

ATLANTIC BASTION

The years 1941-42 witnessed great expansion of defence facilities by both Canada and the United States in Newfoundland. Canada added to the runways and housing facilities at Gander and Botwood to meet the American requirements and to accommodate expanded air patrols and the Atlantic ferry service (discussed later). Canada also constructed Torbay and Goose Bay Air Bases. Both were in operation before the end of 1941. On behalf of the British Admiralty, Canada was also constructing the St. John's naval base which was continued in operation while construction was going on. The base was fully operable by the end of 1942. The United States began construction of its bases in mid-1941 but its air fields (Argentia and Stephenville) were not available much before the spring of 1943.²³ In addition the United States was constructing a large army garrison base at Fort Pepperrel, adjacent to St. John's. Electronic communications were gradually set up between the numerous bases and radar and weather stations were established by both countries.

American and Canadian garrison forces in Newfoundland substantially increased for a time after Pearl Harbour. The high point seems to have been reached in mid-1943 when there were more than 10,000 U.S. army personnel in Newfoundland, and nearly 6,000 Canadian army personnel. Before the end of the year each had scaled down its forces to about 5,000. They remained at about this level until near the end of hostilities.²⁴

These figures, however, are for garrison troops, not for totals of armed services in Newfoundland. Such figures would include: naval personnel engaged in convoy duty (mostly Canadian); airmen (mostly U.K.) serving in the Atlantic Ferry Command; the Canadian battery and infantry battalion (some 1300 all ranks) stationed in Labrador for the defence of Goose Bay; and the Canadian airmen serving at Torbay, Gander and Goose and at RCAF headquarters in St. John's. Nor should the Newfoundland militia be excluded.²⁵ Eventually organized on a two-level pattern of active militia and part-time home guard, by the end of 1943 its active personnel of some 570 all ranks had been organized under the historic name of the Newfoundland Regiment and had taken on the responsibility, under Canadian operational command, of the defence of Bell Island and other sensitive points along the coast.²⁶

Command and Strategic Direction

The issue of a supreme command of Canadian and American forces in Newfoundland first arose in the Permanent Joint Board on Defence at its first series of meetings on the situation in Newfoundland. There were serious competing interests to be reconciled: Canada was legally at war and was

²³ *Ibid.* p. 168.

²⁴ *Ibid.* p. 175-177.

²⁵ Documents 26 and 29-33 and Stacey, C. P. *Six Years of War (Official History of the Canadian Army in the Second World War)*. Vol. 1, Ottawa, Queen's Printer, 1955. p. 180.

²⁶ Documents 639 and Stacey, C.P. *loc. cit.*