

## HOUSE OF COMMONS

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Wednesday, May 16, 1956

### NATIONAL DEFENCE

R.C.A.F.—CRASH OF JET PLANE AT ORLEANS,  
ONTARIO

**Right Hon. L. S. St. Laurent (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, may I crave your indulgence to say how deeply shocked we were to hear of the tragedy which occurred last night at Orleans, near Ottawa, in which several persons were killed and others were seriously injured. On behalf I think of all hon. members, as well as on my own behalf, I should like to express the most sincere sympathy to this distinguished community of Grey Nuns of the Cross and to the relatives and friends of the unfortunate victims of the disaster, including of course the two gallant airmen who were aboard the ill-fated jet craft. I am sure we all trust that the number of victims will not increase beyond that actually known at the present time, and I know we will all wish the injured a very complete and prompt recovery.

Perhaps the Minister of National Defence will have some information which he can give the house, because I know this has shocked all hon. members and that we are all deeply sympathetic with those who have suffered from this terrible tragedy.

**Hon. R. O. Campney (Minister of National Defence):** Mr. Speaker, I am sure all hon. members of the house will wish to learn such facts as have so far been ascertained in connection with the appalling accident about which the Prime Minister has just spoken. Before giving those facts I should like to express the heartfelt sympathy of all the members of the Canadian armed forces, as well as my own, to the relatives and friends of those who died last night when a Royal Canadian Air Force aircraft crashed into the Villa St. Louis convalescent home operated by the Roman Catholic religious order of the Grey Nuns of the Cross near Orleans.

The exact number of persons in the building at the time is not yet known with certainty, but it is believed that between 15 and 20 persons, including the crew of the aircraft, have lost their lives in the explosion and fire which resulted from the impact of the aircraft. In addition several members of the religious order were injured. I have just returned from the scene of the accident, and

from the facts which so far can be ascertained, pending the findings of the official court of inquiry which is now undertaking a full investigation, the details briefly are as follows.

An R.C.A.F. CF-100 jet interceptor aircraft, flown by a pilot and navigator, took off from Uplands airport at 9.30 last night as one of two aircraft ordered to intercept an aircraft detected by the radar warning system but not immediately identifiable. The mission is one which airmen of our nine CF-100 squadrons across Canada perform constantly in their task of protecting this country from possible hostile aircraft attack.

Before the interception was carried through to finality the identity of the unknown aircraft was definitely established by the ground control system, through the aircraft's flight plan, to be an R.C.A.F. transport aircraft returning from the Arctic.

Following identification of the unknown aircraft, at about 7,000 feet, as friendly, the two interceptor fighters climbed to about 33,000 feet to carry out practice interception manoeuvres with one another, which is a normal air defence procedure to build up training experience while using up excess fuel load, which is a necessary practice for safe landing.

Continuing under radar control from the ground, one of the two interceptor aircraft returned normally to its base and the other reported by radio from 33,000 feet altitude that he still had some excess fuel on board and would remain airborne longer. This was the last transmission received from this aircraft, following which it rapidly disappeared from the radar screen and within a couple of minutes crashed near the town of Orleans, at about 10.17 p.m. All evidence so far available points to the likelihood that the aircraft descended in a steep dive out of control from a high altitude, crashing directly into the convalescent home. The violent impact resulted in an explosion and fierce fire which completely demolished the building and the aircraft.

Up until the time of the aircraft's last radio transmission no indication of trouble was given by the pilot. The cause of the accident at present remains unknown. There is no trace of the two aircrew members having abandoned the aircraft by parachute prior