

[ORIGINAL DRAFT CHAPTER FOR RCAC History]

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## **Chapter 18: The Cold War (III), 1971-1989**

### Introduction

Canadian national security policy during the second half of the Cold War was far less robust and direct than it had been during the first twenty years. As noted in the previous chapter, the fight for retaining the main battle tank was on. The Trudeau Government policies ensured that this was to be a sustained battle. In essential terms, leftist members of the Trudeau Government wanted to convert Canada into a neutral state (they used the term "non-aligned" to hide behind the implications) which would eventually entail removing Canada from NATO. This faction knew that they faced severe bureaucratic inertia in carrying out such a project. Consequently, they chose to use 'Salami tactics' over a protracted period to achieve this aim.

The first target was the NATO commitment. In this they almost succeeded and forced a compromise whereby the existing land force commitment would be slashed to a mere reinforced battlegroup. Two brigade groups earmarked for NATO theatres were left to rot, while the third prepared for a dubious mission to North Norway (a situation which will be examined later in this chapter). Thus, 4 Canadian Mechanized Brigade Group's armoured support was reduced to two aging Centurion Mark XI squadrons that were sometimes fully manned, and a further two which were unmanned and designated to be filled out with flyover troops in an emergency. Hard fought rearguard action within National Defence and External Affairs, supported by Canada's NATO allies and particularly by NATO Supreme Allied Commander General Andrew Goodpaster, prevented a full scale Canadian rout from the NATO Central Region.

Then the 1971 White Paper was unveiled. Instead of "providing an effective deterrent to totalitarianism," the Canadian public was told that Canada would seek to "promote social justice, enhance the quality of life, and ensure a harmonious natural environment." Pictures of Canadian soldiers fighting fires and cleaning up pollution competed with pictures of mechanized forces trundling over the Luneberg Heath preparing to take on the Soviet hordes. The Army now had a big role to play in "national development," the

definition of which was left intentionally vague. The next piece of the Salami appeared in the White Paper and echoes of the Hellyer period came through loud and clear:

The Government has decided that the land force should be reconfigured to give it a high degree of mobility needed for tactical reconnaissance missions in the Central Region reserve role. The Centurion medium tank will be retired, since this vehicle is not compatible with Canada-based forces and does not possess adequate mobility. In its place a light, tracked, direct-fire support vehicle will be acquired as one of the main items of equipment. This vehicle, which is airportable, will be introduced later into combat groups in Canada. The result will be enhanced compatibility of Canadian and European-based forces and a lighter, more mobile land force capable of a wide range of missions.

This first ever mention of a specific tank in a policy document struck fear into the very heart of the Armoured Corps. Trudeau himself had even remarked on occasion when visiting firepower demonstrations that the RCAC had better enjoy the shoot while it could, because there wasn't going to be a Centurion replacement. Various versions of these remarks spread like wildfire throughout the armoured community and compounded the anxiety. In any event, the Prime Minister was politically sensitive to the media image of 'tanks in the streets' being a symbol of political instability particularly after the FLQ crisis and various coups or attempted coups in France and Greece in the 1960s.

The White Paper policy contradicted itself, however, perhaps deliberately. A tank and a Direct Fire Support Vehicle were two very different things, both doctrinally and technically. "Tactical reconnaissance" and "theatre reserve" were not compatible roles, and, incidentally, nobody actually asked NATO commanders what was required of Canada's future forces in the Central Region. It was simply not acceptable in alliance circles for Canada to offer a force which would have absolutely no utility. Capable of a range of what missions? To support what policy? By reducing Canada's ability to participate in high to mid-intensity warfare, the anti-NATO faction in the Trudeau Government could reduce the likelihood of effective participation and thus call into question the commitment itself.

Elsewhere in the White Paper, Canadian defence priorities were juggled so that surveillance of coasts and defence of territory was the top priority, followed by the defence of North America (which the White Paper language suggested barely existed), then the fulfillment of NATO commitments (a minimalist approach), and then peacekeeping, "from time to time." The priority, in veiled language and buried in the White Paper, was internal security, which was not surprising after the October Crisis.

There were even more cuts to the force structure. The Fort Garry's were disbanded, which left the RCD, 8th Hussars, the Strathconas, and 12 RBC as the regular force

armoured regiments. Each regiment was assigned to a Combat Group, which was really a Brigade Group without the third mechanized infantry battalion. The Nomad helicopter troop was disbanded and the pilots absorbed into 10 Tactical Air Group and lost their identity. As previously noted, the Militia's Shermans were declared obsolete and used as hard targets, leaving those regiments with no armoured vehicles and calling into question the role of the Militia as a mobilization resource yet again.

Despite the wrangling in Ottawa and the announcement of the 'new' policy, nobody in the Government or those who championed 'non-alignment' conclusively demonstrated that the threat to Canadian interests overseas had declined any measurable degree since the 1950s. Certainly the maintenance, let alone the 1968 enhancement of Soviet forces in Eastern Europe, justified continued vigilance to deter their use.

### Mailed Fist for Mobile Command

The 1970 Corps reorganization was a traumatic experience for many given the uncertainty of the day. The creation of 12 RBC siphoned off almost all French-speaking officers and men from the other four regiments and the Fort Garry's were disbanded. The Fort Garry's in Calgary were rebadged as Strathconas, while the Strathconas in West Germany were rebadged as RCD. The 8th Hussars flyover squadron in Gagetown was also rebadged RCD. Then the RCD moved from northern Germany to Lahr in southern Germany. Individual armoured soldiers were also moved between regiments. To make matters worse, some boffin in Ottawa got the idea that there should be four numbered armoured regiments and went so far as to produce heraldic designs for 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th Armoured Regiments, RCAC.

All the too-ing and fro-ing was compounded by the fact that there were still many unanswered questions as to what exactly the bulk of the Canada-based armoured regiments were supposed to be training for. In the case of 12 RBC, the regiment was still building up and was focused on troop and squadron training for the better part of the early 1970s. The Strathconas determined that maintaining a balance between light armour and tank training was desirable. For example, when LCol Jim Fox arrived to command LdSH he joined a Sergeant who was commanding a machine-gun armed jeep and asked him "What's your job?" The Sergeant replied: If I'm a Fox [armoured car] I'm doing this. If I'm in a Lynx, I'm doing that. If I am in a DFSV, we'd be doing something else which might look like this." At one point, the Strathconas deployed a DFSV mock-up made of a

sheet metal frame and canvas covering and a Deuce and a Half exhaust pipe mounted on a M-113. The "Glenmore-Sarcee" DFSVs put in many appearances on exercises.

It was fairly straight forward for the RCD in Germany operating with 4 CMBG in the NATO context, while the 8th Hussars continued with light armoured operations in the Defence of Canada and CAST role in Petawawa. These northern operations were mandated by the new White Paper which placed some emphasis on power projection for sovereignty purposes. The 'Viking' exercise series was designed to exert a Canadian military presence in the Arctic regions. In many cases, they amounted to a sporadic and temporary deployment of a number of sub-units, usually troops in the case of RCAC units, to various locations in the Canadian Archipelago during the summer months. In some cases, the patrols built navigation and stocked survival cairns in extremely remote areas and then recorded their location so that the data could be included on survival maps. In some cases, Arctic patrol operations were conducted alongside the Innuit Canadian Rangers. Innumerable deployments were made throughout the 1970s and 1980s by 8th Hussars, 12 RBC, and the Strathconas.

In addition to the Arctic, 2 Combat Group also practiced desert operations. One of these was Exercise 'Pitute Lance', held in 1970. LCol Pat Mitchell, commanding 8th Hussars wanted to have his regiment work in a non-traditional area and the brigade commander, General Radley-Walters suggested the then-decrepit Fort Irwin the Mojave Desert (later home of the famous National Training Centre with its MILES gear computerized training system) in the United States since airportability of the light armoured regiment structure needed validation. The bulk of the regiment deployed by Hercules transport aircraft 4000 miles. For four weeks, Lynx's, Ferrets and even a couple of 403 Squadron Hueys, some piloted by ex-RCAC pilots scoured the arid high desert's rocky escarpments and scrub-covered hillocks in search of the Fantasian enemy force. RSM Winston Churchill Rutledge recalled:

We flew by Hercules from Trenton to Ellsworth AFB in North Dakota and then on to Barstow, California. It was hot! It was dusty! There were scorpions and cacti all over the place. There were almost no landmarks in the desert, which placed a premium on map reading skills. We got really good at using the contours and mountains to navigate by. The guys loved it. It was totally different from the usual training areas around Petawawa as was the long weekend we had off in Las Vegas. Assault Troop even got to use their full range of explosives against targets which littered the desert training area.

Once again, Canada's armoured soldiers demonstrated that they could operate in extreme and unfamiliar climactic conditions.

## Battle for the Tank: Round One

The programmed demise of Centurion meant that these vehicles would be removed from the Light Armoured Regiment structure in the Canada-based regiments by 1972. Therefore, there was now a requirement for acquisition of a Direct Fire Support Vehicle which would be part of the light armoured organization, in addition to the requirement to replace the Centurion main battle tanks in Germany. Doctrinally, the DFSV would support the recce vehicles if they encountered serious resistance and allow them to extract from the situation. The DFSV was not supposed to be employed as a tank, though confusion was inevitable since the Centurion Mark V's in Canada were being used as DFSV surrogates on exercises. The DFSV requirement arose during the previously-mentioned main battle tank gyrations in the late 1960s and became intertwined with it.

Prior to the 1971 White Paper, the Vice Chief of the Defence Staff, LGen Mike Dare, requested that the British Cavalry Vehicle Reconnaissance (Tracked) or CVRT family of vehicles be examined with an eye towards adoption into Mobile Command as DFSVs, not as tank replacements. The first two vehicles to undergo trials were the tracked Scorpion (76mm gun) and wheeled Fox (30mm gun). 74 Scorpions were needed to replace the Centurions in the DFSV role, while Ferret desperately needed replacement. After the White Paper was tabled in 1971, the requirement now went up to 134 Scorpions.

Many within Mobile Command were opposed to acquiring Scorpion. Dare told them that these arguments didn't matter: the vehicle was really intended as a tank trainer until he could build up enough political credibility to get a real Centurion replacement. This took some time. The work "tank" could not even be used in some quarters of National Defence Headquarters on the instructions of the bureaucrats.

Mobile Command came very close to acquiring Scorpion. An entire trials team was sent to Bovington, UK. Articles on the vehicle appeared in various journals and an official vehicle characteristics sheet was distributed within Mobile Command for familiarization purposes. The RCEME maintenance cadre was then pulled off the flight to England when higher-level National Defence-External Affairs-British Government machinations relating to other defence-oriented contracts intruded. Apparently, the pressure applied by SACEUR and from other quarters in NATO contributed to this delay, as did some acceptance problems. The two Scorpion and two Fox trials vehicles then arrived in Canada and were paraded around to the units. General Radley-Walters, after examining

the trial machine, told Dare, "What the f--- are you doing? We don't need that pile of s---!"

Then LGen J.A. Dextraze became the Chief of Defence Staff. Jadex was not a fan of Scorpion or Fox, but allowed a competitive trial to proceed with Fox pitted against the Cadillac Gage V-150, which essentially was a V-100 with a turret mounting a 20mm gun. Jadex didn't like the Fox, so it was eliminated from the trials, and Cadillac-Gage thought they had to order in the bag. The car company would not entertain the notion of production in Canada, which then drove the cost up. The DND acquisition team subsequently decided to open up the trials world wide which led to the requirement for the Armoured Vehicle General Purpose (AVGP). At the same time, Cabinet decided in 1973 that Scorpion was not for Canada. Jadex then pursued main battle tank acquisition which eventually led to the Leopard C1 buy.

### Cyprus 1974: UNFICYP

[1974 invasion to follow]

### The NATO Battlefield: 1970s

4 CMBG's armoured regiment, now the RCD, was slashed in half after the Trudeau cuts. This left two squadrons of aging Centurions Mark XI's. Plans were made to keep a third squadron's worth of vehicles near the new base at Lahr in Southern Germany and then fly over the personnel once the NATO Alert System progressed during a crisis. The Flyover squadron was kept at CFB Gagetown where it supported the Combat Training Centre. In some cases, the flyover squadron was deployed during the large annual Fall Exercises (Fallex) in the 1970s.

Working 'down south' was quite different from the more comfortable days of 'up north.' Instead of being integrated with I(British) Corps, 4 CMBG worked with both VII(US) Corps and II(GE)Korps which formed part of Central Army Group or CENTAG. 4 Brigade's role in the 1970s was somewhat ambiguous. Initially, 4 CMBG was to act as a CENTAG reserve force which could involved backing up any one of the four Corps in the region. Eventually reality set in. 4 CMBG was too small to plan for all of these contingencies and it lacked the mobility.

Similarly, the NATO battlefield had changed by the 1970s. It was no longer based on immediate nuclear weapons use. NATO's conventional forces were expected to fight as long as possible to stem the Red tide until reinforcements could arrive from North America, the United Kingdom, and Portugal (and later Spain when she joined NATO in the 1980s) or until NATO authorities decided that limited tactical nuclear warfare was to be implemented. This situation reduced frontages and thus increased the importance of conventional forces. Unfortunately, cutting 4 Brigade and the RCD in half made it a less militarily useful formation than it had been.

That said, however, the Centurion tanks and mechanized infantry were still a welcome addition to a series of smaller but critical contingency plans produced by II(German) Korps. This formation was spread rather thin since it had to cover the vulnerable German-Austrian border. Planners assumed (correctly) that Soviet plans involved violating Austrian neutrality to outflank the main defence positions on the Czech-West German border. Therefore, if II(German) Korps was to extract from these positions, the numerous bridges on the Donau River had to be secured from this Soviet left hook. Many exercises, particularly Ex 'Gutes Omen' (1971) and Ex 'Grosse Rochade' (1975) had Canadian battlegroups operating in this role. The Centurions were divided up to support the infantry in these blocking positions.

World events, however, helped change this status quo. The Arab-Israeli war of 1973 demonstrated that the mass use of light anti-tank guided missiles could thwart offensive operations by massed tanks and mechanized forces. Secondly, it confirmed the fact that helicopters could do more than conduct recce operations and carry troops on a modern battlefield since anti-tank guided missiles could be effectively used from them too. Though these were not new theories, the scale of the Middle East 'experiment', aptly underscored by the hundred of destroyed Israeli M-60A1s in the Sinai and Centurions on the Golan Heights by Soviet-supplied Saggars and night vision-equipped T-62 tanks was enough to shake up the Western media, politicians, and military authorities.

Once again, light airportable formations were trotted out as a possible replacement for heavy mechanized forces. The role of the tank was again questioned which in turn fueled the debate in Canada over a Centurion replacement. What most pundits were missing, however, were the details which the RCAC Association was only too ready to supply to counter the anti-tank mania. The 1973 operations had a number of unique terrain factors which increased the effectiveness of the guided missiles. Similarly, the Israelis did not fully comprehend how to use self-propelled artillery or mechanized infantry combat teams and tended to rely on tactical airpower which was in turn vulnerable to missiles.

West Germany was not the desert wastes of Sinai: it was a highly defensible county with deep rivers and significant built-up areas.

Ex 'Lares Team' (1976) put paid to the notion of a completely air-portable and airmobile force. This exercise pitted 4 CMBG with its Centurions and M-113s against the American 101st Airmobile Division. The Americans had leg infantry battalions equipped with portable TOW missiles and Huey Cobra attack helicopters (also with TOW) and the ability to move a battalion at a time by transport helicopter. In short order, the purveyors of "light infantryism" were stunned when 4 CMBG's mechanized combat teams simply bypassed the immobile American infantry battalions after the Lynx squadron had picqueted them at the maximum range of the TOW systems. The RCD caught the air-portable pack howitzers cold when their transport helicopters failed to arrive on time, while Recce Squadron got deep into the Division's rear. Light artillery was deemed ineffective against Centurion armour. The Canadian onslaught was stopped only when it outran the air defence systems and was caught by the Cobras. By then it was too late.

In the new NATO conventional environment, quality recce capability once again came to the fore, as Sgt Bill Hungerford recalled:

We were given a particular area of responsibility. It could be a screen, a [flank] guard or an advance to contact. We'd go in early and establish an OP. Sometimes it got very hairy. You were surrounded, but not detected and you had to be careful about what type of information that you radioed back. The only restriction you had was your imagination or initiative. If you could get into somebody's living room, dress as a German, walk the marktplatz and scope out 'enemy' headquarters, then you did it.

Recce operations achieved some prominence within NATO with the establishment of the Boeselager Cup, a NATO-wide recce competition sponsored by the *Bundeswehr*. This CAT-like competition, which the RCD and then the 8th Hussars continuously participated in from 1977, consisted of a range shoot, AFV recognition, and the *Par Cours*, mounted and dismounted night recce exercises.

### Operation 'Gamescan 76'

One of the larger operations Royal Canadian Armoured Corps units were involved in during the 1970s was Operation 'Gamescan 76' held from June to August 1976. The brutal mass murder of Israeli athletes by Palestinian terrorists during the 1972 Munich Olympics coupled with bad memories of the recent FLQ terrorist campaign generated extreme concern on the part of the Government. The entire world would have its eyes on

Canada in the summer of 1976 and it would be the ideal opportunity for political groups large and small to put on their own demonstration.

Most of the Canada-based Mobile Command units were involved in Operation 'Gamescan 76'. Task Force 1, based on 5e Groupement du Combat and led by BGen Rene Gutknecht, handled athlete security and the main competition sites in Montreal. TF 1 also included 12 RBC. HQ Sqn and 'A' Sqn were assigned to Montreal to act as a mobile reserve, while the other two squadrons were deployed to three remote sites: the L'Acadie shooting range, the Joliette archery range and...Tadoussac! At least it was warmer this time for the 75 armoured soldiers protecting the hydro system there. Notably, TF 1 was bolstered by the addition of 700 Militia personnel drawn from Secteur L' Est units. In some cases men from the Royal Canadian Hussars, Regiment de Hull, and 12 RBC (Milice) augmented 12 RBC, while in other cases they donned blazers and flannels to act as additional plainclothes security at the competition sites. Combat clothing was not permitted and all Mobile Command soldiers wore summer dress with berets instead of helmets and webbing. This was done to avoid presenting an image to the world of Canada as an armed camp.

Task Force 2 consisted of part of 2 Combat Group. 8th Hussars deployed 'B' Squadron under Major Jack Caverson to CFB Ottawa (Uplands) to act as a Standby Force to support either TF 1 in Montreal, TF 4 in Kingston (a joint task force protecting the yachting site), or to support any incident which may happen in the national capital region. 'A' Sqn was split between Dorval and Mirabel airports, Working alongside 1 RCR, 'A' Sqn's task was to continuously sweep areas around the central air hubs to identify and place surveillance on possible vantage points from which SAM-7 man-portable missiles could be launched against airliners.

8th Hussars and 12 RBC also provided security for the royal yacht HMS Britannia which was transporting the Queen through the St Lawrence river system. Ferret scout cars moved from bound to bound as the ship made her way up the river to Montreal.

The massive show of force and continual presence contributed to the fact that no terrorist incidents occurred during the 1976 Olympics in Canada and reassured Canadians that the Royal Canadian Armoured Corps stood on guard for Olympia.

No Tanks, No Trade: Rent-A-Tank and The Permanent Panzers

By 1972, the Centurions were really showing their age. RSM Doug Seed recalled "I was driving when the damned stickshift came out of it! We'd be going through towns and villages at speed and a stickshift or a tiller bar would break. It was a wonder nobody was killed!" At one point, the entire fleet stationed at Gagetown was grounded. There was, however, no money to continue to run Centurion on. Supported by a major armoured corps community staff and media education effort, the CDS finally accepted that there was a need to replace Centurion with a new MBT and not a DFSV. Several RCAC/RCEME studies were then conducted on how to extend the life of the tanks yet again.

The backup plan, if the CDS couldn't get the Government to buy a new tank, was to give a contract out to Teledyne Continental and retrofit the entire Centurion fleet in the same way the Israelis did when they created their 'Patturions' (Israeli armoured corps General Israel Dan was even brought over to Canada to consult on the project). This involved replacing the engine in a Centurion hull with an M-60 power pack and final drive, while a Marconi fire control system would also be installed alongside a 105mm L7 gun. Once it became clearer that a replacement MBT was not out of the question, a more limited rebuild was authorized. The tanks serving with 4 CMBG in Germany were then re-built by a Dutch workshop, a spare parts deal with the British was consummated (since they still had large stocks on hand) and Jersey Aviation refurbished the engines. The tracks received rubber pads and the IR system was reconstructed.

The 1974 Defence Structure Review served as the basis for a MBT replacement programme. The DSR process confirmed that the Canadian Government was not leaving or contemplating leaving the NATO Central Region. The D Armd 'tank team' kept an eye on what was going on internationally in armoured developments. The Leopard II prototypes were available for examination and the XM-1 was progressing from the design to development stage. Many felt that the Army should wait and then push for Leopard II acquisition. The finalized options were: 'Patturion', M-60A3, Leopard I, the Italian Leopard variant, and an upgrade of the French AMX-30.

The West German government was making noises connecting future trade with Canada to Canada's continued interest in deploying capable military forces to the defence of the Central Region. This became known as the 'no tanks-no trade doctrine' and a 'walk in the woods' with Helmut Schmidt has been credited with changing Trudeau's mind on the matter of a Canadian Main Battle Tank. Chief of the Defence Staff J.A. Dextraze explained what happened next:

They gave me the green light. One thing they didn't know is that the German Minister of Defence and their equivalent of the Chief of the Defence Staff were both good friends of mine. We socialized and this was not generally known to everybody. So I went to see Zimmermann and I said to him, "My Prime Minister has agreed to give us a tank. The only one that is available now is the Leopard Mark I. I know you have got the Leopard Mark II on the drawing boards and that you are not going to have it in production for some time. You have got to sell me a tank."

"Ah, Christ!" he said. "We can't. We are re equipping our armed forces." "Well," I said, "Ok, we'll have to leave West Germany." Zimmermann protested, "We can't have that." I said, "It's easy for you people, you have so many regiments. In each regiment you have so many squadrons. I only want a regiment's worth. Why the hell can't you work this out?" And he did.

So I took the Leopard knowing that I was being criticized at that time by ex-military and some military people and I said, "You guys don't know what the hell you're talking about. We are not supposed to get any tanks" and all of a sudden we have them. I got to buy this one there-not one that might come.

Jadex's view was that the Leopard A-2 rent/C-1 buy, as well as the AVGP acquisition, were expedients until a better deal could be made later for an up-to-date MBT. This vision was supported by some in the D Armd shop but it was not fully understood in other quarters.

The deal was that a regiment of the Bundeswehr's older Leopard A-2's would be made available to the RCD in Germany under a rental agreement while arrangements were made with Krauss-Maffei for the purchase of the Leopard A-3's, which became the Leopard C-1 in Canadian lexicon. This would cover the period after which the Centurions were no longer capable of operation and the arrival of the new vehicle.

The first A-2's arrived in Lahr in January 1977, just in time for the RCD preparations for the CAT competition that year. The crews did a crash course on the A-2 and, using Centurion fire drills, won CAT that year.

The Permanent Panzers arrived between July 1978 and July 1979. There were 114 Leopard C-1's, eight Taurus Armoured Recovery Vehicles, and six Beaver Armoured Vehicle Launched Bridges. The bulk of the machines went to Lahr, while a squadron was sent to CFB Gagetown to support the Combat Training Centre and to train a flyover squadron of personnel which would deploy to Germany in wartime.

The C-1 was based on the Australian version of the Leopard. It had a Belgian SABCA laser fire control system and a Low Light Television (LLTV) night fighting system all wedded to a 105mm L7 gun. It took some time for the crews to get used to the C-1's and the CAT miracle was not repeated. There was a serious fault in the fire control system in

that the design did not take into account heat expansion of the turret which threw off the sight. It would take some time to correct this fault after an embarrassing CAT shoot in 198X when all the rounds missed their mark.

Other than this defect (Canadian crews even used a 'field expedient' of keeping the vehicles in the shade to keep the turrets cool during CAT), the Leopard C-1 was a superb vehicle. It was easily maintained compared with the Centurion and well liked by its crews. During the 1988 CAT competition, the 8th Hussars team beat 70% of the Leopard II and M-1 Abrahms-equipped teams using the Leopard C-1.

### Peacekeeping in the 70s and 80s

While the bulk of the RCAC's effort was directed towards the war without battles, Canada's armoured soldiers also deployed individually far and wide, mostly on global peace observation missions, and collectively as rotation units for UNFICYP, now that the line had stabilized after the 1974 invasion.

It would be extremely difficult to record the presence of every armoured soldier who served on either UN or non-UN peace observation duties in the 1970s and 1980s. At one point Canada had individuals deployed on every such mission. Fortunately, most of these men served in less tragic circumstances than Capt Laviolette.

'Peace observation' was sometimes a contradiction in terms. In January 1973, Canada offered 150 observers to form the Canadian contingent of the International Commission of Control and Supervision (ICCS) which was supposed to implement the Paris Peace Accords and end American involvement in the Vietnam War. The ICCS, known by some of its members as "I Can't Control Shit!," gallantly tried to get the belligerents to adhere to the letter of the peace plan. Operating from incredibly primitive facilities (some deep in the jungle), harassed by the Vietnamese communist forces, put at risk from huge amounts of unexploded bombs and accused of being CIA spies by the media, the Canadian ICCS personnel went about their business. Captain C.E. Laviolette had served as an 8th Hussar and was with 12 RBC when he volunteered for ICCS duty. On 7 April 1973, the clearly-marked ICCS helicopter in which he was flying was shot down by a SAM-7 missile near Lao Bao, Republic of Vietnam. All aboard were killed.

The situation in Cyprus calmed down significantly after the 1974 operations, so much so that the later UNFICYP rotations became known as 'Club Med.' This did not mean that there was no danger, however, as both belligerent forces would 'try on' the Canadians whenever a new roto took over part of the Green Line and there was always

the risk of mines and unexploded ammunition. Any small incident could have become a spark to set off a larger riot or even firepower displays across the Green Line. All four regular regiments, many times augmented by Militia armoured soldiers, deployed as full units or sub-units augmented with infantry companies to UNFICYP eight times between 1974 and 1990. At the very least, a UNFICYP deployment broke the garrison routine and provided some semblance of an operational environment.

### The Special Service Force and the Jump Troop

Back in 1967-68 when the Light Armoured Regiment concept was being implemented, some thought was given within Mobile Command that an airborne formation should be formed to spearhead any Mobile Command deployment in a hostile area. By 1968, this concept took concrete form when the Canadian Airborne Regiment was activated. In the run up, the doctrine and organizational shops in Mobile Command had one version of the Airborne Regiment which contained a Ferret Squadron which could be dropped from C-130 Hercules transports. This sub-unit was deleted as the size of the formation shrunk due to budgetary requirements.

In 1976, the Chief of Defence Staff, J.A. Dextraze announced that 2 Combat group in Petawawa would receive the Airborne Regiment, which at that time was in Edmonton. 2 Combat Group, which included 8th Hussars, would henceforth be known as the Special Service Force (SSF) an airportable light rapidly deployable formation. All members would wear a distinctive camouflage smoke and sport a winged dagger patch with the "Osons" ("We Dare") motto on their shoulders. It was unclear at the time exactly what role SSF was to fulfill: Defence of Canada Operations? North Norway and the flanks? If so, what was the role of the armoured regiment? Some thought that Jadex had created SSF to instill some "macho" back into the Army, which he thought had been "softened" by peacekeeping operations.

As SSF HQ sorted out its mandate in the late 1970s, there was some thought given to assigning a Cougar squadron to the Airborne Regiment when it would be deployed on northern operations, though this wasn't pursued in detail. If SSF were to deploy to North Norway as part of the Canadian Air Sea Transportable brigade commitment, the entire regiment would go. The relationship between 8th Hussars and the airborne community was somewhat strained, however, in part due to over aggressive personal rivalries between the 'Maroon Machine' and the 'Black Hats'. For example, armoured soldiers were prohibited from wearing SSF smocks by their CO. Little was done to integrate the

Regiment into the SSF, though attitudes were starting to shift when LCol YY took over in 198X.

While this was happening, the members of 1 Troop, Recce Squadron 8th Hussars (particularly a certain MCpl Falls) asked to do adventure training which would incorporate jump training. This was approved. Next the troop then did the Advanced Recce Course together in Gagetown. These men had a "Let's try this and see if it works" attitude and wondered why there couldn't be an armoured recce troop which could work with the Airborne Regiment. Eventually, the merits of the idea were recognized by those in charge and in no time at all the Recce Squadron's M-113 ambulance (callsign 49F), was being extracted by parachute from a C-130 on a landing zone near Edmonton (Low Altitude Parachute Extraction or LAPES). Then drop tests with parachutes followed.

The Jump Troop concept stabilized into a seven-car Lynx troop (each with a small black parachute painted on the hull for each drop) which could be LAPSE'd or air dropped. Dropping was preferable: seven parachutes were required for a combat loaded vehicle. The 21 men in the troop parachuted with their vehicles. The troop would jump after the Airborne Pathfinders had marked the Drop Zone (DZ) and then fan out ten to fifteen kilometres like spokes on a wheel to act as a screen while the rest of the Airborne Regiment dropped in.

Jump Troop participated in almost all SSF airborne exercises. In some cases, the recce troop operated in a dismounted recce role, while in others the Lynx's were pre-positioned on the exercise DZ because there were not enough Hercules to carry them. The first jump with the whole troop occurred in 1987 at Forth Drum. MWO Dennis Levesque recalled:

Two USAF F-16 fighters and two A-10 ground attack planes met the Canadian Hercules at the border and escorted them to the DZ near Watertown. The A-10s prepped the DZ with live ordnance and then the seven Lynx's floated down to the ground where they 'married up' with the crews and off they went. It was impressive to watch this from the air!

Jump Troop would continue to refine its insertion technique, but the disbandment of the Canadian Airborne Regiment in 1993 brought an end to further operations.

### Recce By Death: The Militia Armoured Regiments in the 1970s

As we have seen in the previous chapter, The 'Snakes and Ladders' era wrought significant damage to Militia RCAC units. No sooner were these units recovering their

tanks skills using Shermans then the government cut the funds necessary to carry out such training, eliminated the tanks and converted all Militia RCAC units to recce units by 1972. Confusion within the new NDHQ structure produced a situation where the entity responsible for the Militia 'ping ponged' about. A plan existed whereby all Militia units would be reduced to 100 men each which would then provide partially-trained individual augmentation for Regular Force units. No unit training would be authorized.

The whole situation was surreal. FMC now had 18 Militia armoured regiments without tanks. The personnel were trained in a mix of tank and recce tactics at the sub-unit level but were equipped with jeeps, some of which mounted machine guns, some which didn't. Was the Militia to become a light armour force or a recce force? Was it to attempt to preserve tank operations as a skill or not? What larger role did Militia armour units fill in the development of Mobile Command as a fighting force? Were they to augment the forces in West Germany on mobilization? No single responsible agency had the ability to answer these questions in the early 1970s.

Once FMC took over, things slowly started to come back into focus. FMC planners were convinced that they had to preserve the Militia for a better day. There was no quick fix and the Trudeau Government would barely allow the Regular Force to equip, let alone the Militia. FMC started out by re-introducing troop-level training at the local headquarters first, since most units could barely field a full squadron. Then as time went on, squadron-level training was conducted by special staffs led by a lieutenant-colonel and co-located with the nearest regular unit. For example, in Calgary the Strathcona team would prepare the Centurions, the King's Own Calgary regiment tank-trained squadron would arrive for the week end, train on the vehicles on the Sarcee range, and the next sub-unit, say the South Albert Light Horse would rotate in the following week end. Collective training with other arms was usually left to the summer concentrations and remained rudimentary throughout the 1970s.

Once the Centurions were gone, however, the Militia units were forced to fall back on learning recce operations using jeeps. The existing regular-Militia training system was then replaced with the Regular Support Staff or RSS whereby several regular armoured soldiers were posted to Militia armoured regiments. Expertise with tank operations declined. Some soldiers with a rather laconic sense of humour sported tee-shirts emblazoned with a black-beret wearing skull and the words "Recce by Death" writ large underneath.

The struggle to retain some semblance of normality in the Militia units led their commanding officers to push the envelope of creativity. For example, the British Columbia Regiment worked out an arrangement between the Seaforth Highlanders and a

U.S. Marine Corps unit to participate in Ex 'Lumberjack', a full-blown amphibious operation in which the British Columbia Regiment handled the beach and landing force recce tasks.

In another instance, the Queen's York Rangers (1st American) traveled down to Fort Drum, New York, to participate in a large U.S. National Guard exercise. The QYRANG's operated as part of the enemy force for the exercise. As such they wore specially modified cap badges on their black berets which had the regimental title and motto printed in Russian. After the exercise, these were replaced with the normal cap badges and most of the American troops were convinced they were a special forces Ranger regiment brought in to test them!

Another mechanism created to generate closer contact between the regular regiments and the Militia was the Worthington Trophy recce competition. Militia regiments from across the country participated by sending a troop. The winning regiment of the competition then sent that troop to train with a regular regiment's recce squadron. This allowed Militia regiments to gain some expertise with Lynx vehicles and their armament. In later years, the Worthington Trophy winners completed their training on Lynx and were then flown to West Germany to augment 4 CMBG's recce squadron during FALLEX.

Providing such incentives went a long way to keeping the structure intact. Sectuer l'est units were fortunate to have close links with 12 RBC, particularly 12 RBC (Milice). Similarly, 8 CH(M) in New Brunswick profited by having a relationship with the regular 8th Hussars regiment, particularly after the 8th Hussars rotated to West Germany to replace the RCD in the 1980s.

Summer militia concentrations (MILCONs) brought the Area armoured units together. In the maritimes, the Prince Edward Island Regiment and 8 CH(M) went to Gagetown, where 8 CH(M) retained a cadre on callout with the Armoured School to maintain vehicles. The Royal Canadian Hussars, Le Regiment d' Hull, 12 RBC(M) all went to CFB Valcartier and then to CFB Gagetown. Having three training facilities in Alberta meant that Prairie and Pacific area units worked with the Strathconas, who maintained two sets of equipment at Wainwright and Sarcee. In 1981, all Ontario-based Militia regiments were combined into a Recce Battalion and deployed to Michigan for a three-day exercise. The problem was that the recce emphasis meant that there were few opportunities for Militia units to learn critical tank-infantry cooperation or higher-level operational skills. The armour-infantry links totally atrophied in the 1970s, both in Militia and regular units based in Canada. 4 CMBG remained the repository of such expertise.

## The Armoured Vehicle General Purpose

As noted earlier, Jadex was only able to secure slightly more than 100 Leopards, which was enough to equip the 4 CMBG regiment in West Germany and a training squadron in Gaagetown. There was still the problem of the other three regular regiments. In addition, the Militia armoured regiments had progressively lost their aging Sherman tanks until the last one was retired by 1972. Most of the Militia regiments now operated machine gun jeeps in the recce role. Since the government was unwilling or unable to determine what the role of the Militia should be while at the same time was unwilling to pursue a rational defence policy and support it with the necessary funds, the CDS and Mobile Command determined that they would attempt to maintain a flexible force structure so that if a firm direction was selected, it could be adopted rapidly.

After the demise of the V-150 Commando project in the late 1960s, a new requirement was established for four types of light armoured vehicles by 1974: the WAPC (Wheeled APC); WFSV (Wheeled Fire Support Vehicle); WTMC (Wheeled TOW Missile Carriers) and WMRV (Wheeled Maintenance and Recovery Vehicle). The roles that this family of vehicles were required to fulfill were to "provide a general purpose combat training capability for [Mobile Command] field units, both Regular and Militia, based in Canada. They will also improve the operational effectiveness of units engaged in internal security and peacekeeping tasks."

These requirements were continuously reconfirmed throughout the AVGP acquisition process. For example, in 1976 and 1977, the primary capabilities of the vehicle family included:

- a. direct fire support in combined arms operations and training;
- b. reconnaissance and control missions relating to international peacekeeping or to internal security operations; and
- c. protection for combat personnel traveling in the vehicle.

It was fully understood at the highest levels of NDHQ that:

The ideal program to ensure a combat ready armed force is to buy tanks and personnel carriers for Canada-based troops as well as for those based in Europe. The AVGP program is the next best solution, it is less costly, meets Canada's training needs, and redresses a long standing equipment deficiency in the Combat Arms.

The selection process for the AVGP vehicle was riddled with multi-national political intrigue, which was not surprising given that this was a multi-billion dollar deal. Six different trials were conducted. Brazil submitted the EE-11 Urutu, while France fielded three vehicles: the Panhard M4, Berliet 4 X 4 VXB, and the Saviem Vehicle de l'Avant Blinde. Switzerland's Mowag company displayed the 6 X 6 Piranha. Finally, Cadillac Gage resuscitated the V-150. Saviem dropped out unexpectedly. Trials were then conducted on the Commando V-150, the Piranha, and the Urutu. V-150 had too much of a rough ride and could not carry an infantry section and was eliminated. The Urutu would require major re-engineering to meet Canadian requirements. Mowag's Piranha met all the requirements. The most important requirement was probably political since Mowag had signed a deal with GM Diesel Division to build the series in Canada which would produce significant employment in the London, Ontario region.

The decision was taken to acquire an initial buy of 160 WAPC (Grizzly), 120 WFSV (Cougar) and 16 WMRV (Husky). In the original allocation plan, the Strathconas would get 30 Cougars, 19 would go to 8th Hussars, and 30 more to 12 RBC. Militia armoured units would get about 45 Cougars divided into three Militia training centres through which the units would rotate: West, East, and Centre. This dispersion did change over time as additional vehicles were acquired, but it provides some insight into initial thinking.

The immediate impact on the regular regiments and army as a whole was encouraging. The light armour and recce organizations which predominated in the 1970s did not allow for retention of the intimate tank-infantry combat team links that had been forged throughout the previous two decades. Now that Canada-based infantry units had the Grizzly and the armoured regiments had the Cougar, equal mobility between the arms was introduced which in turn led to a renewed emphasis on combined arms training.

At the unit level, the Cougar gave crew commanders and gunners a 76mm Alvis turret-mounted gun to train on. There was provision for a laser sighting system. The acquisition of the RADNIS night sight and the image intensification driving system allowed units to reconstruct their night fighting skills with relatively up-to-date equipment. In effect, the Cougar acquisition was projected to permit non-tank equipped units to be 60% compatible with tank units so that if and when a new MBT arrived in peace or war, conversion time would be reduced. The psychological effect of training on and with a tank-like vehicle in numerical quantity should not be underestimated: it was really stretching a soldier's mind, let alone motivation, to 'see' a tank in a Iltis jeep or use a 5/4-ton truck as a M-113.

There were some caveats, however. The Cougar was not a tank. Doctrinally, it was a tank trainer. The presence of the Cougar in formations like the SSF, however, led to the belief by some that the vehicle was an armoured car and should be employed as such. Some armoured officers, not content with tank trainers, sought creative means to employ Cougars operationally, even though it appears as though operational stocks of spare parts were not acquired: training scales did exist, but they were barely enough to maintain the vehicles in a peacetime training situation.

### The Impact of the Cougar on the Militia Regiments

It is fair to suggest that making the Cougar available to the Militia regiments produced a significant boost in morale and interest. 'Recce by Death' was no longer the unofficial motto of those regiments selected to retain a Cougar troop. There were several plans for Cougar dispersal. As noted earlier, one plan was to group the vehicles at three planned Militia Training and Support Centres: Wainwright, Meaford, and Gagetown. Militia regiments would rotate through the centres every week and then in the summer the vehicles would be grouped in squadrons to form regiments for the MILCONs.

This plan was not implemented and FMC decided that a troop of four vehicles should be parceled out to several selected regiments. This appears to have been done for budgetary reasons to lower the cost of transport for units like the BCD and the BCR who would have to fly to Wainwright every month. By having the vehicles deployed locally, familiarization would be speeded up. The down side was that it did not allow for squadron-level training during the year and then only for a few days during the summer MILCON.

Consequently, many Militia regiments adopted a hybrid structure. For example, 8 CH(M) had an RHQ with 'A' Squadron co-located with it in Moncton, NB, while 'B' Squadron was in Sussex and 'C' Squadron was in Sackville. The Cougars were retained at CFB Gagetown and incorporated into the Armoured School vehicle pool with a reciprocal arrangement which allowed 8 CH(M) to draw on the other AVGP vehicles located there. Cougar-trained personnel existed in all three squadrons. Those who were waiting to go on course to learn the Cougar and its systems did recce training. Over time, large numbers of personnel became cross-trained in Cougar and recce. Therefore, the availability of Cougars on a given weekend determined what type of exercise was run. If the vehicles were not free, each squadron might deploy one seven-car Iltis recce troop and echelon and head for the countryside to work as a recce squadron. If Cougars were

up and running, there was enough personnel to have three troops of four Cougars, an echelon, and an Iltis-equipped enemy force.

Another important development with the advent of the Cougar was the inauguration of the Ram's Head trophy. All Cougar-equipped units, regular and Militia, were eligible to compete in this annual competition. As with other similar competitions, it gave a focus to training efforts. In some cases, Militia units even outshoot regular regiments which provided incentive to both organizations to improve.

As Militia units developed improved Cougar expertise, Mobile Command then generated operational taskings for some units. From the mid-1980s 8 CH(M), for example, was set to augment 12 RBC with a Cougar troop. Almost all units retained a list of personnel and their qualifications so that those personnel not allocated to an operational tasking were available as individual replacements in the event of conflict and if the West Germany-based organizations needed augmentees during FALLEX. Having any given Militia unit deploy five or six augmentees for the annual Operation 'Orion Special' or Operation 'Pegasus' was not unusual, nor was a Militia presence on various peace observation or peacekeeping duties unknown. Generally Western Canada-based Militia units augmented the Strathconas, units in Ontario backed up either the RCD or 8th Hussars in Petawawa, while Secteur l'Est units had a close relationship with 12 RBC.

The addition of Cougars to the Militia regiments was accompanied with an increase in funding which in turn allowed for more and better training which in turn affected recruiting and retention rates, problems which had plagued the Militia in the 'Snakes and Ladders' and 'Recce by Death' periods. The ability to conduct more exercises meant that the Militia regiments increased not only their visibility, but the visibility of the army as a whole. Where the regular regiments and, more importantly, their vehicles, were hidden away on remote Canadian Forces Bases, the Militia used the community as training areas. In some cases, route and sector recce exercises (some of them involving Cougars as 'DFSVs') were deliberately conducted in rural and built up areas. Dubbed 'hearts and minds' patrols, these exercises in some cases were the only contact the public had with Canadian armoured vehicles.

### The Canadian Air-Sea Transportable Brigade Group

The attempts by the neutralist faction within the Trudeau Government to incrementally reduce Canada's NATO commitment continued into the 1970s which in turn affected the roles and missions of Royal Canadian Armoured Corps units. In addition

to reducing 4 CMBG and eliminating the main battle tank, another slice was taken at the existing mechanized division commitment to the Central Region. One of the Canada-based brigade groups was offered to NATO in 1967 as a reinforcement formation to NATO's northern flank. SACEUR wasn't interested since the Central Region was the key to NATO Strategy and there were obvious logistic reasons for splitting Canadian forces into two theatres. Then the Canadian Government forced NATO to accept it and in 1969 announced that Canada would provide a Canadian Air-Sea Transportable (CAST) brigade group to NATO instead of a division.

The CAST brigade was to have pre-positioned equipment in Norway and then fly its troops over to the sites, draw the equipment, and deploy to fight. Except that the Norwegians thought pre-positioned equipment was 'provocative'. Thus, the next evolution of the CAST plan had the brigade group deploying from Canada with its equipment by air and sea.

After negotiations with SACEUR in 1970, it was determined that the Canadian formation would reinforce either North Norway (AFNORTH) or the Jutland Peninsula (COMBALTAP). 2 Combat Group was tasked by Mobile Command with the CAST role throughout the 1970s. As previously noted, 2 Combat Group contained a Light Armoured Regiment (8th Hussars) which the planners thought would prove useful in both the mountainous environment of north Norway and the open plains of Schleswig-Holstein, where there would be plenty of Soviet armour to counter.

The CAST commitment was not popular: little effective detailed strategic movements planning was conducted, though the brigade commanders did plan for the role as seriously as they could, which included a large air deployment exercise of 2 Combat Group to the Gaspé Peninsula in 1969. In addition to the fact the CDS was continuously referring to CAST as "Hong Kong North", there was no money for large-scale exercises for 2 Combat Group in the CAST role after 1970 and only one partial concentration was conducted near Petawawa, again with the Centurions acting as DFSV's and the Lynx's and Ferret's operating as the 'eyes'. When 2 Combat Group became the Special Service Force plans were made to deploy a Cougar squadron with the first increment to Norway, but this melted away with time and in any case SSF was primarily interested in defence of Canada operations and planning to deploy to global hotspots as the repository of the UN standby function.

In 1984, the decision was taken to shift responsibility for CAST from the SSF to 5e Groupement Brigade du Canada. 12 RBC now seized the reigns and was tasked to support a mixed wheeled-tracked infantry brigade group in North Norway (the Jutland deployment option was dropped).

As 12 RBC trained diligently for that role, there was some debate within the Government as to whether the role was feasible. Consequently, the first full-scale CAST deployment was conducted. Ex 'Brave Lion' was held in the summer of 1986. Several Norwegian Roll On Roll Off (RO-RO) ships arrived at Quebec to embark 5e GBC. 12 RBC moved its Cougars and Lynxs and prepared them for the long journey across the Atlantic to Sorreisa and Bardufoss, Norway.

On arrival, 12 RBC spent the month operating in a variety of mounted and even dismounted roles. The terrain was forbidding: twisting, winding roads, deep forests, isolated villages and towns, and mountainous fiords. Though not ideal ground for mechanized operations, it was highly defensible. Lynx's from 12 RBC's recce squadron were used to screen 6 (Norway) Division's defensive lines against the Organgeland forces, while the Cougar squadrons acted as tank surrogates as a counter-penetration and rapid reaction force for the extremely vital rear base areas.

### Regeneration: The NATO Battlefield in the 1980s

The Cold War entered a new phase in the late 1970s when the Soviets invaded Afghanistan and in 1980-81 wound up embroiled in a serious crisis in Poland. The United States was reeling from the Iranian revolution and communism was once again on the march in Latin America and Africa. Any Third World hot spot had the potential for superpower involvement which could have had dire consequences for the NATO Area.

It was clear to NATO authorities that the numbers of forces necessary to carry out a conventional active defence strategy just did not exist. In many cases, the existing forces which were originally deployed in the 1960s for the nuclear battle strategy were fewer in number to those needed to cover NATO's vast Central Region. In addition, they had not kept pace technologically. The enemy still retained crushing numbers and had modernized from T-55 to T-72 and T-80 tanks and from BMP-1 to BMP-2 Mechanized Infantry Combat Vehicles. The enemy also achieved nuclear parity with modernized forces in the mid-1970s, which meant that NATO's threat to escalate to nuclear weapons use to prevent conflict became less credible. In addition, chemical warfare appeared more likely given Soviet use of such weapons in Afghanistan.

The solution was a NATO concept called Follow On Forces Attack (FOFA). A derivative of the American Airland battle concept, FOFA recognized that the enemy forces were structured in a series of echelons. The key to preventing the enemy from bringing superior numbers to bear was to absorb the initial onslaught and then prevent the

follow up echelons from moving up to the battle area and then exploiting gaps into NATO's vulnerable rear area. Therefore, strong NATO armoured anti-tank forces, (equipped with technologically superior tanks, attack helicopters and precision guided munitions) positioned close to the Iron Curtain would attrit enemy armour far forward in a mobile battle, while technologically superior NATO air forces employing precision guided munitions would attack the follow on forces deep inside the Warsaw Pact area. NATO would concurrently mobilize and deploy to prevent deep penetration into Western Europe.

The problem for 4 CMBG was that the 1978 Leopard C1 acquisition and the constraints placed on future Army programmes during the Trudeau Government did not allow Canada to update its forces to operate within the FOFA concept. This forced Canada to operate out of phase with NATO force development in the early 1980s. 4 CMBG remained at reduced strength. The RCD still only had two fully-manned squadrons and the flyover squadron. The two infantry battalions, mounted in 1960s-era M-113 Armoured Personnel Carriers instead of a Mechanized Infantry Combat Vehicles, also did not have adequate numbers. Thus when the Polish Crisis (1980-81) broke, NDHQ planners scrambled to fill the pipeline with something and found there was nothing to feed into it.

In terms of employment, 4 CMBG was continually used as the enemy force on large NATO fall exercise. For example, during Ex 'Certain Sentinel' (1979) the first winter exercise in the Central Region in years, the RCD Leopards were painted in a white and green pattern to simulate Czech or Soviet equipment. The Leopard C-1's Low Light Television afforded a distinct advantage: enemy unit after enemy unit was 'wiped out' in night attacks by the RCD battlegroup. Until, that is, the Leopards ran into an American M-113-mounted TOW unit equipped with thermal imaging equipment. Equipment limitations were also highlighted during Ex 'Carbine Fortress' (1982) when an American tank company equipped with the new turbine-powered M-1 Abrams used superior speed and stealth to catch two RCD squadrons (one of which was refueling at the time) and two Van Doos infantry companies in the open and 'destroy' them. Ex 'Flinker Igle' (1984) showed what the RCD Leopards and most particularly the Recce Squadron could accomplish as part of an enemy force, but the M-113-transported infantry were just not capable of handling Marder-equipped West German units.

Things started to change, however, when the Mulroney Government was elected in 1983. This government started out with a robust attitude towards defence policy and the money started to flow again. With this more positive attitude came a belief that many Army equipment deficiencies would be rectified in short order. This in turn would allow

4 CMBG to alter its role towards providing a viable contribution to the defence of CENTAG.

The new attitude also allowed alterations to the force structure in West Germany. Over 1000 new positions were added which permitted full manning of three tank squadrons and the recce squadron, with plans for a fourth flyover squadron. 4 CMBG's infantry units got 32 M-113-mounted TOW launchers which had Thermal Imaging sights, and more thinking was directed towards acquiring an MICV. With 59 Leopards and 32 TOW Under Armour, 4 CMBG packed a significant mobile anti-armour punch which could be employed in a wide range of contingencies. Additionally, unit rotation was authorized. Operation 'Springbok-Coronet' occurred in 1986 and 8th Hussars relieved the RCD from the task of guarding the gates to Bavaria.

Once 4 CMBG's deficiencies were identified and in the process of being redressed, the decision was taken to alter the operational role of the formation. Brigadier General Dangerfield was adamant that "reality had to be injected into an unrealistic planning environment." Given 4 CMBG's anti-armour capabilities and the fact that offensive action with mounted infantry was problematic given the lack of a MICV, the best employment for the Brigade was as a blocking force. The most vulnerable part of CENTAG lay on the inter-Corps boundary between VII(US) Corps and II(GE) Korps, a route known as Highway 14 which lay in front of Tactical Assembly Area SETTER, the location that 4 CMBG would deploy to in a state of heightened tension to act as part of the deterrent effort if war was likely.

There were several plans drawn up throughout the 1980s all of which revolved around the Highway 14 approach. These General Defence Plan (GDP) positions usually had two infantry battalions dug in with anti-tank weapons deployed in a layer. The 8th Hussars' Leopards were held back to operate as a counter-penetration and then exploitation force, unlike in the past where the tanks were parceled out to the infantry companies and battalions. The TOW launchers were in direct support of the infantry which allowed the full flexibility of the tanks to be employed. The Recce Squadron's Lynx's would form part of the screen and flank guard. The American Armored Cavalry and West German *Aufklarungsbattalion* units would handle the covering force battle while 4 CMBG prepared its base of operations.

The 4 CMBG blocking force was flexible enough to be employed anywhere in CENTAG if higher headquarters felt it necessary to do so but its most likely employment would have been between the two Corps. This was a militarily necessary and politically salient employment of Canada's armoured forces and went great lengths to redressing the poor state of affairs prevalent in the 1970s. It was evident during Ex 'Buntes Fahnlein'

(1986) that the new defensive mission on Highway 14 was well within 4 CMBG's capabilities. The 8th Hussars' Leopards beat off attack after attack on a piece of ground selected because of its similarity to the GDP positions. Other lower-level exercises held in the late 1980s as well as the huge Ex 'Certain Challenge' (1988) validated 4 CMBG's structure and the role of armour within it.

### Raised Expectations: 1986-1989

The Mulroney Government eventually tabled its defence policy in the 1987 Defence White Paper called Challenge and Commitment. The new policy was overdue by about three years which contributed to a series of problems which affected RCAC force development later in the decade. The most important aspects of Challenge and Commitment for the Army were the elimination of the CAST commitment and the assignment of 5e Groupement Brigade Mechanise du Canada to the NATO Central Region alongside 4 CMBG to form 1 Canadian Division. Conventional Defence was a new priority for Canada since the threat of nuclear war was directly linked to the failure of deterrence in Europe:

For the division to be fully effective in a two-brigade posture, a number of other improvements will be necessary. Over time, a large part of the Canada-based brigade's equipment and supplies must be pre-positioned in Europe. Even more important will be the acquisition of new tanks.

The armour world in NDHQ had not exactly been dormant. There were plans on the books to acquire two more squadrons of Leopard C-1s and deploy them to the planned Militia Training and Support Centres so that Militia personnel could learn the Leopard in lieu of the Cougars.

Two projects had been initiated back in 1984: one was to acquire a thermal sight for the Leopard and the other to explore combat improvements to handle future threats. Assistance Deputy Minister for Material, John Killick, suggested that for economic reasons the projects be merged into a new MBT acquisition project. Eventually the Tank Project Office stood up to examine the future of main battle tanks in the Army.

Three avenues were explored by the TPO: leasing an MBT, implementing a life extension programme for the Leopard C-1, and the acquisition of a new vehicle. Initially it looked like the lease option was viable. General Dynamics was enthusiastic, as was Krauss Maffei. However, the constraints of the Financial Act would not allow the

Canadian Government to rent capital equipment for longer than a year. The Government was unwilling to modify the Act to accommodate MBT leasing. In addition to the legal problems, the Mulroney Government wanted offsets and tank rental would not provide political capital.

The mid-life upgrade was then examined. The main problem was getting enough performance out of the 105mm gun to defeat future Soviet armours. The requirement were just not attainable with the 105mm L7, though some improvement could be made to the ammunition. This indicated that a 120mm gun was necessary. Could the 120mm Rhein Metall smooth bore be mounted in a Leopard C-1 turret? The Germans had put a 120mm gun in a cast turret with a thermal imaging sight, but it was seriously cramped and the ammo availability was less. The modifications were in fact 70% of the cost a new vehicle in any case.

The planned contenders were a new Canadian MBT were the M-1A2, the Leopard II, the Challenger 1, the Leclerc, and the Ariete. FMC wanted between 250 and 280 tanks, which would have been enough to re-equip all four armoured regiments and then some. The big battle was going to be between the M-1 and the Leopard II.

While the Tank Project Office wrestled with the bureaucratic quagmire, significant force development activities were being conducted within the Army itself with regards to the structure and role of armour on the battlefield. The new role for 5e GMBG demanded that 12 RBC develop some expertise with Main Battle Tanks. Consequently, one plan was to have 8th Hussars in West Germany drop from four to three Leopard tank squadrons. 12 RBC would man the fourth squadron in Lahr, take over the flyover squadron at Gagetown and the war stocked Leopards in Montreal and West Germany which would fill out two more, for a total of three 12 RBC tank squadrons and three 8th Hussars tank squadrons. This was supposed to tide everyone over until the new MBT arrived.

The development of the armoured force and its planned employment was affected by a future planning study and staff college model generally known as 'Corps 86.' There was some debate whether Corps 86 was supposed to be used as a framework for the Army's structure or whether it constituted an ideal state. Corps 86 consisted of, after full mobilization of the Militia, two mechanized infantry divisions, an armoured division, an independent brigade group, an artillery division, and an armoured cavalry brigade, along with associated Corps troops. In theory, the independent brigade group would already be in Europe (based on 4 CMBG) and the other units would follow during the mobilization period.

One of the structures to emerge from Corps 86 was a fifth armoured regiment. The Minister of National Defence authorized the establishment of the "1st Canadian Division Reconnaissance Regiment" in 1988. To meet the requirement for such an organization, several options were explored. Some thought was given to re-badging all four reconnaissance squadrons to Fort Garry Horse but leave them in place with their parent regiments. Another variant was to group the three Canada-based squadrons in Kingston, again as Fort Garry's. As for equipment, the planned M-1 or Leopard II buy would free up the Leopard C-1's. This new regiment would not spend time 'sneaking and peeking': it would fight for its information. LCol R.K. Smith was to be the CO. The regiment existed as a headquarters cell at 1 Canadian Division HQ from 1990 to 1992 where it participated in CPX's and GDP recces.

Another interesting concept which emerged in the Corps 86 process was the planned Chimera tank destroyer unit. The role of the Germany-based brigade was, simply put, to destroy as much enemy armour as possible should war occur. The tank-TOW team was considered effective, but some Canadian armour officers on course at Bovington in the UK determined that an anti-tank vehicle with a kinetic energy penetrator would be a useful supplement. Division planners agreed. Preliminary studies projected an Challenger or Leopard II MBT hull with a fixed 120 mm gun and the latest fire control system. As with TOW Under Armour, the Chimera would operate alongside the infantry and be used to free up tanks and thus bring more flexibility to the use of armour in the brigade group. Corps 86 structures saw a divisional anti-tank battalion made up of three squadrons of 16 Chimeras each. Chimera was eventually overshadowed by events and inter-arm politics and never built.

Militia revitalization also took place in the 1980s, in part to support Corps 86. Budgets were increased which in turn increased the ability of the units to conduct interesting and realistic training which again affected retention. The 1987 White Paper propounded the Total Force Concept in which composite Militia-regular units of varying ratios would be employed depending on the type and nature of the emergency. In wartime, the Militia was to augment the regular units, contribute to the defence of Canada and train replacements for overseas operations. Such a concept demanded that the training standards at all levels be equalized in that well-trained troopers and corporals were important, but the Militia officers had to understand how to operate at higher levels like battle group and brigade group, not just at the sub-unit level. Several Militia Training Support Centres (MTSCs) were to be established and the existing armoured vehicles pooled at them: Wainwright, Meaford, Valcartier [?] and Gagetown. The early 1970s

training concepts would be re-introduced. More efforts would be made to integrate Militia personnel and even sub-units with regular units in West Germany.

In terms of equipment, the Lynx was showing its age. In 1984, plans were made to pursue a replacement vehicle which would use a similar chassis to the planned M-113 APC replacement. Two projects were then advanced: the Armoured Infantry Fighting Vehicle (AIFV) (a projected tracked machine) and the Canadian Combat Vehicle (CCV-90) project which was to be wheeled. These projects were merged in 1986 into the Light Armoured Vehicle Project and 1700 vehicles of different variants were deemed necessary, one of which was a recce machine.

At the same time, the Tank Project Office examined how best to replace the Leopard C-1. The main problem was that the Government had allocated a chunk of money for the new MBT and told the Army that it could have as many tanks as it wanted as long as it fit within this envelope. The Army could not come up with an agreed upon number of vehicles and this produced delays since the Army could not go to the larger capital acquisition meetings and compete with the other services for priority funding. The best estimate was that between 225 and 250 tanks were needed. Throughout this process, according to deputy project director Colonel Howie Marsh, Deputy Minister Robert Fowler "made life very difficult for us" because he did not believe Canada needed main battle tanks, a view which harked back to the 1970s and the debates with the Trudeau Government over MBT acquisition.

The priorities were set by the Programme Control Board which was navy-dominated. The Navy was in the running for nuclear-powered submarines and didn't want financial competition. Then the boom was lowered. The Mulroney Government decided in 1989 that it could not fund continuing modernization of the Canadian Forces. This, combined with the Cold War 'warming trend' brought on by Soviet *glasnost* (openness) and *perestroika* (restructuring) and the signing of serious arms control reduction treaties, left the MBT and the recce vehicle programmes dangling. The MTSC's were not fully implemented and money for the Militia armoured units started to dry up again.