

THE RCAF DURING 1963

The following are highlights from the year-end round-up released by the Royal Canadian Air Force:

NORAD

The official opening occurred on September 26 of North America's first "hardened" Semi-Automatic Ground Environment (SAGE) control centre near North Bay, Ontario. The site, complete with its 276-ton electronic computer, became the first fully-operational underground installation of its kind in North America. It was turned over to Air-Vice Marshal J.B. Harvey, Commander of the Northern NORAD Region, one of eight regions in North America.

The Royal Canadian Air Force also took over operation of the last of 11 U.S.-manned Pinetree Line radar sites in Canada at Lowther, Ontario, on June 26. Some of these sites, with some of the Mid-Canada and DEW Line, feed information to the SAGE site at North Bay.

In October, it was announced that the Ground Observer Corps, comprising about 1,200 civilian volunteers, was to be disbanded. The Corps was formed in 1951 during the construction stage of the early-warning lines.

NATO

In Europe, the RCAF's NATO role changed from one of air defence to one of strike and reconnaissance. During the year, six squadrons - two in France and four in Germany - were re-equipped with CF-104 "Starfighter" aircraft. Two more squadrons are to be similarly equipped next year, bringing the total to eight squadrons within 1 Air Division.

Meanwhile, on November 1, the last of the famous "Sabre" aircraft were flown from Marville, France, to Scotland for disposal. The CF-100s in Europe had been retired earlier in the year.

AIR TRANSPORT

The RCAF's two "Comet" jet transports were retired from service in October and flown to Mountain View, near Trenton, Ontario, for storage pending disposal. The "Comets" came into service with the RCAF in the summer of 1953, and were flown mainly on transport operations by 412 Squadron, Uplands, near Ottawa. Their work-load has now been absorbed by "Yukon" aircraft.

A "Yukon" aircraft, loaded with more than 12 tons of Red Cross and other supplies, left Trenton in June for East Pakistan following a disastrous cyclone that had struck that country.

Three months later, aircrews from Air Transport Command were again called on to carry out another emergency mission, this time in South America. Twenty tons of powdered milk and four tons of canned meat were airlifted to Curitiba, Brazil, a flood-disaster area.

In Canada, "Yukons", "Flying Boxcars" and "Heracles" aircraft shuttled men and material between major military centres and far northern outposts.

Not the least of Air Transport Command's commitments during the year was the rotation of a battalion of

the Canadian Infantry Brigade in Germany. In all, about 4,000 soldiers with their families were airlifted in the rotation between Canada and Europe in an operation that got under way in August.

UNITED NATIONS

In June, 134 Air Transport Unit, with 50 officers and men, was assigned to the United Nations in Yemen as the aerial contingent of the eight-nation UN observer team.

In September 1962, two "Otter" aircraft with aircrews and supporting equipment were assigned to UN security forces supervising the transfer of sovereignty of West New Guinea. Canadian responsibility in this area continued until May 1963, when RCAF personnel returned to Canada.

In other UN operations, the RCAF continued its support in the Congo. Two "Yukon" aircraft a month continued to cross the Atlantic to Pisa, Italy, and then to Leopoldville, with personnel and supplies for Canada's UN contingent.

In the Middle East, Canadian "Caribou" and "Otter" planes of 115 Air Transport Unit at El Arish, Egypt, continued their desert patrols and light-transport operations over the Sinai area.

MARITIME AIR COMMAND

Also working with NATO, "Neptune" and "Argus" patrol bombers of Maritime Air Command kept constant watch during 1963 over the shipping lanes of the North Atlantic. Maritime-patrol planes flew a total of more than 20,000 hours on both coasts and participated in NATO exercises in the Azores, Gibraltar, England, France, Ireland and the United States.

In the joint U.S.-Canadian operation "Submarine-Launched Atomic Missile Exercise" (SLAMEX), 24 aircraft from Maritime Air Command and six Royal Air Force patrol bombers co-operated with the United States Navy East Coast Fleet in one of the largest international maritime operations of the year.

SOLAR ECLIPSE

Scientists aboard a specially-instrumented "Yukon" aircraft observed the July solar eclipse from 30,000 feet over the Great Slave Lake area of the Northwest Territories. Aboard the aircraft were scientists from the Dominion Observatory, the National Research Council, the University of Saskatchewan and Oxford University, and RCAF personnel. The flight probably represented the most ambitious and comprehensive effort ever made by Canadian scientists to study and photograph a total eclipse of the sun.

In addition to the "Yukon" flight, a specially-equipped CF-100 from the Central Experimental and Proving Establishment Detachment at Valcartier, Quebec, was chosen to take part in the study of the eclipse. In an attempt to measure and record the infra-red radiation produced by the eclipse, this aircraft flew over the Thetford Mines area of Quebec at 40,000 feet at exactly 515 miles an hour.