

HIGHLY SPECIALIZED CF-104 will probably be the last aircraft of its kind for the RCAF.

Focus on Air Power

Peek into the crystal ball at

By John Gellner

● The life of the RCAF's Air Division in Europe has been chequered by a number of military and political changes. When it came into being in 1952 as part of the NATO force, it was established as a day-interceptor force of 12 squadrons of F-86 Sabre aircraft, based at four points in France and Germany.

Since that time the following changes have taken place:

- 1956: One third of the division was converted to the all-weather role, with CF-100 aircraft.

- 1959: A change in the role of the division to strike-reconnaissance (that is, to bomber attack with nuclear weapons) was accepted by the Canadian government, and then:

- 1962: Conversion from Sabres and CF-100s to CF-104s was accompanied by a reduction of the number of bases from four to three; one in France, Marville (with two reconnaissance squadrons) and two in Germany, Zweibruecken and Baden-Solingen (with three strike squadrons, each); and reduction of the squadrons from 12 to eight.

Another change is imminent. Plans are undoubtedly in hand already, for the change must be made in three to five years from now. This is no mere approximation. In 1969, the present term of the NATO alliance runs out; after that there will either be no more NATO or it will be continued for an unspecified period. And around 1971, the CF-104s will have finished their

useful service lives.

This is not the place to weigh the odds for NATO continuing in a form that would make it desirable for a Canadian air division to be assigned to it. Much as the future of NATO may be in doubt, we will assume for the purposes of this article that the alliance will come out of its present crisis hale and hearty, and that it will remain in the Canadian interest to contribute an air component. The question is: What should it be?

The first requirement is to look at the lessons of the past, in order to avoid a repetition of the mistakes made. One in particular stands out: the acceptance of the strike-reconnaissance role, which then led to the equipping of the Air Division with the CF-104.

There is one thing which can be said for this decision, and that is that SACEUR (Supreme Allied Commander Europe) and his staff wanted it, and that as good allies, eager to co-operate, we believed that we should comply. SACEUR's motives are easy to understand. The idea of defending Europe with nuclear weapons was then very much in fashion.

Nuclear strike philosophy

The theory was that if it came to a war, nuclear weapons would and could be used with discretion, in a limited way. One of the jobs they were to do was "interdict" the battlefield. This would be done by fighter/bombers—strike aircraft, in NATO

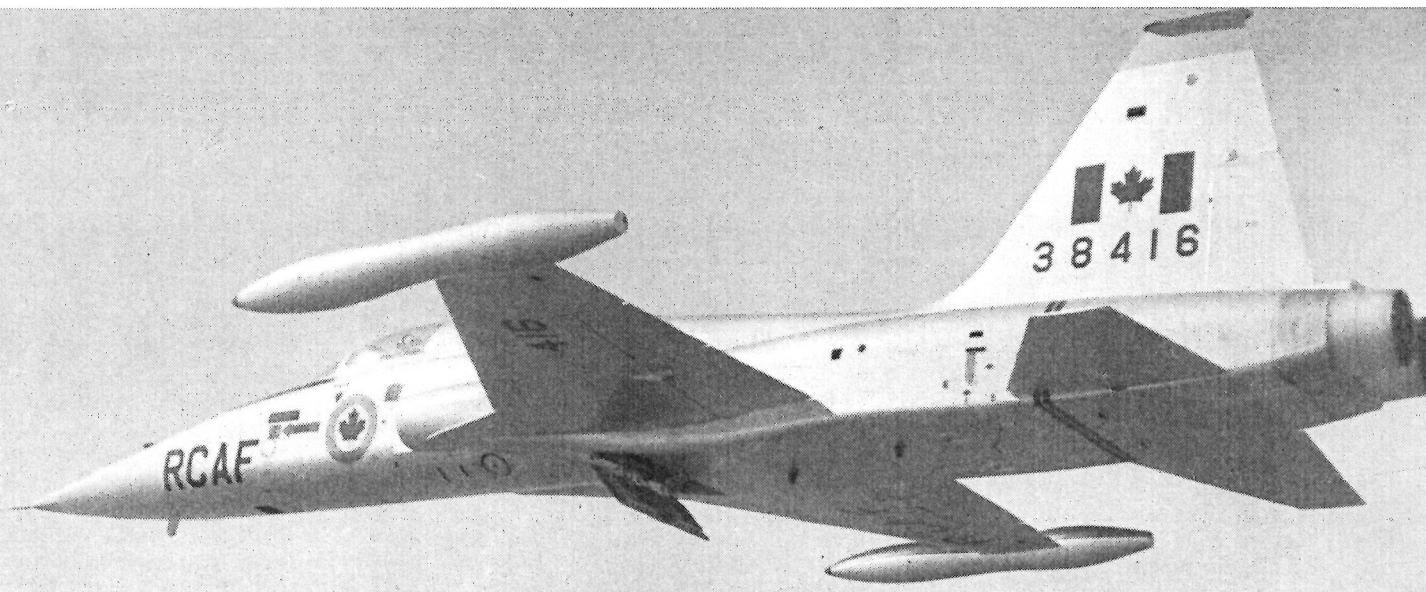
parlance—which would drop atomic bombs of 60 to 80 kilotons (three to four times the power of the Hiroshima bomb) on the lines of communication, the airfields, and the supply areas of the enemy.

But none seemed to realize that if this deterrent function was required, then it could be performed much more cheaply and reliably by a medium-range ballistic missile such as the Pershing.

At all events, the planners must now think of the next role—and the next aircraft—for the RCAF Air Division in NATO. This time, the role must make sense militarily on the basis of our own analysis, not of the blindly accepted analysis of others; and it must fit into our general defence plans. The aircraft, in turn, must fit the role and our own overall requirements.

Those who would say that it is not possible to follow such rules in an alliance; that an ally must do what is required of him whether or not it is convenient or even reasonable, need only be reminded of the partial re-equipment of the Air Division with the CF-100.

At that time Canada offered NATO an aircraft she had available, for a role, all-weather interception, for which know-how, training facilities, matériel backup already existed (the CF-100 was then the standard weapons system of Air Defence Command). SACEUR, who needed night fighters badly, was glad to have the four Canadian CF-100 squadrons.



REPLACING THE CF-104 will be this unsophisticated, multi-purpose Northrop CF-5

the RCAF's future NATO role

If we follow this example and offer the alliance as our next air contribution something NATO needs and we have, the choices are admittedly limited.

The reorganization of the Canadian military forces now under way puts emphasis on highly mobile and flexible, conventionally armed forces capable of acting quickly in a variety of situations and places. This was made clear in the last White Paper on Defence almost two years ago. Among the four procurement priorities listed, three are for the equipment of a mobile force.

Ultimately, Mobile Command, which was activated last October, will control all army combat forces in Canada, as well as an air brigade with aircraft ranging from L-19s through helicopters of all kinds to CF-5s. It will be supported by vastly strengthened RCAF and RCN transport facilities.

In the way of aircraft which SACEUR could possibly use in Central Europe we will thus have transports and tactical support fighters, together with matériel backing and trained personnel interchangeable between Canada and Europe.

It so happens that transports and tactical aircraft are just about the only aircraft which make any sense on the Central European front. If it is true—and it probably is—that the Soviets have several hundred short-range and medium-range missiles with nuclear warheads in Eastern Europe, aimed at Western Europe, then they will

not be deterred by NATO strike aircraft packed unprotected, two or three squadrons at a time, on conspicuous airfields with 10,000-ft runways.

Deterrent must be credible

Like the nuclear deterrent protecting North America, the one protecting Europe must be safe to be credible. This can be achieved through mobility or hardening of bases. The French are putting their MRBMs into silos buried in limestone crags in the lower Rhône valley. They and the British will also have missile-carrying submarines. Sergeant and Pershing mobile missile launchers are operational with the American and the German forces in NATO. This is the stuff of which deterrence is made.

Air defence is generally more economically, if not better, provided in the limited air space of Western Europe by missiles than by aeroplanes. In fact, one of the reasons for the change of role of the Air Division in 1959 was that even then there did not seem to be much of a requirement for defensive fighters. HAWK, and whatever the Americans will settle on instead of ill-starred MAULER, will be the weapons systems on which European air defence will principally rely for years to come, even though the Germans still use the F-104G as a fighter, and the British the Lightning and the French the Mirage III.

It is unlikely that Canada would want to offer NATO a formation of

transport aircraft as her next air contribution. Transports are valuable airplanes in peacetime, with a variety of uses, not all of them strictly military. They could not be employed rationally in Europe by a lodger force like the Canadian.

There remains the possibility of re-equipping the Air Division with a tactical aircraft, preferably identical with, or at least similar in characteristics to, the one used by Mobile Command. By 1971 or thereabouts, an advanced CF-5 will be available—a follow-up is already under development at Northrop's under the designation F-5X—, the proposed Anglo-French tactical aircraft, the Jaguar, will probably be flying, and there may be other options in the same category. Even a VTOL fighter/bomber may be available by then.

In any event it is important that operational requirements for our home and overseas forces should be brought into accord, so that both will be backed by the same pool of trained personnel and the same production and supply organization. That's the only rational way of doing things, especially for a country like Canada, with a numerically small, all-volunteer and thus very expensive, military establishment.

It will not harm the alliance if next time we do not go along with a dubious strategic concept, whether we believe in it or whether it fits into our general plans or not. To be a blind follower is not to be co-operative but foolish.

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