

ANTI-NUCLEAR HOME GUARD CALL UP

HUNDREDS of volunteers have answered the Royal Air Force's call for civilians to help guard bases against nuclear protesters, says the Ministry of Defence.

RAF Brampton in Huntingdonshire is seeking 100 men and women aged 17-55 to turn out in times of emergency."

They will receive tax free allowances at the end of each year in top of a daily rate of pay according to rank. Free uniforms will be issued.

If the scheme is successful, the force will be expanded eventually to 2,000 strong. Other areas looking for recruits are Athan, South Wales, High Wycombe and RAF Lyneham Wiltshire.

Huntingdon residents have been asked to Defence Minister, George Younger.

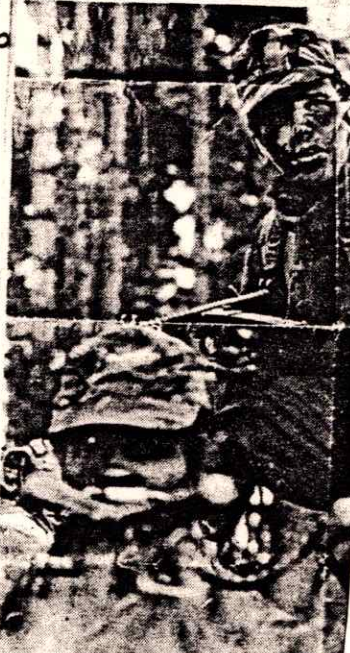
Mrs. Christine Saltmarsh, who lives near the American base USAF Alconbury, has asked for details of how the recruits will be weapons trained.

"This is arming vigilantes to the teeth," she said.

A Ministry of Defence spokesman said it hoped to start training the new recruits by November.

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ROYAL AUXILIARY AIR FORCE

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Russian 'mock attacks' upset Canada

By Eric Dowd in Toronto

SOVIET WAR planes are stepping up flights in which they practise attacks on North America as an alternative to the use of inter-continental ballistic missiles, a Canadian defence spokesman said yesterday.

Bear bombers from Russia entered the 200 mile air-identification zone of Canada's Atlantic coast twice over the weekend, and fighters based in Quebec scrambled to head them off.

Two Russian bombers were chased out of a similar zone in the Western Arctic about 10 days earlier by American fighters from Alaska which are part of the joint US-Canadian North American aerospace command.

A Canadian forces spokesman, Brig-Gen Terry Liston, said that the Russians were beefing up their bomber capacity.

"It's a relatively new strategy to concentrate on something besides their inter-continental ballistic missiles," he said.

"They are practising to attack North America. They come in quite deliberately in order to trigger our interception and determine how quickly and effectively we can respond.

"They want to see how far they can go before being picked up by our radar and they analyse our radio transmissions."

STRAT

result because our case is strong."

Plans for US 'war' hospitals attacked

Labour's foreign affairs spokesman, Mr George Foulkes, last night made a scathing attack on the Government for allowing the US to set up 14 £10 million hospitals in Britain — including a 1,000 bed hospital in Scotland — for the exclusive use of American personnel in time of war.

The Ministry of Defence confirmed that a hospital will be situated at the Royal Warton Condor base at Arbroath — the only one out of the 14 planned for Britain to be based in Scotland. The others will be in the south of England and the Midlands.

Mr George Foulkes, Shadow spokesman for foreign affairs, also hit out at the secrecy surrounding the move.

"There was no official statement about what is happening," he said. "It is very similar to the proposal thwarted last year for an American strategic distribution centre for military equipment to be set up at Prestwick. Public opinion finally persuaded George Younger, whose constituency includes Prestwick, to come out against the plan."

Mr Foulkes said the hospitals were part of the pattern of American defence and foreign policy "which is pretty insulting to us".

The US was treating Britain merely as a front-line defence for mainland America, he claimed, saying this was an extension of what had been seen before with Britain being used as a glorified aircraft carrier for the US.

"It really rubs salt in the wounds when you consider that these hospitals are being set up at a cost of £10 million a time yet here in Britain we have to raise money for hospital equipment by organising flag days and raffles," he added.

PLANE SALVAGE

Fire focus or peace building?

WHAT could be more logical than a logistical exercise to show that the Falklands garrison can be swiftly reinforced in a future "state of tension"? Given expenditure of over £3 billion on recovering the islands and then guarding them (and building an airport plus associated seaport for £400 million), it would be a false economy not to ensure that everything worked properly. So much for the military and financial justification for "exercise Fire Focus" on March 7, when extra troops and aircraft will join the resident forces for three weeks of joint manoeuvres.

Unfortunately foreign political and diplomatic views are rather different, not only in Buenos Aires but also in Washington, which has not been keen to mediate between two such disparate but important allies of the United States when one of them is not interested. There being, presumably, no point in trying to talk Britain out of its plans, a special US envoy attempted to calm Argentine feelings but without success. For Argentina and its many friends in Latin America the forthcoming rehearsal of a state of tension has come closer to causing one than any event since the war of 1982.

Ironically Argentine officers, whose vicious dictatorship was broken by the Falklands defeat and whose residual hostility to democracy has since become notorious, see Fire Focus as a new lever against President Alfonsin, whom they attack for

occupiers Britain also toppled a nasty regime — has been shown to be a not altogether unadulterated blessing. But who actually cares if a bunch of inept and discredited commanders with authoritarian tendencies get upset about a British exercise in the Falklands?

President Alfonsin does, for one, and so should all those who want his embattled regime to survive, among whom must be counted (we assume) the British Government. A British anti-invasion exercise can only have one "enemy" in mind. If Argentines, and not just the military but also their precarious president, find this upsetting, is it so hard to see why? But so long as British policy remains rigid, as it has been since Mrs Thatcher threw away the chance of a fresh start with a democratic Argentine government, every British action on the islands will raise the temperature.

Even now a conciliatory approach, as called for by a UN majority of 114 to five last autumn, would render such counter-productive exercises superfluous, together with most of the permanent garrison of perhaps 2,000. The deep freeze between Britain and Argentina has now lasted as long as it took the western Allies formally to end hostilities with Germany after 1945. If it was possible to move towards normality within six years of Hitler's war, why is there no sign of such an accommodation after Galtieri's? It is going to have to

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