

LAST CANADIAN TROOPS RETURN FROM KOREA

Twenty-nine members of the Canadian Army, the last of more than 22,000 to serve in the Far East since the Korean War began seven years ago, are scheduled to return to Canada by air today, Army Headquarters has announced. Two other flights returned earlier this month.

Withdrawal of the remaining Canadian Army personnel is in line with action taken by other nations that have contributed to the Commonwealth Contingent. Their return to Canada marks the official end of an era that cost Canada nearly 300 lives but enhanced the reputation of Canadian soldiers.

Their departure from the Far East leaves only one Army officer still serving in Korea. He is Major Gordon Douglas Cochrane, CD, 41, of New Glasgow, N.S., the Canadian Representative with the Advisory Group, United Nations Command, Military Armistice Commission at Munsan-Ni, Korea.

The men returning home are members of the Canadian Medical Detachment, Korea, which has been providing medical and dental care for remaining British Commonwealth troops in the theatre.

North Korea invaded South Korea June 25, 1950 and within two weeks Canada announced formation of the Canadian Army Special Force for service in Korea in support of the United Nations. A month later the Regular Forces of Canada were placed on active service to meet the emergency.

FIRST ENGAGEMENT

First Canadian unit to reach Korea was the 2nd Battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, which landed at Pusan, December 18, 1950. The battalion moved into front line positions as part of the 27th British Commonwealth Infantry Brigade February 19, 1951, and two days later made its first contact with the enemy.

The Patricia's had fought in several bitter engagements with the enemy by the time the remainder of the 25th Canadian Infantry Brigade Group sailed from Seattle April 19, 1951. While other units of the Brigade were at sea the Patricia's became involved in heavy fighting that at one time saw the unit surrounded by the enemy. The Patricia's fought their way free and, for their part in the bitter fight April 24-25, were awarded the U.S. Presidential Citation.

Remainder of the Canadian Brigade arrived at Pusan, Korea, May 4, 1951, and on May 20 relieved elements of the 25th U.S. Infantry Division east of Seoul. The 2nd Battalion, PPCLI, then fighting as part of the 28th British Commonwealth Infantry Brigade, rejoined the 25th Canadian Infantry Brigade on May 27, 1951.

COMMONWEALTH DIVISION FORMED

A few weeks later the now-famous 1st Commonwealth Division was formed with the Canadian force comprising one of its three infantry brigades.

Despite the fact that truce talks had begun at Kaesong, near the 38th Parallel July 10, the fighting continued throughout the summer and early fall.

The beginning of November saw the enemy putting in numerous attacks against the Commonwealth Division. On November 4, an estimated 10,000 enemy shells fell on the Commonwealth Division's sector. The heavy shelling indoctrinated members of the 1st Battalion, PPCLI, newly arrived from Canada to relieve the 2nd Battalion which was being sent home after a year in action. Throughout the next few weeks all three Canadian infantry battalions fought one furious battle after another to repel repeated Chinese attacks.

Armistice delegates at Panmunjom reached an agreement for a "Demarcation Line" November 27, 1951, but the agreement was not signed for another 20 months. The fighting continued.

The war now had become "static" but constant patrolling behind enemy lines cost the Canadian brigade a number of casualties in the ensuing months. Late in April, 1952, the majority of the personnel of the 25th Canadian Infantry Brigade were relieved by fresh troops newly arrived from Canada.

In late October, the Royal Canadian Regiment fought its now famed battle for Hill 355, known to the troops as "Little Gibraltar". Communist gunners rained 4,000 shells on the Canadian positions in a 12-hour period and Canadian losses were heavy.

The third big replacement in the 25th Canadian Infantry Brigade was begun in November 1952 when the 1st Battalion, PPCLI was replaced by the regiment's 3rd Battalion. The remainder of the brigade was relieved by fresh troops in the Spring of 1953.

An exchange of sick and wounded prisoners was begun at Panmunjom in April 1953. Two Canadians were among the first prisoners to be exchanged. In August, the Chinese returned 30 more Canadian prisoners of war.

KOREAN TRUCE SIGNED

The Korean truce was signed at Panmunjom July 27, 1953, and, their fighting done, Canadian Brigade took over for a period the responsibility of guarding the entire sector held by the 1st Commonwealth Division.

A fourth major turnover of 25th Canadian Infantry Brigade personnel was effected in 1953. In all, 12 Canadian infantry battalions, of four infantry brigade groups with artillery,