

**CANADIAN WAR MUSEUM
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM**

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEW CONTROL NUMBER: 31D 7 McNAUGHTON

INTERVIEWEE: DONALD McNAUGHTON

INTERVIEWER: ANGUS BROWN

DATE OF INTERVIEW: NOVEMBER 24, 2006

LOCATION OF INTERVIEW: PERTH, ON

TRANSCRIBED BY: LONNI COLE LANGE

Transcription of Interview Number 31D 7 McNaughton

LGen (Ret'd) Donald M. McNaughton

Interviewed November 24, 2006

By Angus Brown

INTERVIEWER: Canadian War Museum, Oral History Program, interview with Lieutenant General (Retired) D.M. McNaughton. Recorded on 24 November, 2006. RR6, Perth. Interviewed by Angus Brown. Tape one, side one. Could you identify yourself, please?

McNAUGHTON: My name is Donald McNaughton. I spell, M-c-N-A-U-G-H-T-O-N.

INTERVIEWER: I just want to check to confirm that we have both signed the legal release.

MCNAUGHTON: I signed.

INTERVIEWER: Can you give me some biographical background, please?

McNAUGHTON: I was born in Perth, Ontario 1934, went to local schools here. In 1952, I joined the Royal Canadian Air Force directly out of high school. I was selected for pilot training which was out of Centralia, Ontario and in 1953 I was commissioned as a Pilot Officer and in April of that year, following advanced training on the Harvard and gunnery, I was awarded my wings. I was selected then as a flying instructor, took a flying instructor's course at Trenton. Went right back to Centralia and, by the time I was still three months short of my 19th or, my 20th birthday, I was training NATO pilots how to fly.

After a year and a half of that, I was then posted back to Trenton to instruct at the Flying Instructor's School. Following that tour, I was sent overseas, four years flying Sabres in Europe on 439 squadron. In 1963, I returned to Canada, again to another instructional tour, this time on T33s. And then when the Tudor became a basic aircraft, I had the first squadron doing basic training on the Tudor.

1966 I was selected for the Army Staff College in Kingston. On graduation in the summer of '67, I was promoted to Wing Commander and sent down to Mobile Command Headquarters where I served two years before coming back to the Army Staff College again as a member of the Directing Staff this time. Three years there, then some training on helicopters. Pilot training at Portage La Prairie, then over to England for a course at the RAF College of Air Warfare until the summer of '74 when I came back to Canada to take command of the 427, a tactical helicopter squadron at Petawawa. One year in command there and then back to Mobile Command Headquarters, as Chief of Staff Operational Support. Then over to, across the street just, to

become deputy commander of 10 Tactical Air Group. While doing that I spent six months in Egypt with the Canadian contingent to the United Nations Force, Middle East.

On return in '78 I was posted to Winnipeg, the base commander of that base. One year in that position and then on promotion to Brigadier General, I had to finally do my tour in Ottawa as Director General Air Doctrine Operations. Three years at that. '81 back to Montreal again, this time as commander of 10 Tactical Air Group. '82 on promotion to Major General, back to Winnipeg this time to be Deputy Commander of Air Command. I had three years at that, then one year as Commander of Air Command and finally off to Colorado Springs for three years as Deputy Commander in Chief of NORAD, retiring in 1989.

INTERVIEWER: Can you describe any events leading up to your selection as D CinC NORAD?

McNAUGHTON: No specific events. When I was made Commander of Air Command in '85 I was told at that time that I'd only have command for a year and that I would be going to become D CinC NORAD in '86, but no specific reason was given.

INTERVIEWER: Was it normal that you would expect a two or three year tour as D CinC?

McNAUGHTON: Yes, it was. It's normally a three year tour if you work it out. I think, interestingly, this is the first time a Commander of Air Command has ever been commander here first then out to be D CinC. Mostly it's the other way around. So

INTERVIEWER: So you were pretty *au fait* with the NORAD mission?

McNAUGHTON: I was already. I like to tell people that only two heads of the Air Force ever went to Colorado Springs. One was Slemmon and I was the other.

INTERVIEWER: I wonder if you could explain the general geo-political situation at the time that you took up your position.

McNAUGHTON: Well, in 1986 when I went to NORAD, the Cold War was very definitely on. We were maintaining normal states of alert, over 60 aircraft on alert at all the time, and a good state of watching the missile progress and what was happening. It was – it was tense times then and as my time in Colorado went on, things started to warm up very much so. But by the time I left, it was just before the dissolution of the USSR, Gorbachev was making great strides in coming to terms and we did see the Berlin wall come down shortly afterwards. But, '86, it was still tense times. We were worried about things.

INTERVIEWER: Was General, sorry, was President Regan the president of the US at the time?

McNAUGHTON: Yes, he was doing his, finishing his second tour in '88 when – so I had two years of President Regan.

INTERVIEWER: So, during your time there, what was the greatest threat that NORAD was really established to counter?

McNAUGHTON: I guess, the missile threat was always there, the most immediate. Whether it was the most important, it was the one that we had to respond to as rapidly as we could. But the bombers threat was coming back at that time as well. They had the new Bear H coming in and a new long range bomber called the Blackjack and they both were carrying the S-15 missile.

INTERVIEWER: These were both long range Soviet bombers.

McNAUGHTON: Both, yes. And they had a long range capability. They would leave, for instance, with the Bear H, leave Moscow and fly all the way down our coast to Cuba unrefuelled. And we used to intercept them out in international airspace so we knew what they were doing there. And the Blackjack had equal. But, I guess the thing that worried us was that they were carrying cruise missiles. And we had gaps in our coverage you could put cruise missiles through. And they're pretty potent as we've seen in their use in the Gulf was and places like that.

INTERVIEWER: Can you just recap for me the mission at NORAD?

McNAUGHTON: Well, very simply, number one was the surveillance and control of North American air space. Number two was the warning and assessment of an airspace, a missile attack. And finally we had to respond to an air attack if that should have happened to come to fruition. Basically, those were the three main.

We were a warning function. That's the point that a lot of people didn't understand. That's all we did. We had a lot of groups coming into NORAD and said, "Where's the red button?" Well, we had no red button. All we did was tell people what was happening around the world.

INTERVIEWER: So you were the trip wire for other retaliatory measures, if necessary.

McNAUGHTON: Exactly.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Were you, in NORAD at that time, looking more outward or inward to the continent?

McNaughton: Oh, we were looking more outwardly to the continent. We had pretty broad scope to cover and we relied so much on other component Commands to provide us with the information. And, of course, Space Command was our partner down there and the Commander in Chief was double hatted so he had all the resources of Space Command on one side and then the resources of NORAD on the other hand. So we were quite fortunate to have the resources to keep an eye on the world.

INTERVIEWER: When you took over your position as D CinC NORAD, what briefings or incoming administration did you receive?

McNAUGHTON: Well, as Commander of Air Command at the time, I was also attending the Defence Management Committee meetings in Ottawa and I was a member of Armed Forces Council. So I was pretty well up to speed on the intelligence situation in the world and because of my position I had to spend some time at NORAD at meetings. And I always talked to previous commanders, General Thorneycroft, General Mackenzie, so I was up to speed pretty well on NORAD. And as a result I did not really receive any specific tasking of details before going down.

INTERVIEWER: Did you get any briefings from Foreign Affairs?

McNAUGHTON: No, not before I went down.

INTERVIEWER: Nothing.

McNAUGHTON: No

INTERVIEWER: OK. Can you talk quickly about the hand over process at NORAD?

McNAUGHTON: It was quite simple, actually. As I say, I had spent quite a bit of time there. We had a nice parade and I was very fortunate that the Minister of National Defence, Mr. Beatty at the time, was visiting, his first trip to NORAD. So it was logical I just sat in with him and all the briefings and the tours around. And then, as part of the procedure, within a week I was off to Washington to see their set-up in the national command post there and have briefings from CDLS Washington and a visit to DIA and NSA to be briefed in the intelligence situation. So that filled in the gaps very nicely.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have to go through any specific training so you would be capable of acting in the command post?

McNAUGHTON: That was number one. As soon as I got there, after the visit with Mr. Beatty, started training right away on all the command post functions because I had to be ready to do assessments. So I took quite a lot of training in that and then finally ran through many exercises in the command post. And finally General Herres, the Commander in Chief at the time, saw me handle an exercise, make my assessments, to declare that I was suitable to do that role. That all happened within the first two weeks and then I was called operationally capable

INTERVIEWER: So, in the first two or three weeks you were then ready to roll.

McNAUGHTON: Yes, like a fire hose.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have any other unique Canadian responsibilities, being the senior Canadian officer in the United States?

McNAUGHTON: Well, we had what, 105 military people, at –Canadians – at Colorado Springs and about another 450 scattered all over United States and abroad with NORAD-related

functions. I felt I was kind of a grandfather to them all, although I didn't have direct responsibility over other than those that were right at NORAD. They were working a lot with United States Air Force positions. And, you know, the padre would come back from Hawaii and he'd come to see me and say, "You know, your man out in Hawaii isn't too happy, that he's got island fever." Well, I'd relay that information back, although I didn't know the man. I would never meet him. But there was a lot of that going on, because I felt it was my responsibility. I was the senior man there so they wanted to tell me if I could help anybody. So.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have any kind of diplomatic or representational duties as the senior Canadian officer there?

McNAUGHTON: Well, I didn't really have it in writing but I was expected to do certain things. For instance, when the White Paper of '89, was coming out, I was sent off to Los Angeles to brief the air space industries on all the things we were going to do, which never happened. They said, "Tell me truthfully, is this gonna happen?" And I said, "Well, the minister said we had to talk to you. I had that and I spoke to Rotary Club after Rotary Club and doing that sort of thing, more or less on the part of NORAD but also to get the Canadian part of NORAD across as well.

INTERVIEWER: Can you tell me how NORAD was organized, in general terms, when you were there?

McNAUGHTON: Well, on the, at the atmospheric side – no, I think I should maybe say first that NORAD was more or less a war fighting command, if you will. We had a Commander in Chief in charge. So, he didn't do any training. He didn't do – he wasn't responsible for readiness. That was all the responsibility of component commands. And on the atmospheric side we had the continental United States NORAD region. We had in Canada, we had the Canadian NORAD region and Alaskan NORAD region. They were called component commands. They did all training. They controlled all the assets, were responsible for the readiness to the Commander in Chief of NORAD. On the missiles warning side, most of the facilities were controlled by the United States Air Force, Space Command which again was a command under United States Space Command. And United States Space Command was not a component command but it was a contributing command, a supplying command type of thing to the CinC because he commanded it.

Now, with the fighters, they were located all over the United States and Canada, 60 of them, as I said, on high alert. They were controlled by the regional controllers, on directions from the Commander in Chief of NORAD. And then, once he set the parameters and told them what the states were, they would fight the air battle within their regions. I won't go down to sectors, but each region was split into sectors and each had a sector commander who would respond to the region commander. And they were responsible as well for the radar systems. And in Canada our military radars were tied in with our commercial radars. And in the States it's the same thing.

The whole system came together in the NORAD headquarters with our air defence part there. It was a very tidy system but we'd been working it in variations since 1958 so it was well, well coordinated.

On the missile warning side, the space side, that was something new to me and I had to marvel at what they were doing with it. For detecting missile launches they had this – the SEWS, the satellite early warning system. These were satellites out at 23, 22 thousand three hundred miles with geo-stationery so they whip around, as the world turns, I guess. And continuously stared, but their infra-red picked up launches. In my time, up to 900 a year missile launches.

INTERVIEWER: 900 per year.

McNAUGHTON: 900 per year.

INTERVIEWER: And they'd pick it up by the heat, of course.

McNAUGHTON: By the heat. And 65 of those, 65% of those, were coming out of the Soviet Union. And it was interesting as well that the Soviets, I guess were like us. They liked to do their business in the daytime so they were firing off their missiles in the middle of our night. And, of course, we only had to respond to do an assessment if the arc of the missile touched any part of North America. But their testing range was in eastern part of Russia, so we'd get an arc [and if it] that even touched part of Alaska, we'd have to do an assessment to state whether North America was under attack. So they had this satellite early warning system.

The second component of that, of course, was the BMEWS, ballistic missile early warning system radars in Scotland, and in Greenland and in Alaska. And they picked it up on radar and they could get a good azimuth.

Now, we got late on into low level surveillance and we had to start looking for the low level stuff coming in. Now, we were concerned about submarine-launched missiles and, of course, they put in some really huge phased array radars on the coast to cover that. We had, covering the southern border, aerostats and other means to look for people coming in. And that was mainly to look for light aircraft carrying drugs.

That became an issue during the time I was down there because United States Air Force at NORAD specifically was given the job working with DEA to look down and see if they could stop the airborne drug carriers. So a lot of our good flying came from intercepting all this people. We had two specific cases in my time and we detected air craft off the coast of Nova Scotia and we made them land in Northern Quebec and we got some good arrests out of it. But, all sorts of new things that would boggle your mind and continually changing, upgrading with new capabilities.

INTERVIEWER: You mean new radars, new computers

McNAUGHTON: New radars. During my time down there, we were putting in plans for the North Warning System to replace the radars there. New airfields. Then they changed their command post configurations. It was a never ending thing. And fortunately, the Americans were paying for most of it.

INTERVIEWER: Now, you said the Soviets were launching about 900 missiles a year. Were most of these tests or were they other types of missiles?

McNAUGHTON: Some were tests but mainly they were training. They were training their crews on firing missiles and, of course, when they brought in each new missile system they would have to go to a lot of testing being done.

INTERVIEWER: Were these ICBMs, IRBMs, theatre level missiles?

McNAUGHTON: Most were ICBMs. But when we got into really high figures, when we were getting into battlefield Scuds and that, of course we were detecting them but we were getting twenty a day, or fifty a day, you know, going back and forth in the Iran/Iraq war. It was good training for us but that, that was not, they were certainly no danger to, of course, North America.

INTERVIEWER: So, let me just clarify. The satellite would pick up because of the heat of the launch and then that would be confirmed by a subsequent radar contact which would, in turn – the radar contact in turn – would give you the fan, is that the idea? The azimuth and the projected landing spot.

McNAUGHTON: It gives a very wide fan. And if it was coming down, we also had Parks radar North Dakota which was, I guess, a hold off from the old first attempt at shooting down a missile [indistinct]. We got real fine figures from it. But we had to work on the fan. As soon as we got the fan from the radars, we could make an assessment whether North America was under attack or not. And, you know, we had a lot of intelligence as well to back it up, the, so it wasn't a chance assessment. But we had four minutes from the time of missile launch. From the time a launch was detected anywhere in the world, we had four minutes to tell the national command authorities in Ottawa and Washington whether North America was under attack.

INTERVIEWER: So, is this where you came in as an assessor, you and the CinC?

McNAUGHTON: If we were both in place, the CinC would do the assessment but I would be on the phone at the same time and if, if we were by our self then we were the only one of us on the phone.

INTERVIEWER: Could you just kind of walk me through, step by step, the sequence of events that might happen in a missile launch.

McNAUGHTON: Well, the missile launch, they'd pick it up and the phone would ring in the command post from the missile warning system. "We have a launch at such and such a co-

ordinates, from where.” And I would be immediately be called to the, to the phone, no matter what time of day or night. 24 hours a day we carried a cell phone around and I would be listening to the command director giving me – he would say, “No, it’s a type SS16.” – we could type them from the heat of the missile – “and it’s coming out of a certain position. We suspect it is heading for that and it’s a test launch, or it’s a training launch because that’s a training base where they do it.” So we knew pretty well what was going on. Then on about the three minute mark, we started to pick up the readings from, normally it would be Fylingdales [UK] getting it first...

INTERVIEWER: From radar.

McNAUGHTON: From radar. And they say, “The fan does touch the continent and we’d need an assessment.” So they would really give me all the, more detail than that that is classified and I would say, “What’s your recommendation?” And they’d say, “We recommend ‘no.’” I mean, North America is not under attack. And I’d say, “I concur with ‘no’”. And at that point they’d get through to Washington and who they had been talking to. But until the CinC or myself said ‘no’, then they didn’t pass the ‘no’ on to – didn’t pass all the other garbage we were, you know, compiling ‘til we could make our decision.

INTERVIEWER: When an event like this occurred, did other agencies, other commands, other command posts, get the data and, if so, how.

McNAUGHTON: I’m not aware that they did get it. They got the information that the launch had happened and our big concern, of course, was to pass it on to the people who would have to make the decision in the case we were under attack and to what retaliatory measures. So I don’t think we were downloading to other people at that time. And I think maybe we might have done it, but in that four minute time period we were, you know.

INTERVIEWER: By the time all the, you know, from a launch, by the time all the indicators were in, you mustn’t have had much time yourself to say ‘yes’ or ‘no’.

McNAUGHTON: We relied a lot on the command posts. I mean, we had, what, on a crew, must be 15 people up there. And that was their very specific duty to know. Now, a lot of times we did have intelligence notice. In the last year I was there, they had signed a treaty between the States and Russia, saying that – or the USSR, saying that they would inform us when they were going to have a launch. And we were, the United States, was informing them because they didn’t want anything to be “surprise!” So a lot of times when I go to bed at night I’d be briefed to expect a launch at 2:30 or something in the middle of the night. So, okay, I’ll set the alarm clock. [laughter]

INTERVIEWER: Could you just describe the physical layout of NORAD headquarters at Colorado Springs?

McNAUGHTON: Well, when I first got there we were headquartered in the Chidlaw Building, named after the first CinC of NORAD and that is where the administrative work was done, the plans, the personnel, things.

INTERVIEWER: Where was the Chidlaw?

McNAUGHTON: That was Chidlaw, right in the middle of Colorado Springs.

INTERVIEWER: In the city?

McNAUGHTON: Interestingly, yes, interestingly enough, a nice, soft target right in the middle of a great place. But that changed about, oh, a year after I got there. In fact, less than a year after I got there. We went out to new facilities on Peterson Air Force Base and it was the headquarters with the CinC's office in the middle. One wing went off to United States Space Command personnel and the other wing was off to NORAD personnel. And we, the D CinC of Space, had his office next to the commander's on one side and, of course, I was there on the other side. And it was a very good set up.

Now, on the off side, mainly, although some office people had headquarters, or head offices in Peterson Air Force Base they also had offices in the mountain. And that's where their work was done. We had five crews, all headed by a Major-General to do eight hour shifts in the mountains. They'd work from, well, starting from two o'clock in the afternoon 'til ten, then went on ten until six in the morning, the midnight shift and then six until two. It was a good system. It worked. I remember briefing up in Denver once and they asked what the system was. And some expert there on the medical staff said, you know, we've done studies and you're exactly right. Eight hours doing that type of work is all you can take. Other places, maybe, you know, they can stand ten hours a shift, or 12 hours a shift, but I don't want a nurse who's been on her twelfth hour.

In the mountain they did all the exercising to exercise the crews to work with all systems. Now, in the mountain you have a command post which is the big office where everything is compiled there. But then in the mountain you have all these different cells, different centers. You got the missile warning center, you got the space surveillance center, you got the air defense center, you got intelligence centers, you know. You name it and they all come together at the command post and that's where they get all their information from. Now, in the mountain the Commander in Chief had an office with a bed – I was going to say which I shared – which I had when he wasn't there and all the communications equipment. I did a fair amount of, spent a fair amount of time on shift in the mountains as well.

Back in history there'd been an incident, a communications flaw, which had led to some embarrassment, a false alarm. And part of the recommendation was that there had to be a general officer in the mountain at all the times. And that was mainly done by just putting a general officer in charge of the combat crew. But I found that they were working pretty hard and I liked the going in the mountain. So I said, "Well, I can be the general officer in the mountain because I'm aware of this." But, I didn't run the crew. We had another colonel who was really specifically trained for that. But I would be the general of the month.

You know, it did more good for me to do this because I was a free runner. I had communication with men and everyone knew where I was. And I'd move from missile warning center over to talk to the people in the US space surveillance and air defence and they loved that. And I learned

more about people. There's something about the middle of the night, you know, when you go to one of the centers. If somebody's got something on his chest you learn about it and, you know, in the morning I'd go back to the US Space Command – because with Canadians and Americans working in all the centers, side by each. And I'd get back and say to D CinC Space, "Hey, back in your missile warning center you've got a very unhappy sailor down there, you know." And so I could do that and I'd get a good look at what the Canadians were doing when they're on shift and part of the crew, or down at the centers. And I did that at least twice, three times a month. I didn't do too many midnight shifts but I found the afternoon shift was the easiest because I could do my job out at headquarters and go in for two o'clock and do it 'til ten then go home. And the commanders actually liked that extra day off their shift because they could get another game of golf in, or something. And I got to learn about the mountain a lot more than I would have otherwise. So that was the main set up there.

INTERVIEWER: You mentioned that the Canadians and Americans were side by side. Did you have other than US Air Force from the American side? Were there Army, Navy, Marines?

McNAUGHTON: Yes, yes. There were Space Command was a unified command and they made an order sometime in the '80's – I think it was the Nicholl's report. If you're going to be a senior officer, you better get some unified time in. So, a lot of the officers were there, are, were navy and air force or navy, air force and army and marines.

INTERVIEWER: So this counted as their joint time.

McNAUGHTON: This was their joint time. And I can think of a time when the command directors would be a Canadian general, an air force general, a marine general and an army general and probably, you know, too, maybe another air force general. But that was their way of getting their joint time.

INTERVIEWER: How did you find the Canadians and Americans worked? Was the interoperability high?

McNAUGHTON: I'd say it was close to perfect. I just considered them all the same, really. They got along fine. The Americans had a bad habit of coming to work early and I talked to all the Canadians when they came down. I had a personal interview with every Canadian when they first came in there and said, "Look, you go and do your job and you go and do it right. But don't make it a habit of coming into work at six o'clock in the morning because that makes your subordinates come in at 5:30." you know and etcetera. And, I said, "You read your newspaper at home and then come to work and do a full day's work and then go home again." They worked awfully hard, you know. General Piotrowski, who was the second CinC I worked for, he had two staffs, you know. He'd come in early with an early staff and work all day and then have people stay at night to, to have help. General Herres, the first CinC I worked for, I mean, I got up early in the morning. I was reading my paper at five o'clock and having a cup of tea but I had my radio on with the mountain, which you always had to have. And I'd hear him calling in, going for his run, five o'clock in the morning. And then when he's done, off to the office around six. So they worked hard.

INTERVIEWER: Now, you must have been in your position during the period of strategic defence initiatives, Star Wars, SDI. Were you, did you have a chance to see that develop?

McNAUGHTON: I was there, for sure, and it was a bit of a sticking point between Canada and the United States when Canada declined to support it. But it wasn't really all that difficult for us, the Canadians, at Colorado Springs. Although, as I say, the staffs were so integrated that – and working side by side in the two buildings, that it was hard not have some rub off. But I felt rather sorry for the United States military down there with the procedures that they had to take to keep the Canadians from being, you know, knowledgeable about what they're doing.

INTERVIEWER: So, this was their 'no foreign' rule.

McNAUGHTON: Well, it was more to protect Canada's interests. If they said, "Oh, Canada doesn't want to be involved. We have to protect the Canadians against getting information that their country doesn't want them to have." So it was kind of a, a ticklish situation. You know, you couldn't help but being aware of what they were doing and the organizations that they'd set up. But by and large, it didn't bother our working relationship. But, we just knew there was a special group over there and they would have preferred to have a Canadian component working with them at the same time.

INTERVIEWER: So, it was more an irritant than an impediment.

McNAUGHTON: Oh, yeah

INTERVIEWER: Is that right?

McNAUGHTON: It was. And you know, there was nothing surprising about it. But when the media got hold of it and started calling it Star Wars, the program was doomed. But it was the forerunner to ballistic missile defence and our country's taken just about the same approach to it again. But it was an irritant and it just shouldn't have been an irritant.

INTERVIEWER: Now, along those lines, now operating at the level you were operating at, you must have almost inevitably had some sort of exposure to high levels plans that the Americans did not normally share with their allies. How was that handled?

McNAUGHTON: Well, I only worked for General Herres for a period of six months maybe before he went up to be the new Vice Chairman of Defence so he didn't really share much of that with me. But with General Piotrowski, if he felt that I had a need to know to do my job, that he would share, he'd take me by myself and say, "Don, I'd like to show you this and show you that." And I felt very grateful that he did that. And it was never anything awe inspiring, just pieces of information that helped the whole puzzle fit together. But, and occasionally, he would do that with all the general officers, and we knew he was doing it for the good of the cause without breaking any real security.

INTERVIEWER: Did that ever occur at lower ranks, do you think?

McNAUGHTON: I don't think so. I think it was kind of a close to the vest thing. If the information was ever divulged, you'd know exactly who divulged it.

INTERVIEWER: And, of course, it would be a confidence-building measure for him as a commander, I would think.

McNAUGHTON: Oh yes, yeah. No, I worked for two of the best four-stars that I, there could be in. General Herres and General Piotrowski, brilliant men.

INTERVIEWER: Were there any particularly vexing operational problems affecting NORAD during your time?

McNAUGHTON: Well, except for calls in the middle of the night to do an assessment, we didn't have that many problems. We were concerned about the cruise missile problem and the gaps in our coverage. But we knew enough of the Russian bomber movements that we weren't really too concerned with a nuclear explosion being the first evidence that a Scud or a missile had been fired.

But that was one and I think that when closing the gap with the new north warning system we felt would take care of that problem and at least we'd know when the bombers came through and be able to [occupy?] our forward operating locations. And, you know, just knowing what's happening around the world you get a good feeling about what's going on. You go back to the Slemmon era when they had a false warning and the – I guess it was geese that came up on the radar and he just said, "No, hold it," and solved it before they had to make a decision. I think one time they had a false warning and the CinC at the time said, "Where's Gorbachev?" or, "Where's," – oh gosh I forget who – "Khrushchev?" "Well, yeah, he's at the United Nations in New York." Well, false warning, eh? So the intelligence helped a lot to make the decisions. So, no we, in my time, it was one of the periods where there were no, no events. We didn't have a Cuban crisis or we didn't have anything like that and our op systems were working good. Again, because of past mistakes or false warnings, new equipment and new procedures were in effect.

INTERVIEWER: Was equipment continually upgraded during your time?

McNAUGHTON: It was. New fighters, new radars. Our command post was over a year being reconstructed. We had to work in an alternate command post so, yeah, it was. There was lots of money going in to improvements all the time.

INTERVIEWER: Now, you mentioned exercises. Now, how did these exercises happen? Did they happen in a separate location or concurrently with the same staffs that were doing the operations of the moment?

McNAUGHTON: Oh, I'll tell you the combat crews in the center – well, first of all we had an exercise division and that's all they did was prepare exercises. The combat crews normally ran a tape once every crew shift. They would run one and then we'd have a big one that the CinC or I,

whoever was there, got involved with about once a month. That would be more of on a national, a much larger. Air defence exercises, they were run mainly by the regions. But then we'd be able to run from – we'd be involved with our air defence people in the mountain providing information. Every so often we'd have – you could have a nationwide, a real big exercise, flying with the aircraft and with targets and stuff like that.

INTERVIEWER: So these exercises would be run at the same time as the combat crews were actually doing the ...

McNAUGHTON: Oh yeah.

INTERVIEWER: The watching and the waiting.

McNAUGHTON: And if they had anything happen, exercise was off the tapes. And you had to be very careful there because you're running real life tapes and you're running exercise tapes and there's a good monitor going on all the time.

INTERVIEWER: That sort of brings me to the urban legend, the Hollywood myth almost, of how the computers ran the headquarters and there was, once the operation was launched, it couldn't be stopped. Would you like to address that?

McNAUGHTON: Well, we know there's no red button so that didn't work with us. We were just concerned with the warning. Now, I don't believe there's any system ever devised that can't be stopped at the last minute. But...

INTERVIEWER: So the system was never automated to the point where there was no human intervention.

McNAUGHTON: Oh, no, never. There's always – there's always a man in the loop and he'll always be in the loop because they haven't got a system yet that is foolproof.

INTERVIEWER: From your description of the sequence of events, there probably were two or three people at various places in the loop. Is that correct?

McNAUGHTON: Well, yes, always. And very strict adherence to the procedures.

INTERVIEWER: But you, as the final assessor, would be the guy that said 'yes' or 'no'.

McNAUGHTON: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: I wonder if you could just give me, if there was such a thing, your typical daily routine?

McNAUGHTON: My routine. I started at five o'clock in the morning. I got up then because the paper was there and I could make a cup of tea and I had a quiet period until about six-thirty. And

that really was the only time of the day that was my own. The rest of the time I was controlled by events. When I left work every day I had a card that my secretary prepared and it listed every event for the following day – every time, dress and what the subject was. You know, it was fairly, fairly detailed. I started off in the office about six thirty, got to my desk at seven and went to our morning briefing at seven thirty in the morning. And this was either commanded by the Commander in Chief or, if he was away, I took the briefing. It was just an update of what's going on within the command. The rest of the day I spent either at my desk or I would spend it working in the mountain.

A lot of my time was spent there hosting visiting groups who came to visit. And these were high level groups, you know like the Young Presidents, those who have made their first million before they're 30 and you know, hires, runs companies that are over fifty employees, stuff like that, boards of trades. And they were briefed by the special – we have a PR group that – protocol group – that did nothing else but brief and do mountain tours. But then, in the middle of the afternoon, either the CinC or myself would have to go out to the mountain and do a question and answer session with them where they'd pose some pretty good questions to us. And then that same group would be hosted that night in the Peterson officers' mess with a dinner and again another opportunity for them to ask some questions. That took up a lot of time because we had groups there, two a week. But it was a really good program because they went away with a much better understanding of what NORAD did. And inevitably, I got that red button question: where's the red button you push when you...? So we did clear things up.

I had many social engagements down there in Colorado Springs. The people were tremendous. Again, it took a lot of my time. Once I went fourteen days that my wife and I were never alone at dinner, although we were always there. We were either out being entertained or we were entertaining at home or I was in the mountain or whatever. And it was a hectic program. The one thing about the Americans, though, they all go home at nine o'clock at night. Everybody's told you that. First time around I thought, "Gee, what's happening here?" But that's it. They go at six and they go at nine because they're up and at it early in the morning and working. So that's my day.

There's no two days alike. And, as I say, I did a lot of speaking engagements in and around Colorado Springs, I took many of those tours and I took, I did a lot of speaking engagements in the continental United States. We had Smokey II still at that time, our Cosmopolitan aircraft, so I had air transport whenever I wanted it. And because we used Smokey II to go out with NORAD people to do evaluations and to... If a group had to go someplace, and it could carry a big group. I had access to jet transport with a phone call and I could go anywhere I wanted on an American Citation or whatever they were flying at the time.

INTERVIEWER: You mentioned going to Los Angeles once to brief the White Paper. Did you do many things like that for NORAD?

McNAUGHTON: Yes, I did. But mainly, not as important as that, not really understanding, not doing that. That trip to Los Angeles, I also got on television, live, on the Financial News Network. That was another experience I'm glad I don't have to do on a daily basis. And it's kind of hard when you're talking about a program you don't think even's gonna happen.

INTERVIEWER: Interview with Lieutenant General McNaughton, end of side one.

END OF SIDE ONE

INTERVIEWER: Canadian War Museum Oral History Program interview with Lieutenant General McNaughton, tape one, side two.

Talking about briefings, did you ever have the opportunity or the occasion to brief any parliamentary or congressional committees in either national capital?

McNAUGHTON: No, I did not during my time there, have any. I briefed visitors of cabinet rank but not a congressional committee or a special committee coming down from Canada to investigate anything. I went back to Canada on a monthly, or quarterly, basis to brief the Chief of Defence Staff and the Assistant Deputy Minister of Policy on what was going on down at NORAD, but that was more or less on an informal basis.

INTERVIEWER: So this would be much more routine.

McNAUGHTON: Routine. What's happening, is, are there any problems, are you satisfied with the support Canada's giving, that sort of thing. And, so we'd have, spend half a day going up and down the corridors of NDHQ to see if we could solve any problems that were going on. And that was a benefit but I'd do that on a quarterly basis only. So.

INTERVIEWER: In that regard, then, you probably weren't that much different from your liaison as the Commander of Air Command.

McNAUGHTON: No, except I wasn't going through those Defence Management Committees meetings or Armed Forces Council. But if I was in there on a quarterly visit when there was one of those meetings I was always asked to attend and brief DMC or brief Armed Forces Council on what was going on.

INTERVIEWER: You mentioned that the agreement had just been renewed prior to your arrival. Did you have any input for further renewal of talks?

McNAUGHTON: No, they hadn't started the momentum going for the renewal and my successor, Bob Morton, carried that through in his first couple of years there and the initial part, the part done by the politicians and the staff officers and DFAIT had never occurred while I was still there.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have an official residence?

MCNAUGHTON: You bet I had an official residence. When my predecessor was there, Pablo McKenzie, he was able to get an official residence for the D CinC NORAD. It was up in the mountains. It was a tremendous house and it was beloved by the Colorado people because we had many good functions there. The residence was close to the mountain but unfortunately about 30 minutes away from Peterson, which was out in the plains east of town. The living conditions were gracious and we were very fortunate to have it. And because we had to do so much entertaining it was in an excellent position. I just wish they had provided a parking lot at the same time because it was kind of tight up in the mountain roads.

INTERVIEWER: I'd like to turn to maybe the relationships between you and your higher headquarters. The American higher headquarters you answered to, from NORAD headquarters, would have been Chairman of the Joint Chiefs?

McNAUGHTON: That's it, exactly.

INTERVIEWER: And in Canada, the Chief of the Defence Staff.

McNAUGHTON: That's right.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have occasion, other than your routine visits, to talk to them, for instance on a monthly, daily, weekly basis?

McNAUGHTON: I talked to members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, not ever to the Chairman except on his occasional visits out to NORAD. I talked to the Canadian Chief of Defence Staff, who was Paul Manson at the time, who came down to visit us and do ceremonial duties a few times when I was there. The other occasion was when I accompanied a group called the Thirty Group up to Canada to get briefings in National Defence Headquarters. This is a very high powered group that had a very big influence on the, not just the military position in Colorado Springs but in Washington. And we were up there and we were briefed by the Chief of Defence Staff and others.

INTERVIEWER: Who were the Thirty Group?

McNAUGHTON: Well, we started off the group of 30 and they were the names of, civilian names of Colorado Springs. I couldn't name you their specific ones now or all of them now but they were movers and shakers.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. In the Colorado Springs area.

McNAUGHTON: In the Colorado Springs area. It included the former governor of Colorado and people like that and, because of Smokey II, we could take the whole group along and they really enjoyed it and they were wined and dined in Ottawa, but they would always.... Money was never a factor with them. If you wined and dined them, they really reciprocated. But it was the influence that they had. Like with the NORAD agreement, they always had an influence on how to help out with it.

INTERVIEWER: Sometimes the Canadian input is characterized as being quite small and so, therefore, did that have any bearing on your operational capabilities there, your influence?

McNAUGHTON: No, I was, along with all the other Canadians in Colorado Springs, was treated exactly like they would have treated an American. In fact, I was a favourite when the personal evaluations were being signed. The American ones that was, because all the colonels wanted me, my signature, on theirs because at that time it was the rank of the officer signing that had a lot to do with who paid attention to their report. So no, it didn't because they, a lot of them, had served in Canada. The United States Air Force had done tours up here. A lot had served, you know what, exchange positions on our squadrons, and came back and all they could talk about was their Canadian tour. So they knew what we were doing, they knew quality of our people there and I was really proud of every Canadian.

Every Canadian did themselves proud and in, we had a lot positions, in Space. I don't know how many in people in Canada really knew how much space work we were doing down there. But shortly after I arrived we had a problem with one of the satellite early warning systems satellites. And CinC said, "Don, I'm gonna get someone there from US Space Command to come over and brief you on the satellite because you have got have that knowledge. You know, you don't need to know how to fix it, you gotta know how it is going to affect your assessments." And to my surprise, the guy who walked through my door was a Canadian major. He had flown with me in the helicopter squadron, 427, and a good friend of mine. And I said, "What are you doing here?" And he said, "I'm here to brief you on the system." And he did, and we had a lot people like that who were experts in the space work and they would at every place I visited. Or with words coming back, within a year, our guys and gals were either the flight commander or they were the standards people. Amazing. They stood out very much. I think it must have been our training system, the way they were trained. But they were really good.

And, you know, I didn't have an incident – I had one incident when I was down there – with a discipline matter. And that's when we had a Canadian master corporal, who was a member of a crew and they were exercising and he was in another room and over the, in the mountain over the intercom came the word "bomb threat", which was bad because you didn't fool around. And great action took place. Now the man had the chance to stop that right away if he had admitted that he was the one who had performed the hoax. But he didn't. And the Americans were really watching to see what actions the Canadians were going to take on that. And I just said, "I want the man back in Canada by the end of the week," and he was. Now, the commanding officer of the Canadian forces support unit said, "Well, you can't do that. We have to have an investigation, we have to do this." I said, "Look, yes, people are watching here and if we don't take action right now then well..." So we did. So what'd they do, they posted him back to Mont Apica where he wanted to go and it worked out all right. But it was a good lesson. You don't fool around when you're in a command post and if something does go wrong you stand up and you admit it right away.

INTERVIEWER: How did you find NORAD was regarded by the American political world and the Canadian political world? Was there any difference?

McNAUGHTON: That's rather difficult to answer as, because I don't really know. I think we were highly regarded by both countries. And, as referenced by – you know, there's never been a question, in my time and I think still, about whether the NORAD agreement should be renewed or not because it has always seemed to be a good operation since 1958. From Canada's side, I don't think the cost is great for the benefits that we get and the space training that we have been able to receive down there, let alone the other benefits that we've gained.

INTERVIEWER: But you thought that perhaps Canada, Canadians, didn't understand the benefits that we would gain? Am I right?

McNAUGHTON: I don't think they did. As a whole, and I think maybe we didn't do enough to educate them. Now, the Americans had the resources to bring all those good groups of people in. We had the Vancouver Board of Trade, we had Toronto Group of Young Presidents. But every time we had a group like that, I'd get three or four invitations to go back to Canada and say we want you to come to Kiwanis, we want you to come here to spread the word with us because people don't know what you're doing down there. Come up and enlighten us. You know, that's only a few people that we get to.

INTERVIEWER: Did you ever have the feeling that perhaps Canadian politicians could have been better informed?

McNAUGHTON: I think so. Now, again, everybody who's been down – the Ministers of Defence are very buoyant when they leave with all this new information they got. But again that's just one, one man and if we could have, I think we could have educated a lot of the politicians better to have better knowledge of what we were doing down there.

INTERVIEWER: Were there, at your time, any exercises that involved the higher levels of political...

McNAUGHTON: No.

INTERVIEWER: pieces of either country?

McNAUGHTON: We had those exercises, but there was also a stand in for the prime minister and a stand in for the minister.

INTERVIEWER: So, whoever would be primed in order to do what he had to do.

McNAUGHTON: No, we never. I guess they're very busy people and too, you know, you don't stop the world and do a NORAD exercise. So we had those type of exercises to prove because that's the ultimate man that we are responding to, was the Prime Minister of Canada and the President of the United States.

INTERVIEWER: So who was your normal day to day contact back in Canada?

McNAUGHTON: Well, from the command post in the mountain, they were talking to NDOC, National Defence Operations Centre, logically. But very rarely, unless I was on the phone to go back to my superiors, it wasn't common back conversations going back and forth.

INTERVIEWER: And of course, as you said before you had access, because of your rank, to anybody you wanted to talk to, up to the CDS I suppose.

McNAUGHTON: That's right. And maybe I could just say something about communications and the change in communications while I was there. To go back to when I first got there, we had to use the old message form. You know, have it hand coded and decoded and, you know, it was awkward. Then we started to get modern and by the time I left we were up to the STU- III. I'm not sure...

INTERVIEWER: This was the secure voice

McNAUGHTON: Secure voice. I think it's secure transmission unit, STU. And anyhow I could call the CDS, you know, and say, "Sir, I have something for you. Can we go secure?" And it was just a normal telephone conversation. So we could pass a lot more information on that. I don't know what they're up to now. It's 17 years; they've made a lot of changes since then. The other thing in communications, when I first got down there we were carrying the old brick-type radio thing. And at home we had stacks of radio equipment and there was a key that you had to carry with you at all times and then put it in when you got home and take it out in the morning. God help you if you forgot to take it out and some technician went in to – you were in trouble, you know. It was very awkward. Then, I think we were the first unit users of cell phones in the country and that was very big. But it was still a big machine we carried around with us. And we thought we were secure until we found out that taxi drivers downtown were listening to us making assessments – was North America under attack? And then we set up a secure system with the towers that were owned by NORAD and Space Command so it was secure. Of course, now you, you pick up a cell phone. You can do everything but wash your socks with it.

INTERVIEWER: And think nothing of it.

McNAUGHTON: It's all a little wee thing. So the, especially the communications, the impact was significant.

INTERVIEWER: And fast, too. You saw all that in a three year tour.

McNAUGHTON: That's right. And you know, out at the mountain we had five different types of ways to pass the information. And we had, I think, ten different ports of where it went out to in kind of like a spider in case one thing failed. I don't know where they are now. Interestingly enough, I just heard that the mountain is going to be put in a mothball state

INTERVIEWER: Yes, they just announced that in the last week or two.

McNAUGHTON: And they are going to work out of Peterson. I was talking to Rick Findlay, having dinner in Kingston on Wednesday night, and he said that's going to happen fairly soon.

INTERVIEWER: The end of an era.

McNAUGHTON: Yep.

INTERVIEWER: In this rather unique bilateral position that you had, did you have to change your style of command, or how did you handle that?

McNAUGHTON: Well, it was different down there. I had a lot responsibility, a lot of authority. But it was – I had to exercise command exercise differently than I did as commander because there I was my own man. And I could make things happen without giving too much, a lot, of thought. But knowing that I was going to have full support to see that whatever I wanted done was seen through. You kind of walk a bit on coals when you're with permission like that. And you gotta think: what would the CinC do at a time like this? Because he was, you know, he was going to carry the can for what my decision is. So I had to be very, very careful dealing with the Americans and getting to understand the air force and the navy, who don't get along, and the army and the marines and a bit of their backgrounds. And taking different factors into consideration before making a decision that I would have in Canada, where I knew exactly what my limits were there. So it wasn't all that difficult and I certainly was encouraged by every, by both CinCs that I worked for, that if a decision is to be made, you go ahead, make it based on your best knowledge. So I didn't do it but I was more careful before I made the decision.

INTERVIEWER: Did the war on drugs receive the prominence during your tour that we saw in later years?

McNAUGHTON: Probably not the prominence but it did occur while I was there. And the tasking was given to NORAD, but it was the United States Air Force side of NORAD that they had to deal with it because the order came from Washington only. And that was kind of difficult for the way we were operating down there because it was one thing to try to separate SDI, but now, if you're talking of the war on drugs, it's so widespread. We talked it over. I talked with General Piotrowski and I said, "You know, it's good training for us, it's good training for the Canadians as well because we're dealing with a low flying aircraft. It's pretty much like a cruise missile, low radar coverage or, and you know, we as Canada, Canadians, should be involved with that." And he agreed, but he said but my word out of Washington is that. So I wrote a message to General Manson, who was the Chief of Defence Staff, giving him reasons why I thought the Canadians should be involved with that and get clearance to do it.

And I think that was about the, around Christmastime of '88 and I was leaving in August of '89, I guess. And he staffed it around headquarters, to the policy people. And, you know, it wasn't going to be a significant change to the NORAD agreement or something like that. It was really just to get us the authority, the Canadian agency, the authority to do it down there. You know what, in two weeks we had an answer back from the CDS saying, "Yes, go ahead, we considered it." Now, I know further staffing went on after that with the CDS, Washington and people but we were given the operational go ahead to deal with the drug problem. We had some very successful missions where radars detected the drug dealers and we caught them with some very significant loads of drugs.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have good visibility through the FAA radars or did you have to deploy other NORAD and military resources?

McNAUGHTON: We had AWACs, access to AWACs and if there was some operation that we really wanted to get involved with we wouldn't normally use it

INTERVIEWER: So you would have supplemented

McNAUGHTON: Supplemented the coverage

INTERVIEWER: Standing radar

McNAUGHTON: Because FAA can be pretty cluttered and get pretty busy at times with normal traffic.

INTERVIEWER: FAA radar, civilian radars, tend to rely on transponders, don't they?

McNAUGHTON: Um hmm. And of course, they can't paint traffic that's not transponding. So we would use the AWACs. We had a lot of Canadians flying over the AWACs at Tinker, and except when they were at war we had good access to use of the AWACs.

INTERVIEWER: In your opinion, during your time was NORAD effective?

McNAUGHTON: I couldn't say otherwise, having been a part of it. But NORAD to me was a very effective operation. The three missions that we were asked to do were carried out in a highly professional manner. I think we served our nations well. We have not been embarrassed by NORAD. They've kept our air space under surveillance, they've kept it under control. They have kept the missile warning going and knowing that North America has never been under attack, and in a few cases when it could have been misconstrued, it hasn't been. I won't speak for post 9-11 but, speaking to Rick Findlay who's there and who launched the aircraft, it responded very quickly to an incident that it wasn't ready to face. So, in all respects I think we have been well served by NORAD and I hope it continues in whatever revised format it will have in the future.

INTERVIEWER: Interview with Lieutenant General (Retired) Don McNaughton on 24 November 2006. Interview ends.

TRANSCRIPT ENDS