

PRESS RELEASE

DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS



CANADA

COMMUNIQUÉ

MINISTÈRE DES AFFAIRES EXTÉRIEURES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

No. 6

February 16, 1962

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Howard Green today released the texts of an Exchange of Notes which took place recently between the Ambassador of Denmark to Canada, Mr. John Knox and Mr. Green, dealing with the exceptional act of heroism performed by a Canadian pilot, James Anthony Roe, who on August 29, 1961 gave his own life in saving the lives of his passengers when the aircraft, of which he was the pilot, made a forced landing in Greenland. The texts of Mr. Knox's Note of January 11 and of Mr. Green's reply of January 23 are attached.

COPY

ROYAL DANISH EMBASSY

Ottawa January 11, 1962

No. 3.

Sir,

On the 29th of August last a DHC-3 (Otter) aircraft (CF-WEX) operated by Eastern Provincial Airways departed from the airport at Søndrestrøm, Greenland for a flight to the station Egedesminde further north. The pilot was the Canadian citizen James Anthony Roe with Harris G. Robinson as a crewman. Passengers were Knud Rasmussen, Manager of the hotel at Søndrestrøm, Henning Dyrse, Station Manager for Scandinavian Airlines System, Daniel B. Catlin, 1st Lieutenant United States Air Force and Earl P. Frank, Staff Sergeant United States Air Force.

About 10 minutes after take-off at an altitude of approximately 3000 feet the pilot noted a drop in fuel pressure. The fuel booster pump was turned on and a strong smell of gasoline was noted in the cockpit. The smell of smoke became evident and this was followed almost immediately by flames coming through openings in the floor.

Pilot Roe shut down the engine and operated the engine fire extinguisher. He executed a rapid descent during which he was being burned about the legs and the right hand. During the latter stages of the descent he apparently flew from a position partially outside the aircraft as flames and smoke reduced visibility.

The Honourable Howard C. Green,
P.C., Q.C., etc.,
Secretary of State for External Affairs,
Department of External Affairs,
O t t a w a, Ont.

A smooth landing was made on the water and the aircraft continued on to the land about 50 feet beyond the water. At this stage the already badly burned pilot was apparently thrown forward and trapped under the left float. Efforts by the passengers and crewman to free him were unsuccessful and he remained trapped for 40 to 45 minutes exposed to a fire which consumed the aircraft back to the tail. When he regained consciousness the first concern he expressed was for the safety of his passengers. Pilot Roe was flown to Toronto where he succumbed to his injuries on the 7th of September, 1961. According to a Canadian Press report of October 30, his parents are Mr. and Mrs. James J. Roe of Mount Chesney, north of Kingston, Ontario.

In drawing your attention to the above, I am, Sir, to express to you on behalf of the Danish authorities concerned their sincere appreciation and recognition of the bravery and intrepidity shown by your compatriot James Anthony Roe, who, sacrificing his own life, through his heroic action saved the lives of his passengers and crewman.

I avail myself of this opportunity to renew to you, Sir, the assurances of my highest consideration.

JOHN KNOX
Ambassador of Denmark

January 23, 1962

No. 1

Excellency:

I have the honour to refer to your Note No. 3 of January 11, 1962, in which you wrote to me concerning an accident which took place at Søndrestrø. Greenland last August 29, which claimed the life of a Canadian pilot, James Anthony Roe. Like other Canadians, I shared in a sense of pride when I learned through the Press last autumn of Mr. Roe's exceptional act of heroism in saving the lives of his passengers while giving his own.

It is indeed gratifying to learn that this act of heroism has been officially recognized by the Danish authorities concerned. Your action expressing, on behalf of the Danish authorities concerned, their sincere appreciation and recognition of the bravery shown by Mr. Roe, will, I am sure, be particularly gratifying to his parents, Mr. and Mrs. James R. Roe of Mount Chesney, Ontario, and I am taking the opportunity of bringing this exchange of correspondence to their attention.

Accept, Excellency, the renewed assurances of my highest consideration.

Howard Green

Secretary of State
for External Affairs

His Excellency John Knox,
Ambassador of Denmark,
446 Daly Avenue,
O t t a w a.