

The first transatlantic ferry flight consisting of seven planes took off from Gander on November 11, 1940, and landed safely the next day at Prestwick. A new age in mass Atlantic flying had thus begun. The volume of ferry traffic built up rapidly until 1944, after which the demand for planes was declining. In 1940, 26 planes made the crossing; in 1941, 593; in 1942, 867; in 1943, 883; in 1944, 1,864; and in 1945, 686: for a grand total of almost 5,000.³³

Goose Bay

As early as 1941 Gander was becoming unduly crowded and much more traffic in heavy bombers could be anticipated as U.S. industry got into its full stride. Moreover, the advantages of a ferry service for medium and short-range planes was clearly apparent and a new airfield near the North-West River in Labrador was proposed. It was strategically located for the fulfilment of three main functions: it would strengthen the direct defence of Newfoundland and North Eastern Canada and the United States; it would be an important staging field on a new route for ferrying planes via Greenland and Iceland to the United Kingdom; and it would be a useful operating base in the Battle of the Atlantic. Canada undertook construction of the new field (later designated Goose Bay) which was in use by December 1941, although not yet equipped with paved runways.³⁴

The United States did not participate openly in the Atlantic section of the ferry service until after it entered the war (December 8, 1941) but thereafter it moved large numbers of its forces as well as aeroplanes overseas by ferry routes. Indeed, on occasion entire tactical formations crossed via Presque Isle, Gander or Goose, Greenland and Iceland. Nor should the enormous freight tonnage and large numbers of passengers carried by the United States Air Transport Command via Newfoundland (normally through Stephenville with Goose and Gander available as alternates) be overlooked. The RAF Transport Command and Trans-Canada Air lines also participated in these services.

After VE Day the ferry routes were available for the return westward of United States forces for demobilization or service in other theatres. By July over 3,000 tactical aircraft, carrying 50,000 personnel were returned with the loss of only one aircraft and no lives. By mid-September over 80,000 personnel were transported westward. In addition over 160,000 personnel due for demobilization were transported westward without a fatality. The great majority of these returned through bases in Newfoundland including Goose Bay.³⁵

THE BATTLE OF THE ATLANTIC

Canada's most distinctive contribution to the war at sea was that of escorting convoys over the Atlantic. At the outset of the war the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) was allotted two main tasks: protection of Canada's sea-borne

³³ Appendix D.

³⁴ Dziuban, Stanley W. *op. cit.* p. 191 and 192.

³⁵ *Loc. cit.*