A Case Study: The Diefenbaker Government's Shifting NATO Commitments

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CHAPTER FIVE

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This case study considers the Diefenbaker government’s legacy with respect to Canadian defence policy and the onset of “new thinking” about nuclear weapons; it also asks why Prime Minister Diefenbaker and some of his advisers began to question whether Canada should take on a nuclear role. Two questions take centre stage: What beliefs about nuclear weapons and the nature of the threat led some high-level policy-makers to argue against acquiring nuclear warheads? What assumptions about the dangers of abandonment, entrapment, and nuclear deterrence incited some to oppose the nuclear commitments? Apparently, a new way of thinking – typical of “Critics” – significantly influenced decision-making and led to the Diefenbaker government’s shifting approach to nuclear weapons. Diefenbaker’s legacy was that he was the first Canadian prime minister, but certainly not the last, to take an anti-nuclear stand.

My purpose here is to explain when and to what extent the belief systems of Critics began to influence the defence decision-making process. This chapter retells the story of the Diefenbaker government’s controversial defence policy. The new findings are based largely on the recently declassified records of Cabinet; the newly opened personal papers of Prime Minister Diefenbaker; and the declassified documents now available from DND’s Directorate of History, such as the recently opened “Raymont Series.”

THE EARLY YEARS: FIRM COMMITMENTS
(JUNE 1957 – JUNE 1959)

John Diefenbaker’s predecessor, Louis St. Laurent, had delayed making defence-related decisions for fear of inciting public furor. Thus, it was left to Diefenbaker to decide whether Canada should
join NORAD, cancel the production of the Avro Arrow, and acquire nuclear weapons for the Canadian Forces.

The decision to integrate operational control of the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) with the United States Air Force (USAF) had been under discussion since December 1956. The chairman of the Canadian Chiefs of Staff, General Charles Foulkes, advised the newly appointed minister of National Defence, General George Peake, that this urgent matter be taken up by the Cabinet Defence Committee. However, Peake suspected that the prime minister would be disinclined to set up a Cabinet Defence Committee before the entire Cabinet was itself organized. On 24 July 1957, barely two weeks into the government’s mandate, Peake proceeded to discuss the matter privately with the prime minister, his long-time friend, returning shortly with the latter’s written endorsement. A press release announcing the establishment of the North American Air Defence (NORAD) agreement was quickly prepared. A Canadian deputy commander was appointed, and the matter was later briefly discussed in Cabinet. That appeared to be the end of the matter.¹

The decision to cancel the production of the Avro Arrow was taken with more circumspection, if only because of its domestic implications. The costs of producing a state-of-the-art interceptor almost entirely in Canada, combined with factors such as managerial inefficiency, limited demand, a short production line, and news of the successful Sputnik launch and ICBM tests, impelled Diefenbaker to announce, on 23 September 1958, the government’s decision to delay Arrow production pending further review. A sustained attempt to find foreign buyers yielded no takers. At that time, the other allies were concerned about the new ICBM threat, not about a Canadian-made interceptor to counter the bomber threat. The government was finally forced to shut down the A.V. Roe industry, putting tens of thousands of highly skilled employees out of work. For some, this signalled the end of Canada’s economic independence in more than just defence production.²

The decision to acquire nuclear warheads for the Canadian Forces as part of Canada’s commitment to NATO was initially accorded little importance. Indeed, in 1957, politicians were largely unconcerned about the extent of Canada’s non-nuclear commitments to NATO, and the question as to whether Canada should maintain a standby battalion overseas under NATO auspices was not even an issue. Not long after the Diefenbaker government assumed power, however, questions about whether to acquire nuclear warheads for the Canadian Forces committed to NATO began to assume a great deal of importance.
THE DECISION TO ACQUIRE NUCLEAR WEAPONS FOR THE CANADIAN FORCES

Diefenbaker attended his first meeting of the NATO heads of government in December 1957. At this meeting, the leaders of the Alliance finally endorsed NATO document MC 14/2, which called for development of the Alliance’s ability to defend its territories and seas as far forward as possible to maintain the integrity of the NATO area. The MC 14/2 counted on the use of nuclear weapons from the outset. The leaders also agreed to a complementary NATO document, the MC 48/2, authorizing the NATO Council to plan and make preparations on the assumption that nuclear weapons would be used from the outset. It was agreed that NATO would establish stocks of nuclear warheads for the defence of the Alliance.

Although Diefenbaker agreed to MC 14/2 and MC 48/2, he was very much preoccupied at the NATO meeting with the NORAD issue. The recent well-informed criticism of Lester Pearson, leader of the Opposition and former minister of External Affairs, was forcing Diefenbaker to tread carefully on the issue of NORAD’s relationship to NATO. His chief concern was to present the concept of a bilateral arrangement with integrated air forces in North America as an integral part of NATO’s multilateral military structure. Indeed, with General Pearlès’s and Foulkes’s support, he would have liked to declare NORAD a NATO command. But Diefenbaker, Pearlès, and Foulkes knew this would fly in the face of the American military’s reluctance to establish a multinational command in North America, with its attendant implications for American disclosure policy. Consequently, the prime minister had to choose his words carefully when speaking to the Heads of Government at the December 1957 NATO meeting. If his political sense had already warned him to question American proposals to stockpile nuclear weapons in Europe, these doubts were not aired. His comments on NORAD’s relationship to NATO were designed to avoid consternation, as was his endorsement of the concept of acquiring nuclear weapons. He reasoned, simply, that “the proposal to form a NATO stockpile of atomic warheads ... follows logically from the decision taken in 1954 to organize our forces in Europe on the understanding that they would be able to use such weapons to repel attacks.”

It is difficult to determine whether Diefenbaker fully understood that these words implied his agreement to the concept of nuclear weapons for Canadian air and land forces in Europe. On the one hand, as prime minister he was supposed to be informed about NATO’s total force requirements for planning purposes. On the other,
it is unlikely that he took any interest at this time in the implications of MC 14/2 and MC 48/2 for the structure of his own country’s forces. Preoccupied, and perhaps unprepared for his first NATO meeting, he seems to have had little understanding of what he was committing Canada to.

In terms of exact commitments, the “planning guidance” issued by SHAPE headquarters for 1958 recommended that Canada obtain the Honest John and Little John nuclear missile units, as well as nuclear-tipped fighter-bombers. The government eventually acquired an interlocking network of five expensive nuclear weapons systems. Ministers shortly began to discuss these different systems in secret Cabinet meetings. Before the public, however, they were careful to make it seem as if the burgeoning nuclear weapons issue primarily revolved around the question of obtaining nuclear warheads for the Bomarc missiles and the interceptors to be deployed on Canadian soil.

AN EXTENSIVE NETWORK OF NUCLEAR-CAPABLE WEAPONS SYSTEMS

The commitment to acquire Bomarc missiles

On 23 September 1958, at the same time as his announcement concerning the Avro Arrow, Diefenbaker announced that the government would acquire two squadrons of Bomarc missiles. The decision to acquire the Bomarcs appeared tainted from the beginning, however, for Diefenbaker misrepresented the grounds for their deployment. Indeed, he conveyed the impression that the Bomarc missiles would be acquired as a substitute for the obsolete Arrow interceptors. Although he may have been confused about the strategic purpose of the Bomarc and primarily concerned about alleviating the political impact of the Arrow cancellation, in hindsight he seemed deliberately disingenuous. Moreover, his speech mystified the public, contributing to the impression that the Bomarc was necessary because it was strategically superior to the Arrow.

The new Bomarc missile to which Diefenbaker had committed the country was designed as an anti-bomber projectile that could intercept Soviet bombers carrying conventional or nuclear warheads. Whereas the original version, the Bomarc A, carried a conventional warhead, the USAF-preferred newer model was armed with a nuclear warhead. The USAF maintained that the Bomarc A’s disadvantage was its conventional charge, which would need to be exploded in close proximity to an attacking aircraft. The Bomarc B’s nuclear explosion, on the other hand, could destroy enemy aircraft without
needing the same precision of interception. A second argument in support of the Bomarc B was that its warhead could destroy all the warheads on the Soviet carrier vehicle. Since the fear was that Soviet bombers would carry "dead man fuses" preset for certain altitudes, at which point they would detonate regardless of whether the bomber's crew was dead or alive, the USAF favoured the nuclear-tipped model. To counter arguments that the explosion from the Bomarc B would cause nuclear fallout over Canada, American experts pointed out that fallout levels would be insignificant compared to the nuclear fallout showered down on Canada by the release of a conventional bomb.\(^7\)

Whether Diefenbaker understood from the outset that the Bomarc would carry a nuclear, not a conventional warhead, remains unclear. Years later, he professed not to have understood the distinction between the two models, and only to have consented to the acquisition of the Bomarc A missile because it carried a conventional warhead.\(^8\) However, the Parliamentary record shows that, on 20 February 1959, the Prime Minister told the House of Commons:

> The full potential of these defensive weapons is achieved only when they are armed with nuclear warheads ... Problems connected with the arming of the Canadian Brigade in Europe with short range nuclear weapons for NATO defence tasks are also being studied. We are confident that we shall be able to reach formal agreement with the United States ... It will be of course some time before these weapons will be available for use by Canadian forces ... It is our intention to provide Canadian forces with modern and efficient weapons to enable them to fulfill their respective roles.\(^9\)

These words clearly seem to mean that Diefenbaker accepted that the Canadian Forces would have nuclear weapons. From his perspective in 1959, however, the chief advantage of the Bomarc stemmed not from its warhead but from its relative inexpensiveness. The Bomarc was cheaper to build and maintain than most aircraft. Instead of a pilot, it relied on a ground-based system of radars referred to as the SAGE system. State-of-the-art technology, it was nevertheless vulnerable to jamming and deceptive tactics. American strategists concluded that, for the sake of credible deterrence, the Bomarc should complement, not replace, manned interceptors. In 1959, Diefenbaker may not have fully understood this.\(^10\) Cabinet documents indicate, however, that by May 1960 ministers recognized that Canada was bound by agreement with the United States to construct two bases for nuclear-armed Bomarc missiles, although the threat of the manned bomber had rapidly decreased and the ministers were
advised that the threat would be negligible by 1965. The Cabinet's quandary about whether to acquire the Bomarc was exacerbated by news that US tests of Bomarc B missiles were unpromising and the cost of buying more interceptors prohibitive. Nevertheless, the consensus in Cabinet was that the Canadian commitment "could not be cancelled in present circumstances without precipitating a crisis in Canada's relations with the U.S."11

This fear prompted the Cabinet to continue to advocate construction of the Bomarc missile sites, at a cost of $15 million. Ironically, the American Congress held a heated debate several weeks later about whether or not to drop the entire Bomarc program owing to its cost and unpromising trials. It was a measure of the Canadian government's commitment to the missiles that Diefenbaker decided to visit President Eisenhower.12 In telegrams, the Canadian ambassador to Washington, Arnold Heeney, sought, too, to reassure officials that he was seeking the preservation of the Bomarc program: "We understand that USA officials are fully aware that approval by Congress of a curtailed Bomarc program aimed solely at providing for the installation of Bomarc 'B' in Canada would create difficulties for the Canadian government. It might be useful, however, if I were to reiterate this point at a suitable level in the State Department before the House-Senate conference convenes."13 Evidently, high-level representatives of the Canadian government pressed the United States to continue the project.14 The extent of the government's lobbying activities is portrayed by one American senator's comment that, "what with Boeing lobbyists and the Canadian Cabinet Ministers twisting our arms, we might have to spend more money on a thoroughly bad weapon."15 Although the United States Congress finally reinstated some money for the Bomarc program, it reduced the missile strength originally contemplated for the two Canadian bases by seventy-five percent.16 However, the decision as to whether or not to supply nuclear warheads for the missiles was still being debated in Cabinet two years later, during the Cuban missile crisis. In Peter Newman's words, "The fifty-six Bomarc missiles, guarding Canada's industrial heartland, pointed at the sky, supposedly alerted but in reality unarmed and totally useless."17

The Commitment to acquire CF-101 air defence interceptors

In the years between 1958 and 1961, the government also considered whether to replace 162 CF-100 air defence interceptors with 66 CF-101 Voodoo interceptors. Although the Voodoos carried bomber-destroying missiles armed with atomic warheads, they were also capable of
carrying conventional weapons. The USAF gave the nuclear-fitted Voo doos to the RCAF in July 1961 in exchange for a Canadian commitment to operate eleven Pinetree Radar stations. Although the ICBM was expected to become the principal intercontinental weapon by 1963, the military warned that the enemy would also use bombers to “augment the weight of attack for some time to come.” Therefore, high-level military representatives thought that a “family” of complementary weapons would be required, consisting of interceptor aircraft and surface-to-air missiles for area defence. In such a configuration, they wanted the Voo doos to provide “positive armed identification” and “fire-power back-up.”

It was reported that the Americans tried, unsuccessfully, to write into the Voodoo transferral agreement a clause that they would be armed, like the American interceptors with Genie nuclear warheads. The Cabinet vacillated on this issue for months; then in June 1961, the prime minister announced the decision to arm the 66 F-101B aircraft with conventional weapons only. Although the commitment was seldom mentioned again publicly, the Cabinet confronted the dilemma again in August 1961. The minister of National Defence advised that nuclear warheads were necessary for the interceptors so that they could destroy the nuclear weapons on attacking bombers. Furthermore, special storage sites would be needed at each interceptor base in Canada for the nuclear MB1 missiles. According to George Ignatieff, Diefenbaker’s adviser on defence and nuclear issues and assistant deputy minister of External Affairs beginning in November 1960, this belated request for nuclear warheads for the Voo doos enraged the prime minister. At one point he accused Chief of the Air Staff Hugh Campbell of “time and time again” deliberately misleading him about the bomber threat, and then the interceptor threat, so that he felt faced with a fait accompli.

The Cabinet’s decision about whether to acquire nuclear or conventional warheads for the CF-101B was further complicated by an American request to stockpile MB1 nuclear missiles for their interceptors at Goose Bay, Labrador, and Harmon Field, Newfoundland. The minister of National Defence suggested, and Cabinet agreed, that this matter be dealt with when questions relating to the nuclear weapons for Canadian Forces were settled. Diefenbaker, however, secretly decided to defer his consent to the American request as a lever to persuade the United States to grant joint control of use. When Diefenbaker explained his plan to Arnold Heeney, Canada’s ambassador to the United States, Heeney was unable to conceal his dismay, allowing that “this was an exceedingly difficult matter altogether.” Diefenbaker was undeterred. He agreed with Heeney that early
conclusion of an agreement with the United States would be desirable, but reminded him that there was a great deal of sentiment in Canada against nuclear weapons. As he explained in a rare moment of disclosure, ultimately Canadian Forces would need arming with nuclear weapons. Nevertheless, he preferred to defer his approval on the American MB1 storage issue until there were satisfactory arrangements for joint control over the use of Canadian nuclear weapons systems. In the end, the issue of nuclear warheads for the Canadian and American interceptors was left undecided until the last few months of the government’s tenure.

**The commitment to acquire nuclear depth charges and torpedoes**

Another rarely mentioned commitment was the government's decision to acquire nuclear depth charges and torpedoes for Canadian and American maritime forces in the North Atlantic. The intention was to drop them from aircraft or launch them in anti-submarine missiles from surface vessels. The anti-submarine missiles were also meant to destroy nuclear-missile-carrying submarines and to prevent the offshore bombing of Canada and the United States. Indeed, their small size and short range rendered them useful only for an anti-submarine role. The issue of supplying these warheads to Canadian maritime forces raised parallel questions. Of concern to the Cabinet was the plan to store them for American use at the American-leased naval base at Argentia, Newfoundland. Rarely, though, did the public hear about this arrangement.

**The commitment to obtain CF-104s**

Once the allies agreed to develop NATO’s ability to defend its territories and seas as far forward as possible, counting on the use of nuclear weapons, the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR), General Lauris Norstad, recommended that Canada convert four of its squadrons to one “strike” and three “attack fighter” bomber squadrons. At that time, both strike and attack fighter-bomber squadrons were capable of delivering nuclear weapons. It was then up to the Canadian government to decide whether to fulfill the request. In its highly-classified reply, the government stated that the recommendation was not entirely acceptable to Canada, but that discussions with SHAPE on the future of the RCAF No. 1 Canadian Air Division would take place once the present equipment became obsolete. General Norstad had to accept this reply. Again in 1958, SHAPE’s planning guidance recommended that Canada provide, by
1961, one nuclear-capable strike and one nuclear-capable attack fighter-bomber squadron of twenty-five aircraft each, to be increased to one strike and three attack fighter-bomber squadrons by 1962. The government replied that the decision was under study. Finally, in May 1959, Norstad proposed that Canada replace its F-86 Sabre squadrons with not one but eight strike-reconnaissance squadrons consisting of eighteen aircraft per squadron. The Canadian government accepted this recommendation and decided to prepare for the recommended strike-reconnaissance role by replacing the F-86 squadrons with the Lockheed F-104G aircraft. The F-104s were low-level jet bombers that could carry a one-megaton nuclear bomb and had a radius of action of some 500 miles. The RCAF calculated that Canada would then be able to contribute about twenty percent of NATO’s tactical nuclear force in Europe.

General Pearkes publicly announced the decision to acquire the F-104s (renamed the CF-104s or “Starfighters”) in July 1959, although the aircraft were not expected to come into service for two years. In his speech, Pearkes explained that the NATO military authorities had asked Canada to fulfill a nuclear strike-reconnaissance role, and that the views of General Norstad about the roles and equipment needed by the Canadian Air Division were an important consideration. In Pearkes’s view, “the decision now taken is in accordance with the recommendations of the supreme allied commander and re-emphasizes the fact that Canada, as a member of the NATO alliance, intends to continue to meet its agreed commitments as we have in the past, despite the heavy costs involved.”28 In a personal letter to General Norstad, Diefenbaker indicated that the general’s briefing to Cabinet had been “most helpful and of distinct benefit in making the decision.”29

NATO welcomed the Canadian government’s decision to acquire the CF-104s. Norstad replied to Diefenbaker shortly afterward, describing the “stimulating effect” in NATO circles that had followed the decision to re-equip:

Militarily, of course, the effect is very significant for it means that the Air Division, which enjoys a record second to none, will continue to play a leading part in deterring aggression and in defending the nations of the Alliance. More important, perhaps, the decision is a reaffirmation of solid support and backing of the principles of the NATO Treaty. Traditionally, Canada has demonstrated such support in several distinct ways; by the high calibre of her personnel, by the quality of her equipment, by the generosity of her aid to other nations, and by the leadership displayed in higher Councils. I feel that once again by the way in which this decision was
communicated to the Canadian Parliament and the NATO Council, accompanied as it was by a re-statement of Canadian policy, the cause of NATO has been tangibly strengthened and, by the same token, the prestige of Canada has been greatly enhanced. Coming as it did at a rather critical time, this fillip was all the more gratifying. It has had a noticeable effect on Council members and, I am certain, on the nations which they represent.10

In the end, however, this “fillip” did not have as stimulating an effect on Council members as Norstad had hoped. Although at the time Norstad wrote the letter no indication had emerged as to a lack of Canadian interest in obtaining nuclear warheads for the CF-104s, when the CF-104s came into operational service two years later they were deemed ineffective. Moreover, the decision as to whether to supply the Air Division with nuclear weapons had still not been made.

The commitment to acquire Lacrosse and Honest John missiles

The decision-making process surrounding the acquisition of nuclear-tipped surface-to-surface missiles for the Canadian Forces in Europe was similar to the process for the CF-104s. Cabinet simply had to approve two costly types of missile systems instead of one. In 1957, SACEUR recommended that Canada acquire the Honest John rocket in order to support the infantry brigade group in Europe. The Honest John surface-to-surface missile was a land-force atomic support requirement, with a range of approximately twenty miles and a nuclear warhead with a comparatively low yield. The government did not accept SACEUR’s recommendation, claiming it was considering providing a ground-to-ground missile suitable for the support of the land forces when such a missile became available. Norstad could only concur with this course. A year later, SHAPE recommended that, by 1958, Canada include an Honest John unit of two launchers in support of the Infantry Brigade Group and, by 1961, a Little John unit of two launchers. The government again rejected the recommendation, claiming that it was considering a ground-to-ground missile suitable for the support of the land forces. On 1 October 1958, on the recommendation of the minister of National Defence, Cabinet authorized the procurement of one battery of Lacrosse II missiles.

By 1960, however, it was apparent that the complexity of the Lacrosse system prevented its use in forward areas.31 The Cabinet Defence Committee therefore decided to approve, at an estimated cost of $2.8 million, the procurement of six Honest John launchers instead of the Lacrosse missile system.32 They chose the Honest John system because it was already in service – or about to be introduced
with other NATO forces at the brigade and divisional level. Most importantly, Canada’s reply to NATO’s 1960 Annual Review stated that the new Honest John launchers were capable of carrying either a conventional or nuclear warhead.33

The government intended to deploy the Honest John missiles early in 1962. Unit training on the Honest John battery took place, and, in Canada’s reply to NATO’s 1961 Annual Review, reference was made to the planned deployment of the missiles to Europe. As had happened with the CF-104s, however, the missiles did not come into operational service because of the debate in Cabinet about whether or not to acquire nuclear warheads for the launchers.

Firm commitments to acquire nuclear weapons

By 1960 it appeared that the government was firmly committed to acquiring nuclear weapons in order to fulfill its NATO commitments. The presence of the prime minister and his top military advisers at the NATO summit in December 1957, authorizing the establishment of nuclear stockpiles for the use of NATO forces in Europe; the prime minister’s announcements of 23 September 1958 and 20 February 1959, referring to the acquisition of Bomarc missiles; the announcements regarding the CF-101 and CF-104 interceptors for Canada and Europe; and the statements about the intended acquisition of the Lacrosse and Honest John nuclear missiles all indicated that the Diefenbaker government was firmly committed to the acquisition of nuclear weapons for Canadian Forces in both Europe and Canada.34 General Pearkes’s comments to the House of Commons in July 1959 reflected this decision:

Of course it is Government policy that Canadian troops should be armed as efficiently and as effectively as the troops with which they are cooperating ... On February 20 of this year ... the Prime Minister announced that as far as our troops in Europe were concerned and as far as our Air Force and troops in Canada were concerned we were entering into a series of negotiations with the United States in order to arrange the details of the storing of and equipping [of] our forces with nuclear weapons as and when they would be available and as and when we would have the weapons to launch them. By the time we get the Bomarc and by the time we get the Lacrosse over to the Brigade and by the time we get the new aircraft for the Air Division I am confident that these programs will be completed.35

It is apparent that the Diefenbaker government announced several defence commitments in this period that it did not fulfill. It is evident, too, that several decision-makers in the Department of External Affairs exerted considerable influence in order to reverse avowed government policy.
THE MIDDLE YEARS: WANING COMMITMENT
(JUNE 1959 TO DECEMBER 1962)

Diefenbaker appointed his good friend Howard Green as secretary of state for External Affairs in June 1959. Within a few weeks, Green had begun a disarmament campaign in External Affairs, focusing on the need to rid Canada and the world of nuclear weapons. Once it became clear that the minister was "attracted by the anti-nuclear viewpoint," Norman Robertson, under-secretary of state for External Affairs, gave him his support. Although Robertson already harboured doubts about the government's direction, under Green's predecessor he had felt he should be careful about voicing his concerns so as not to put disconcerting pressure on his minister. He also believed that it was sometimes necessary to be pragmatic and wait for the current of opinion to run its course. Once Green assumed control of the department, however, External's most senior mandarin was reassured that his dissenting beliefs could be more openly expressed. For other high-level decision-makers in the inner and outer core of decision-making, such as the ambassador to the United States Arnold Heeney and the principal secretary to the Cabinet Robert Bryce, the strength of the Green/Robertson coalition was alarming. As Heeney wrote in his diary: "H.G. [Howard Green] himself, though he continues to have the loyalty, even affection, of those who work with him, and who supports the dept. stoutly, is sadly miscast in his office. Nevertheless, his own attitudes and prejudices, in a curious way, combine with nar's [Norman Robertson's] cosmic anxieties, particularly w.[with] our defence relationships external and domestic to produce a negative force of great importance." Despite Heeney's assessment, Green inspired keen admiration among civil servants such as Robinson and Ignatieff, who held great affection for "the old guy" and for his guts and determination. Howard Green and Norman Robertson were largely responsible, then, for heading External Affairs in the direction of disarmament, toward more support for the United Nations, and, ultimately, onto a collision course with General Pearkes, Douglas Harkness, and the Department of National Defence.

Joint control

The first public sign of waning support for nuclear weapons among Cabinet ministers emerged in 1960. On 4 July the prime minister stated that there must be "Canadian control" over the nuclear weapons. Ten days later he amended this to "joint control" by Canada and the United States. By November 1960, Diefenbaker was referring to
Canada's sovereign right to exert joint control over the nuclear weapons "when and if" such weapons were required:

We have taken the stand that no decision will be required while progress towards disarmament continues. To do otherwise would be inconsistent. When and if such weapons are required we will have to take the responsibility... We have made it equally clear that we shall not in any event consider nuclear weapons until as a sovereign nation, we have quality of control - a joint control. In other words, this problem is not one requiring immediate decision. The course to be taken will be determined in light of what happens in connection with disarmament and in the light of events as they transpire and develop in the months ahead.41

Although "when and if" frequently appeared in public statements by Diefenbaker and others after July 1960, behind the scenes Diefenbaker still seemed to accept the necessity of ultimately arming the Canadian Forces with nuclear weapons. As he disclosed to Heeney at a meeting in November 1960, the problem was that there was a great deal of sentiment in Canada against nuclear weapons; in addition, the Liberal party was opposed, as was the CCF [Co-operative Commonwealth Federation]. Diefenbaker himself thought this a "totally unrealistic attitude," and believed the Canadian Forces would "ultimately" have to be armed with nuclear weapons once satisfactory arrangements for joint control of use were in place. It was at this November meeting that Diefenbaker told Heeney of his plan to use Canadian consent to the storage of American MB1 nuclear weapons as leverage in persuading the United States to grant joint control of use. Overall, Heeney gained the impression that Diefenbaker recognized the necessity of acquiring nuclear warheads, but that he planned to strike a hard bargain to obtain the desired joint control.42 However, Green, after talking with Heeney and Robertson immediately after this meeting, came to a different conclusion. He surmised that Diefenbaker's reference to joint control and the use of the MB1 "as a sanction for insistence thereon" was based on the prime minister's underlying assumption that "the US would never meet our requirement for participation in the decision to use the weapon." In Green's opinion, Diefenbaker knew the United States would "never give us satisfaction on joint control."43

The Irish resolution

A few weeks after these discussions, Cabinet met to discuss the implications of "the Irish resolution." The declassified records of this
meeting in December 1960 reveal that the ministers had already recognized the quandary concerning their NATO commitments. Briefly, the government’s stand on the disarmament resolutions it had sponsored at the UN, particularly the Irish resolution, greatly concerned the Cabinet. The Irish resolution was calling for temporary and voluntary restraints on the spread of nuclear weapons. Howard Green explained to Cabinet that no country would vote against the Irish resolution; all would either vote in favour or abstain. To date, he noted, the United States had persuaded the United Kingdom and some other NATO countries to abstain. Although the United States was not pressing Canada to abstain, Green believed that a Canadian vote in favour of the Irish resolution would split the country from its NATO partners. Green was in an impossible position. As a co-sponsor of the resolution on disarmament, he thought Canada should not abstain. On the other hand, the secretary-general of NATO was attacking the resolution in the NATO Council because NATO was proposing that a unified deterrent be put in place under NATO’s control. In effect, Green worried that he might have to speak out against the secretary-general in the NATO Council.44

In their discussion, “some ministers” pointed out that to vote in favour of the Irish resolution would make it impossible to hold discussions with the United States on the acquisition of nuclear weapons for all of Canada’s proposed systems.45 Furthermore, after supporting NATO’s position in 1957 on the stockpiling of nuclear weapons in Europe and the placing of intermediate-range ballistic missiles at SACEUR’s disposal, the government “could hardly turn around now” and vote for the Irish resolution. The concern was that the public would feel that the government had washed its hands of nuclear weapons, and the next step would be strong criticism of the government for spending so much money on carriers for these weapons. Indeed, some ministers feared “the government would be acutely embarrassed by having very expensive but virtually useless equipment on its hands.”46

During their discussion, Diefenbaker argued that the government was bound by the agreement reached at the meeting of the NATO Heads of Government. He declared that the Canadian delegation to the upcoming NATO meeting should recognize that the government was “morally bound” by the 1957 decision, and discussions should continue with the United States on acquiring the weapons and warheads. As for disarmament, Diefenbaker stated that he personally did not have much hope for success in this field. While disarmament was a laudable purpose, he said, he was afraid the Conservative party would be dubbed “the disarmament party.”47 Diefenbaker planned to
reconcile Green's disarmament stance at the UN with his own stand on nuclear weapons by, first, insisting that Cabinet members refrain from publicly airing their conflicting opinions. In future, he declared, only he would make statements on policy regarding nuclear weapons, and these statements would be made as far as possible in Parliament. If other ministers had to refer to Canadian policy, he added, they should quote the prime minister or use his wording. As for the Irish resolution, Diefenbaker asked that it be modified to clarify that, if there was no progress in the immediate future on preventing the spread of nuclear weapons, Canada would review its position. He noted, however, that this did not mean that Canada would slow down the procurement of carriers for nuclear weapons; nor did it rule out discussions, when the time was ripe, on the acquisition of warheads. Finally, he warned his colleagues, without explaining exactly what he meant, that the government would only acquire nuclear weapons if the United States accepted the principle of "joint control." 48

In accordance with the prime minister's wishes, the Cabinet instructed Green to vote in favour of the Irish resolution but with a caveat. Green was to add the following clause to the resolution: "If, however, there is no significant progress in this field in the immediate future we will reconsider our position on the temporary measures which are proposed in this resolution." 49 In effect, Diefenbaker had reconciled the Cabinet's conflicting points of view by suggesting policies based on delay and prevarication.

First meeting with Kennedy and growing confusion about joint control

John Kennedy's political victory in the United States initially dismayed the prime minister for he greatly valued his friendship with Dwight Eisenhower and had doubts about his brash successor. Nevertheless, Diefenbaker’s first meeting with Kennedy in February 1961 was singularly successful. The prime minister proudly reported to Cabinet that he had insisted negotiations continue regarding "joint custody and control and joint authority over use" of the nuclear weapons to be stored at Harmon Field and Goose Bay. As for the American submarine base at Argentia, he claimed he had told Kennedy that Canada would require joint custody but that NATO would determine the actual use of the nuclear weapons. Diefenbaker also reported that he had indicated to Kennedy that, as long as serious disarmament negotiations continued, Canada did not propose to determine whether to accept nuclear weapons for the Bomarc bases or the Canadian interceptors. In the event that such weapons were accepted by Canada, however, "joint custody and joint control" would be required. According to Diefenbaker, the president had
raised no objections, and only asked whether the same sort of “two-key” arrangement as the United Kingdom had would be satisfactory. Diefenbaker said it would, and both leaders concluded that negotiations for the necessary agreements could now continue based on a “package deal.”

Satisfied with Diefenbaker’s report of the arrangements, Cabinet let the matter lie for more than six months. By October 1961, however, Diefenbaker had again made several contradictory statements regarding the spread of nuclear weapons and the issue of joint control. He told journalists and petitioners against nuclear weapons that his government had accepted the “Kennedy declaration” that there should be no extension of the “nuclear club.” In terms of the declaration’s implications, however, he stated that “the Bomarc is in the position it has always been in — also the F-104 — that they are equipped so that if nuclear warheads become necessary to be used in the event of war they would have the launch capacity.” In response to questions about how Canada would obtain nuclear warheads for these systems in the event of an attack, Diefenbaker seemed either not to know or to be deliberately disingenuous. As he put it, “I am not telling you something that is a matter of security. I am simply telling you that if there is no extension of the nuclear club then all other answers are available.”

Was Diefenbaker opposed to the acquisition of nuclear weapons in 1961? His comments at the time indicate that he was undecided and confused. He seemed to believe that Canada could abide by the principle of not spreading nuclear weapons if it acquired defensive, rather than offensive, weapons and if the warheads were neither manufactured nor tested in Canada. He was also confused about whether Canada’s acquisition of nuclear weapons would extend the nuclear club, inasmuch as Canada was a member of NATO, which already had nuclear weapons. Nevertheless, during the tense weeks of the Berlin crisis in August 1961, the prime minister seemed to decide in favour of nuclear warheads:

There are some in Canada who advocate we should withdraw from NATO in the event that nuclear weapons are made available for the possession and control of NATO. I believe that to follow that course would be dangerous to the survival of the forces of NATO that are there now, should war begin. And it would be dangerous for the survival of freedom itself ... Would you in 1961, faced by the overwhelming power of Soviet might in East Germany close to West Berlin with large divisions fully armed, would you place in the hands of those who guard the portals of freedom nothing but bows and arrows? They would stand against overwhelming power — it is as simple as that.
Diefenbaker was not alone during this time, either in his insistence on joint control or in his confusion about what was meant by the spread of nuclear weapons and the expansion of the nuclear club. Confusion was also apparent in Cabinet. At a Cabinet meeting in August 1961, some ministers expressed concern that "there was no move underway in NATO to work out "a system of joint control" over nuclear weapons. At the time, control over the American nuclear weapons deployed in the United States, Turkey, Greece, and Italy was solely in the hands of the United States. And the United Kingdom controlled its own, much smaller arsenal. As the allies preferred this system, some ministers in Ottawa feared that Canada's insistence on some form of joint control would fly in the face of the arrangements made for the nuclear weapons stored in Turkey, Greece, and Italy. They wondered, furthermore, whether the question of German acquisition of nuclear weapons would be brought to the forefront if Canada acquired nuclear weapons under joint control. In these ministers' opinion, the United States did not want Germany to have nuclear weapons because the Soviet Union, which "had legitimate reason to fear Germany, might then strike the first blow." Consequently, they were concerned that Canada would break "more than new ground" if the principle of joint control were negotiated.\(^5\)

During Cabinet debates, ministers seemed to split into three different sets of opinion concerning nuclear commitments. Some argued that Canada was obliged to contribute to the defence of the American deterrent, not only because of Canada's location but because of Canada's involvement in NORAD and in the other collective defence arrangements of the Western Alliance. In their view, "the defence of Canada and the United States was inseparable and it was not acceptable that the United States' forces under CINCNORAD [the Commander-in-Chief NORAD] were armed with nuclear weapons and the Canadian forces were not."\(^6\) Other ministers referred to the crisis over Berlin and similar tense international situations that could only be exacerbated if Canada acquired nuclear weapons. In the middle, either unwilling or unable to come to a decision, was the prime minister. If Canada acquired nuclear weapons, he argued, it was essential that it be only on the basis of "joint control," amounting to a power of veto over their use. According to Diefenbaker, even the nuclear weapons to be stored by the United States on American-leased bases in Canada would have to be under joint control, or this would "be an abandonment of responsibility on the part of Canada."\(^7\)

Although Diefenbaker and others often referred to the principle of joint control, no one seemed to understand what it really meant. Ministers fretted over NATO's lack of movement in working out "a
new system of joint control" and the implications of Canadian joint control for a possible German acquisition of nuclear weapons. Dave McIntosh, a newspaper reporter who followed the defence debate and had a firm grasp of defence concepts, put forward the most plausible explanation: "What it boils down to is this: the United States president could authorize use of nuclear weapons in Canada but Canada would determine whether these weapons would be fired. Canada by itself could not order the firing of a nuclear warhead but it could veto any such firing approved by the US. This is known as the 'two-key' system and has applied for years to American nuclear warheads stored in Britain." 58

At the behest of Green and Robertson, the Cabinet inquired in 1961 and 1962 into the possibility of storing nuclear warheads in the United States, which would then be flown to Canada and installed in launching systems in the event of an emergency. The chairman of the Canadian Chiefs of Staff, Air Marshal Frank Miller, noted the suggestion "with some concern." "This is not regarded as an acceptable military solution," he warned. 59 However, the idea was not abandoned. Cabinet members such as Diefenbaker and Green continued to refer to the possibility of storing "missing parts" for the nuclear weapons in the United States. It was not until after the Cuban missile crisis in December 1962 that Howard Green and Douglas Harkness were informed by Dean Rusk and Robert McNamara that the missing part proposal was considered impracticable by the United States government. 60

Throughout this confusing period – October 1961 to October 1962 – ministers were aware that the issue could have serious repercussions in Parliament. Nevertheless, the expected admonitions and questions failed to materialize. When Minister of National Defence George Pearkes retired, Diefenbaker replaced him in November 1961 with Douglas Harkness. Harkness's chief of staff warned that an article by Professor Peyton Lyon criticizing Diefenbaker for clouding the nuclear issue could have serious repercussions for him in Parliament, but nothing ever materialized. 61 Indeed, nuclear weapons were not a major issue during the June 1962 election campaign, although by that time Diefenbaker seemed to support their acquisition. He also seemed to oppose expansion of the family of nuclear powers, and to advocate a distinctly different version of joint control. In truth, by baffling everyone, he was able to avoid the issue.

It was around the spring of 1962 that Diefenbaker's closest advisers began to worry about the prime minister's preoccupation with burgeoning anti-American sentiment in Canada and his own growing antipathy toward President Kennedy. Before Eisenhower stepped
down, Diefenbaker had already begun to refer to the "avalanche of anti-Americanism" in Canada. According to Heeney's diary in March 1962:

The first major evidence of this change was his expression of concern to me late last summer [1961] ... as to the alarming [rise] in anti-US sentiment among Canadians. At that time he dissociated himself from this sentiment and referred to it as a grave problem with which he had to deal. On a number of occasions since - in person and over the telephone - he has given me the impression increasingly that he has little confidence in the USA Admin., that he resents their failure to take effective account of Canadian interest - and that his feeling for the President has changed to one of, yes, resentment, as well as lack of confidence ...  

The development that concerned Diefenbaker's advisers most, however, was the prime minister's reference to a paper Kennedy inadvertently left behind after their April 1962 meeting. The memo, entitled "What We Want from Ottawa Trip," contained "instructions" from Walt Rostow to the president about American objectives regarding the Organization of American States (OAS) and foreign aid. Although the objectives it recommended were relatively innocuous, the memo was punctuated by references to "pushing" Canada. Its language incensed the prime minister, and he decided to hold onto it. But it was Diefenbaker's demeanour concerning this incident that so alarmed Arnold Heeney and Basil Robinson. The prime minister was no longer concerned about the rising anti-American sentiment in Canada - he embodied it.

The Cuban missile crisis

On 22 October 1962, the former American ambassador to Canada, Livingston Merchant, arrived with an important message for the Prime Minister. At a meeting with Diefenbaker, Green, and Harkness, unaccompanied by attending officials, Merchant spoke about the intelligence situation in Cuba and the action contemplated by the American government. A couple of hours later, Kennedy addressed the American people about the gravity of the threat from Cuban missile installations. He spoke of a peril which "menaced most of the major cities in the Western Hemisphere, ranging as far north as Hudson's Bay, Canada and as far south as Lima, Peru." Emphasizing that Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko had lied to him about Soviet assistance to Cuba, he announced a strict quarantine of all offensive military equipment under shipment to Cuba. There was no doubt that the American armed forces were preparing for any eventuality.
An hour after the television address, the chairman of the Chiefs of Staff asked the minister of National Defence for permission to put the Canadian Forces on a state of alert equivalent to that of the American forces. Harkness agreed to the Air Chief Marshal’s request, but said he needed to consult with the prime minister first. Diefenbaker, who balked at alerting the Canadian Forces, suggested that such a move required the entire Cabinet’s approval. That evening, in an address to a jittery Parliament, Diefenbaker appealed for calm. He cast doubt on the deductions arrived at from American aerial photographs of the missile sites in Cuba, and recommended that a group of non-aligned nations from the UN Disarmament Committee make an on-site inspection in Cuba to ascertain the facts. His public demeanour throughly downplayed the sense of crisis.65

At the emergency Cabinet meeting the following day, Harkness reiterated President Kennedy’s request that the Canadian Forces go on alert. Diefenbaker and Green urged that Canada reject the request. Unable to come to any decision after much divisive argument, the Cabinet met again, on 24 October. After yet another inconclusive meeting, Diefenbaker finally consented to Harkness’s request to alert the forces. Unbeknownst to the prime minister, however, Harkness had secretly alerted the Canadian Forces forty hours previously. Within an hour of President Kennedy’s television speech, the defence minister had gone ahead and put the Canadian Forces on alert without Diefenbaker’s approval.68 Whether Harkness was right to take matters into his own hands remains a matter of debate, but journalists criticized the government severely for purchasing $700 million worth of nuclear weapons that turned out to be utterly ineffective as a deterrent because it was known they lacked their necessary warheads.67

Like many crises, the Cuban missile crisis delineated opinion, erased ambiguity, and hardened soft-liners. Some sections of the Cabinet Conclusions continue to be excised, and the secretary to the Cabinet did not keep a record of all the discussions. But Harkness wrote a detailed diary describing the Cabinet debate shortly afterward.68 Both the existing Cabinet records and Harkness’s account corroborate that there were at least two opposing opinions in Cabinet.

One group of ministers, led by Harkness and supported by Associate Defence Minister Pierre Sevigny and Minister of Veterans Affairs George Hees, argued that, as partners in defence, Canada should put the Canadian component of NORAD in readiness. They regarded the situation as “perilous,” believed that “Canadians would not panic” and thought “Russia would, in any case, not expect Canada to do anything else.” Furthermore, they said, “not to move in pace with the American forces would embarrass Canadian troops.”69
Another coalition, led by Diefenbaker and supported by Green, argued that Canada should not appear to be "stampeded," as this would only intensify the excitement and increase the pressures. In their view, "Canada was not automatically embroiled any time the United States was. Practically, however, Canada was." They argued that there were great dangers in rushing in at this time. "Quick action brought quick judgement," they warned, and "it would be dangerous to have the present moves interpreted as offensive rather than defensive action." Furthermore, in their view, there were "domestic political overtones in the US decision," and Canada should appear to be behaving normally and deliberately.\textsuperscript{70}

The only issue the entire Cabinet could agree on was the need to consult with the other NATO allies. Yet apparently the British, French, and West German governments had pledged their full support to the United States when consulted by Dean Acheson, and the issue was discussed at the NATO Council meeting.\textsuperscript{71} It was only after the news that the US Strategic Air Command and some American naval forces had gone to the Defcon 2 alert level, which meant "immediate enemy attack expected," that Diefenbaker ruefully told Harkness, "Oh, well, all right, go ahead ... go ahead."\textsuperscript{72}

As Diefenbaker admitted, "The Cuban crisis brought a new urgency to the defence debate in Cabinet, in Parliament, and in the country as a whole."\textsuperscript{73} Military personnel were angry that, when alert status was ordered, the newly acquired nuclear weapon systems lacked warheads. "No one wants a nuclear war," wrote one brigadier-general to Diefenbaker, "but the best way to ensure peace under present conditions is to be strong. If proof is necessary the Cuban situation is an example."\textsuperscript{74} Others were frightened that the world had narrowly avoided nuclear war, yet the Canadian government was still intent on acquiring nuclear warheads for its weapons systems. And some interpreted the Cuban crisis as evidence that, in an emergency, nuclear warheads could not be acquired quickly, if only because a hasty call by Canada for nuclear arms could rapidly unhang a tense world situation.\textsuperscript{75} In the wake of the Cuban missile crisis, the entire issue of nuclear warheads for the Canadian Forces in Canada and Europe suddenly assumed a very high profile.\textsuperscript{76}

Diefenbaker reacted to the complaints and the uproar by deciding to proceed with secret negotiations for "joint control" over the nuclear warheads. He insisted, however, that he was only willing to continue the discussions on the understanding that if there were any leak concerning the negotiations, they would stop forthwith. As for joint control, the prime minister still believed it was possible; indeed, only if it were proven that joint control with the United States was impossible
would he be willing to consider other alternatives. Also during this Cabinet meeting, ministers began to reconsider whether or not to hold warheads for the Bomars and the CF-101s in the United States, to be brought into Canada on request by the Canadian government if an emergency occurred or NORAD was alerted. Over the next few weeks, Diefenbaker began to refer to this alternative as “the missing part approach.” To his mind, the missing part approach called for an agreement with the United States whereby nuclear warheads would not be physically located on Canadian soil in peacetime, but could be rapidly acquired from the United States should war break out. According to Diefenbaker, the missing part approach would be reconcilable with all the stated policies of his government, and prove a satisfactory solution to the problem of North American defence.

Another option the Cabinet considered in the wake of the Cuban crisis was to negotiate the storage of weapons for the Canadian Forces in Europe on bases under NATO command. On 30 October the Cabinet agreed to pursue negotiations with the United States, under which nuclear warheads would be held in storage for, and made available to, Canadian Forces in Europe under NATO command for use in CF-104 aircraft and Honest John rockets. Harkness and Green agreed to the prime minister’s request that they discuss with the American chargé d’affaires the possible implementation of this alternative as well as the missing parts approach.

American reaction was strongly disapproving. According to one high-level source, the frustration of American authorities with Canada became acute in December 1962, once US Secretary of Defence Robert McNamara and Secretary of State Dean Rusk met Harkness and Green. McNamara and Rusk decided there would be no further satisfactory progress toward Canadian acceptance of nuclear weapons. Whereas the American authorities were entirely dissatisfied with Canada’s delays in fulfilling its NATO and NORAD commitments, Green’s report to Parliament about the NATO meeting was reassuring: “We were very pleased to have it pointed out, not by ourselves but by the military authorities and the United States, that Canada had lived up to her commitments and, for example, that our brigade was the only combat-ready unit in the NATO forces other than those of the United States. In spite of rumours which I have seen in the press at home since my return, there was not a word of criticism of Canada’s military efforts in NATO.” Apparently, the European allies refrained from criticizing Canada’s overall military effort because Canada was the only member of the Alliance, besides the United States, which had met all its conventional military commitments to Europe. With little media attention, the government had
strengthened its conventional forces in Europe the year before at the time of the Berlin crisis.\textsuperscript{89} Although American defence officials were acutely frustrated by the endless delays in negotiations to obtain nuclear warheads, the European allies were satisfied with Canada's conventional contribution. Green felt justified in asserting that "accusations that we are the bad boys of NATO or have let the side down are completely false ... I have seldom encountered as much friendliness toward Canada as at this meeting.\textsuperscript{84}"

**THE FINAL YEAR: LACK OF COMMITMENT**

**JANUARY 1963 TO APRIL 1963**

A succession of events in January 1963 led to the fall of the government. The entire issue of nuclear commitments came to the fore again when about-to-retire SACEUR General Norstad visited Ottawa on 3 January. Speaking frankly, he told journalists that, until the Canadian government acquired nuclear warheads for the Canadian air division and army brigade group in Germany, it would not fulfill its NATO commitments. Based on arrangements made at the NATO meeting in 1957, he explained, a stockpile of atomic weapons had been developed in Europe to meet the requirements of NATO forces. Under the atomic energy law of the United States, however, the president retained authority, custody, and control over these warheads and could only make them available to a NATO ally that had signed a bilateral agreement. Such agreements had been reached between the United States and essentially all NATO countries, and did not imply any expansion of "the nuclear club." Until a bilateral agreement with the United States was signed, Norstad stated, Canadian soldiers and airforce crews could not be given information enabling them to train for up to six months in the use of the nuclear weapons. Norstad concluded his remarks by pointing out that Canada was one of two, perhaps three, countries that had done its best in meeting its commitments, but "it's an obligation on every country in the alliance to contribute what they can contribute, and I think this is an obligation which the Canadians have accepted.\textsuperscript{85}"

Lester Pearson took the opportunity to deplore again a situation whereby, having accepted the NATO commitments, the government was neither fulfilling nor changing them. Government representatives continued to defend the "joint control" and "missing part" approaches, and Green continued to maintain that Canada was living up to its NATO commitments. Then on 9 January, Pearson announced a volte-face in Liberal nuclear policy. The government, he stated, had an obligation to fulfill its commitments to acquire nuclear warheads for all the weapons systems it had acquired at great expense. Moreover,
he promised that, as prime minister, he would first fulfill those commitments and afterward negotiate for disarmament of the weapons systems.\textsuperscript{86}

Pearson’s new resolve to support the acquisition of nuclear warheads profoundly disturbed Diefenbaker, and he elected to make a keynote policy address to the House of Commons on 25 January 1963. In his speech, Diefenbaker claimed he had realized at a recent meeting in Nassau with President Kennedy and Prime Minister Macmillan that new concepts were planned for the NATO forces: “I was in Nassau. I formed certain ideas. I read the communiqué that was issued there and I came to certain conclusions based on that communiqué ... that nuclear war is indivisible, that there should be no further development of new nuclear power anywhere in the world, that nuclear weapons as a universal deterrent are a dangerous solution.” Diefenbaker also declared that the current state of disarmament negotiations meant that the world was entering a new era in which NATO would rely on a multilateral nuclear force. Consequently, “all our planning to date, or most of it, will be of little or no consequence.” Specifically referring to the Bomarc missile, he hinted that it would be scrapped. “Every now and then some new white hope of rocketry goes into the scrap pile ... [W]ho would have guessed three years ago that today the fear would be an attack with intercontinental missiles?” As for the nuclear weapons systems in Europe, he pointed out that, “all the nations made mistakes, $3 billions worth of mistakes and more, up to 1960, but the fact that a mistake may have been made, or may not have been made, should not be a basis for the continuation of a policy just because to admit it would be wrong.”\textsuperscript{87}

To everyone’s surprise, Harkness issued a press release shortly after the speech to clarify Diefenbaker’s remarks. He explained that, although the speech contained “nearly all the varying theories and ideas which have been put forward on nuclear arms,” the prime minister’s remarks indicated that he did intend to equip certain weapon systems with nuclear arms. After vigorous argument in Cabinet, however, Harkness realized that Diefenbaker would not support his stand and submitted his resignation.\textsuperscript{88}

The resignation of the minister of National Defence was accompanied by yet another embarrassing incident. The US State Department issued a press release on 30 January 1963 directly contradicting Diefenbaker’s speech. The release stated that the agreement at Nassau raised “no question of the appropriateness of nuclear weapons for Canadian Forces in fulfilling their NATO or NORAD obligations.” It also contradicted Diefenbaker’s assertion that Canada could secure nuclear weapons if circumstances made such a course necessary: “The Canadian government has not yet proposed any arrangement sufficiently
practical to contribute effectively to North American defense." Finally, the release affirmed that the bomber threat would remain a significant element in the Soviet strike force for the rest of the decade. Canada needed, therefore, to fulfill its obligations to acquire nuclear weapons for North American defence.99

The press release made glaringly apparent the displeasure of American authorities over Canada’s defence policy. Although it was rumoured that Kennedy’s national security adviser, McGeorge Bundy, had released it against the president’s better judgement, Diefenbaker later attributed the release to Kennedy’s machinations to remove him from power. According to the prime minister, “President Kennedy concluded that he could fix things so that he would no longer be obliged to deal with me or my government.”90 Preoccupied with fears about American intentions, Diefenbaker refused to acknowledge the mounting frustration of the media and the population with his equivocating stand on Canada’s nuclear commitments. There followed a debate in Parliament in which the Liberals and the ccf both attacked the government for failing to issue a clear statement respecting Canada’s defence policy. Finally, on 5 February 1963, a motion of non-confidence in the government was carried, Parliament was dissolved, and an election was called for 8 April 1963.

The election campaign

During the election campaign, Diefenbaker crusaded against the acquisition of nuclear warheads. In speeches across the country, he referred continuously to the Liberal party’s intention to make Canada a “nuclear dump,”91 and to an old press release concerning the conventional warhead on the Bomarc A as proof that his government had definitely not committed Canada to a nuclear role.92 Once he received Robert McNamara’s testimony to the United States House of Representatives regarding the Bomarc sites, Diefenbaker’s resolve to oppose nuclear weapons was even more apparent. In his testimony, McNamara admitted the Bomarc sites were “soft” and offered practically no protection from Soviet bomber attack. He acknowledged that, at the very least, they would “cause the Soviets to target missiles against them and thereby increase their missile requirement or draw missiles onto these Bomarc targets that would otherwise be available for other targets.”93 Diefenbaker reacted to McNamara’s testimony with: “Happy days are here again. McNamara’s really put the skids under Pearson. This is a knockout blow.” He continued: “The Liberal party would have us put nuclear warheads on something that’s hardly worth scrapping. What’s it for? To attract the fire of intercontinental missiles. Never, never, never,
never has there been a revelation equal to this. The whole bottom fell out of the Liberal program today. The Liberal policy is to make Canada a decoy for intercontinental missiles."94 But his efforts had little effect on Canadian voting preferences. The Liberal party took enough seats to form a minority government under Lester Pearson. A few months later, after reaching a quick agreement with the United States, Pearson replaced the sand ballast in the missile systems with nuclear warheads.95

**WHO WERE THE INFLUENTIAL DECISION-MAKERS?**

*The centre*

A close reading of the primary and secondary documents relating to the Diefenbaker government’s period in office indicates that between 1957 and 1963 only a few individuals exerted a strong influence on the defence policy-making process. Between June 1957 and April 1963, Prime Minister John Diefenbaker, Minister of National Defence George Pearkes and his successor Douglas Harkness, and Minister of External Affairs Howard Green dominated the decision-making process. Indeed, these four were effectively at the centre of policy-making. They had the greatest opportunity to act on their preferences and fears. It was their attitudes, concerns, and beliefs that most affected the outcomes of decision-making processes regarding Canadian policy toward the Alliance. They were the ones who wielded the most power to commit the government, along with the ability to prevent other decision-makers from reversing that commitment. As prime minister, Diefenbaker was very influential throughout the period from June 1957 to April 1963. As minister of National Defence from June 1957 to October 1961, General George Pearkes also wielded a great deal of influence. Of the two ministers of National Defence, however, his successor Douglas Harkness had a greater opportunity to dominate the decision-making process. Harkness influenced defence policy-making from November 1961 until his resignation in January 1963. Finally, as minister of External Affairs from June 1959 to April 1963, Howard Green had a considerable impact on defence decision-making. The study of their beliefs and assumptions is therefore key to illuminating the reasons for the government’s contrasting commitments to NATO.98

*The inner and outer core*

At different times, an inner core and outer core of decision-makers also wielded considerable influence. The inner core seems to have
consisted of Under-Secretary of External Affairs Norman Robertson, Ambassador to Washington Arnold Heeney, and Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff General Charles Foulkes. In the outer core, exercising less influence, were Minister of External Affairs Sidney Smith; Associate Defence Minister Pierre Sevigny; Chief of the Air Staff Hugh Campbell; Air Chief Marshal Frank Miller; as well as Assistant Deputy Minister of External Affairs and Diefenbaker’s special adviser on defence, George Ignatieff.

The leader of the Opposition, Lester Pearson; the ambassador to the UN, General E.L.M. Burns; Heeney’s successor to the post of ambassador in 1962, Charles Ritchie; Minister of Trade and Commerce George Hees; Minister of Veterans’ Affairs Gordon Churchill; the first under-secretary of External Affairs Jules Leger; and Diefenbaker’s External affairs liaison Basil Robinson were at the periphery. On the margins were those who occasionally influenced the course of events, people such as Pearson’s external affairs critic Paul Hellyer; the Canadian ambassador to West Germany, Escott Reid; and Senator William Brunt. Finally, the marginalized, who were largely excluded from directly taking part in the decision-making process, included representatives of anti-nuclear organizations such as the Voice of Women and the leader of the ccf, Tommy Douglas.

Primary documents and most of the secondary literature confirm that certain figures – Diefenbaker, Harkness, Green, and, to a slightly lesser extent, Pearson – dominated the defence decision-making process during this time period and that, at different times, an inner and outer core also wielded considerable influence. The following chapters analyse these decision-makers’ underlying beliefs and assumptions. They also establish the dynamic generated by the presence of two competing belief systems – that of the Defenders and the Critics – as an important reason for the variation in the government’s nuclear commitments.