



REFERENCE PAPERS

INFORMATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
OTTAWA - CANADA

No. 31

The RCAF Today September 1st, 1948.

Today's Royal Canadian Air Force has a maximum authorized establishment of 16,100, but for the present (1948) will be mobilized only to 75 per cent of this strength. Operational elements, which have been, are being, or will be set up in the near future, consist of 1 Coastal Reconnaissance Squadron (Lancaster), 2 Transport Squadrons (North Star and Dakota), 1 Mobile Tactical Wing (Mitchell, Mustang, Dakota, Auster), 1 Interceptor Fighter Wing (Vampire), and 2 Photo Survey Squadrons (Lancaster, Mitchell and Dakota). One of the two photo squadrons is provided as an extraneous commitment, to enable the RCAF to carry on work over and above its normal photographic duties.

For control and administration of these units, together with necessary training and other establishments required to back them up, Canada has been divided into two Commands.

Central Air Command, with headquarters at Trenton, Ont., is responsible for the eastern section, and North West Air Command, headquarters at Edmonton, Alta., for the western section, the dividing line in southern Canada between the two Commands being 85 degrees west. Central Air Command has an operational group headquarters at Halifax (10 Group). North West Air Command has group headquarters at Winnipeg (11 Group) and Vancouver (12 Group). These group headquarters have a limited establishment and are designed to exercise operational control only. All units remain directly under Command Headquarters for administrative services.

In addition to the two geographical commands, there are two functional organizations. Maintenance Command (H.Q. Ottawa) is responsible for supply, storage, distribution, repair and construction services to all units and formations. Air Transport Command (H.Q. Rockcliffe, Ont.) is responsible for direction, co-ordination, and control of transport operations. Overall command, supervision and control of the organizations outlined above is exercised by Air Force Headquarters, (Ottawa).

Standing behind the RCAF (Regular) is the Auxiliary Squadron Organization. These squadrons in the event of national emergency constitute the first-line reinforcements to the Regular Force, and, as such, occupy an important position in Canada's defence plans. Members of the RCAF (Auxiliary) include both aircrew and groundcrew, and training is carried out on a part-time basis throughout the year, including summer camp periods. Fifteen squadrons (4,500 personnel) have been authorized but only 10 (about 3,000 personnel) will be activated by the end of 1948. As the RCAF is primarily designed for the defence of Canada, the Auxiliary Squadrons are predominantly fighter squadrons. They are being equipped with DeHavilland jet Vampires.

The ten squadrons which have, or will have formed, by the end of this year (1948) are situated at Montreal (2), Toronto (2), Hamilton, London, Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Edmonton, and Vancouver.

These squadrons come under the operational and administrative control of the command in which they are situated.

Also standing behind the RCAF (Regular) is the Reserve, which is designed to furnish a pool of partially-trained personnel ready to be brought to operational standard in the minimum amount of time in event of emergency. The Reserve is divided into six classes. Classes A, B, C, and D comprise the active reserve, and personnel belonging to these classes may be required to take annual training to keep their Service knowledge up to date. Class E of the reserve is merely a list of names of former members of the Service. This class will not be called up for annual training. The sixth division, Class F, is a special class to which university students may be appointed for short periods when they are undergoing training or when required for special duties. The Reserve as a whole, but particularly the active classes, constitute the second-line reinforcements for the RCAF (Regular). Establishment for the active classes is set at 10,000. The inactive class is unlimited.

Closely associated with the RCAF is the Air Cadet League of Canada. The League operates 225 squadrons across Canada with a maximum approved enrolment of 15,000 cadets. These squadrons are administered by the Air Cadet League, a civilian organization, but are trained and equipped by the RCAF Regular Force. This early training will materially assist cadets who eventually join the RCAF (Regular), or an Auxiliary Squadron. Cadets who do not enter either component will find that opportunities for training, experience, and contacts afforded them in their squadrons will be of value in their civil occupations. Cadet training is also designed to train young men in the responsibilities of Canadian citizenship.

The peacetime RCAF (Regular) is small by comparison with the wartime Force, which rose to a peak strength of over 215,000. It is realized, however, that it is not practical for a nation with Canada's population to maintain an Air Force approaching such size, and the peacetime RCAF is designed to serve as a highly-trained Force, capable of rapid expansion in emergency.

About 85 per cent of the Regular Force peacetime establishment is composed of groundcrew, and ground training at the moment is one of the most important and extensive of RCAF activities. Role of the training organization in peacetime is twofold--it must provide for peacetime needs and it must equip the members of the Regular Force with sufficient background to facilitate rapid expansion if necessary. At present the RCAF is busily engaged in training not only hundreds of recruits without previous military service, but also in converting as many as possible of those wartime-trained tradesmen whose trade responsibilities have changed through amalgamation of two or more trades or changes in the trade itself. Approximately 2500 airmen are taking correspondence courses in various subjects to raise their academic standing. Training schools for ground crew are located at Camp Borden, Aylmer, Clinton, Trenton, and Rockcliffe, all in Ontario.

Aircrew training for new entrants, destined to become commissioned pilots or radio-navigators, now is also getting into full swing, and flying schools will be holding their first post-war wings parade in 1948. Many of the RCAF's aircrew in the

peacetime force will be short-service commission officers. Under this plan, qualified high school graduates and airmen selected from the ranks train as pilots or radio-navigators, the two post-war aircrew trades, being commissioned in the RCAF (Regular) upon completion of their initial training period, covering about one year. Upon finishing a total six-year period as aircrew, including the initial training, they are appointed to the Auxiliary or Reserve, with substantial gratuities, and stand ready to serve in emergency. A certain number may be retained in the Regular Force with long-service commissions. The scheme is aimed at keeping average age of aircrew at a low figure and furnishing a constant flow of trained personnel to the Auxiliary or Reserve Forces. Long-service aircrew commissions are offered to selected university graduates, and long-service technical commissions are open to qualified university graduates in science or engineering courses.

In addition to fitting itself to serve as an efficient defence force, ready to defend Canada at any time, the RCAF has various "peacetime" tasks, which serve the public interest and which at the same time give personnel operational training.

Most important of these is the aerial photographic coverage of Canada, being carried out by 22 Photo Wing, Rockcliffe. Its two squadrons leave their home base each spring and summer to range from coast to coast, and from the border to the Arctic, covering the Dominion by means of aerial photos. More than two million square miles have been covered since the RCAF began the job in 1921, the first season seeing 280 square miles completed. In 1947 over 400,000 square miles was chalked up, and the figure may go higher in 1948. The photos are used for mapping and for development of Canada's natural resources, and have proved a vital factor in pushing back the Dominion's frontiers.

Search and Rescue is also a responsibility of the RCAF, which co-ordinates and largely operates the organization. Designed to handle Canada's commitments under ICAO, Search and Rescue has in the last two years set up a thrilling record of mercy flights in various parts of the country. Search and Rescue does not displace existing means of lending aid to distressed persons in isolated areas, but steps in only when the job is too big for anyone else.

The RCAF is vitally interested in research and development, and the work being carried out in this line is aiding not only the Air Force but aviation in general. The Experimental and Proving Establishment at Rockcliffe, Ont., and the Winter Experimental Establishment, at Edmonton, Alta., are both carrying on many important jobs.

The RCAF is also involved in the study of the propagation of radio signals, a special section having been set up to study this in co-operation with other government departments. Their investigations are co-ordinated through the Canadian Radio-Wave Propagation Committee, which in turn co-operates closely with similar organizations in the United States and Britain.

The part played by the RCAF in the Second World War is well known. From a pre-war Force of fewer than 5,000, the RCAF reached a peak of more than 215,000 in January, 1944. Forty-eight operational squadrons-- bomber, fighter, coastal command and transport--served overseas, and many more served in the western hemisphere. RCAF fighter planes fought in the Battle of Britain, and Canadian bombers flew through the thick of the

bombing on Germany. In addition to the air power which Canada threw against the enemy, out of all proportion to the country's population, Canada operated at home the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan, designed to train aircrew from the Commonwealth nations. From its start in December, 1939, this was a spectacular undertaking. Altogether, including RCAF men, more than 131,000 aircrew were turned out. Of these, nearly 73,000 were Canadians, and it is believed that Canada had the highest per capita number of air crew of any nation fighting in the war. Casualties suffered by the RCAF totalled more than 18,000. Of these, 17,000 were killed.

The RCAF set a high standard during the Second World War, a hard one for the men of the post-war force to maintain. But it is being maintained, the peacetime RCAF showing itself well fitted to bear the Air Force motto "Per Ardua Ad Astra" - Through Adversity to the Stars.
