

R.C.A.F., 1953: The year 1953 saw the RCAF make significant strides towards completion of its current expansion programme. It was highlighted by formation of new Squadrons, new training establishments, and new reserve units, by completion of a large portion of its extensive construction programme, and by the continued buildup of its overseas NATO forces, the National Defence Department announced at the year-end.

Recruiting continued steadily throughout the year, and estimated strength for the end of 1953 was more than 43,000. Actual strength as of Dec. 31, 1952 was 38,391.

In Canada the progress made by the RCAF's manning, training, construction and procurement programmes was reflected by formation of the first CF-100 Canuck jet fighter squadrons. Announcement of the formation of the first such operational squadron was made in May, and other Canuck squadrons have since been formed.

These Canuck squadrons, flying the Canadian designed and produced two-seater long-range jet fighter, the CF-100, provide the teeth of the home-based interceptor forces, under Air Defence Command.

CONTROL SYSTEM

Although few details were released, progress was made during 1953 on the early warning and ground control system, vital to home air defence operations. Some of the units were in operation during the last year and construction work on other units was virtually completed by the year's end.

The Ground Observer Corps, another vital element in the air defence system, opened its first filter centre in June. This filter centre, officially opened at London, Ont., by the Chief of the Air Staff, Air Marshal Slemon, was followed by opening of others in different parts of Canada, and marked the operational existence of the GOC.

Elements of Air Defence Command, including Regular and Auxiliary fighter squadrons, the early-warning system and the GOC, took part in numerous exercises throughout the year. Notable amongst these was Exercise Tailwind a combined RCAF-USAF air defence scheme in July.

While Air Defence Command continued to gain in operational status, 1953 saw the last of the 12 squadrons nominated for overseas duty with NATO make the Atlantic crossing to new bases in Europe.

Operation Leap Frog Three, in March, saw three Sabre jet squadrons fly over the Atlantic route to their new NATO base at Zweibrücken, in Western Germany, to form No. 3 Fighter Wing under the RCAF's Air Division. The crossing was made without incident.

The final mass movement of the Air Division squadrons overseas came at the summer's end, when Leap Frog Four took place. Three more Sabre Wings made the crossing, over the same route, to Baden-Soellingen, in Western Germany.

The year's end found the Air Division complete, except for the move of 1 Fighter Wing, now at North Luffenham in the U.K., to its new NATO base at Marville, in France. The North Luffenham Wing is to make this move in 1954.

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NAVY, 1953: Canada's naval strength reached a new peacetime high in 1953, the Department of National Defence announced at the year-end.

At the end of the year, it reported, the Royal Canadian Navy had more ships and more men than at any time since the wartime forces were demobilized.

Coincident with this expansion in size was an evident increase in experience and efficiency, achieved largely through an intensive programme of training carried out during the year both at sea and ashore.

Ships currently in commission include an aircraft carrier, two cruisers, eight destroyers, one destroyer escort, five frigates, four minesweepers, five coastal escorts and 16 miscellaneous craft. The minesweepers are the first of 14 new construction sweepers due to be completed by next summer. Six of these will go to France under the Mutual Aid agreement.

56 IN RESERVE

Besides those ships in service, the Navy has another 56 in reserve. Twenty of these have been modernized and most of the remainder are in varying stages of modernization. Additional ships, including an aircraft carrier, 14 destroyer escorts and an Arctic patrol vessel are under construction, with the Arctic patrol ship scheduled to complete in the spring of 1954. There are also nine naval ships, including three frigates, on loan to other Government departments.

By the end of 1953, there were 16,887 officers, men and Wrens on full-time naval duty. This was two-and-a-half times the personnel strength of the RCN in December, 1947.

More than 3,500 of the Navy's officers and men are veterans of service in the Korean theatre, where Canada continues to maintain three destroyers, despite the truce. This has been a continuous commitment almost since the beginning of hostilities, and one Canadian destroyer, HMCS Athabaskan, has three complete tours of Korean duty, totalling 34½ months, to her credit.

Now serving in the Far East are the Huron, Crusader and Iroquois. The Iroquois is due to be relieved at the first of the year by the Cayuga and the Huron will be succeeded by the Haida early in February.

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Labour income topped the billion mark for the first time in September 1953 to reach \$1,012,000,000. This was more than double average monthly earnings of \$444,000,000 in 1946, close to five times 1939's monthly average of \$215,000,000.