

The Navy

In the Navy, we began the month of May with 6,614 officers and ratings, including 125 officers and 100 ratings serving in the British Navy.

We had 94 vessels in commission.

We had 90 vessels under construction.

Our ships operated on both coasts, in West Indian waters, and convoyed ships from our shores and protected our harbours.

Since the course of the war changed, with the shock of unanticipated suddenness, we have ordered the recruitment of 4,900 additional men. Every shipyard now works to capacity. And to-day, by one of those strange changes of fate and fortune, our destroyers, willingly repaying a small part of an ancient debt, are helping to guard the shores of Britain, and watch with increasing vigilance for those who would violate her island freedom. I bade them Godspeed when they left with the same pride with which you and the people of Britain greeted their arrival.

Our Navy is a young navy. It has inherited great traditions; it is helping to create them.

The Air Force

The Royal Canadian Air Force had no existence during the last war. At the beginning of May, it had a strength of 12,315 men. We had nine squadrons for home defence, one army co-operation squadron overseas, another completing its training in Canada, and reinforcements continuously preparing for active service in the Army Co-operation School.

The Commonwealth Air Training Plan was proceeding in magnitude, training, and time in accordance with the predetermined plan.

The Nazis struck with all their power. Their swift advance was made possible by their numerical superiority in the air. We immediately sent overseas No. 112 Army Co-operation Squadron. We called up for immediate service 5,000 recruits for the Royal Canadian Air Force. We undertook to despatch overseas a fighter squadron of the Royal Canadian Air Force. We appointed a Minister to devote his entire time and attention to National Defence for Air.

We have hastened the construction of air fields and hangars a year earlier than the time fixed under the Commonwealth Plan.

We have sent overseas a number of pilots recently graduated from Camp Borden, who were intended to be used as instructors. Many of our own aeroplanes were sent to Britain. Aeroplanes of British manufacture, ordered five months before the outbreak of war, for our own Air Force, and which in the month of May were on their way out to Canada, were, on our own instructions, stopped in mid-ocean and returned to Britain.