



PRESS RELEASE

DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

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The Department of External Affairs announced today that the first six of 82 Canadian F.86E Sabrejets have been handed over by the Canadian Charge d'Affairs, Mr. G.K. Grande, at Eleusis Airport near Athens to the Greek Minister of National Defence, Mr. Kanellopoulos. General Gyalistras, the Greek Under-Secretary for Air, General Kitrilakis, the Chief of the General Staff, and the Chiefs of Staff participated with Mr. Grande and representatives of the R.C.A.F. in the ceremony.

These F.86E jet fighters, flown to Greece by pilots of the R.C.A.F., are being transferred as part of Canada's programme of mutual aid to members of NATO. The balance of the 82 Sabrejets will be delivered to Greece in forthcoming months.

In addition to these aircraft, Greece is also receiving from Canada 195 spare jet engines together with other military equipment to the value of approximately \$55 million.

During the ceremony at which these first aircraft were handed over to the Greek authorities, Mr. Grande read a short message from Prime Minister St. Laurent which stated: "We have watched with great admiration your great achievements in reconstructing your country which had suffered so much, not only during the war but also in the post-war years. We therefore welcome this opportunity to assist you in strengthening your defence forces".

Mr. St. Laurent also expressed confidence in the role that Greece was playing in NATO: "These aircraft will also, I am sure, make it clear that, although our two countries are oceans apart, we are, in fact, partners in the defence of peace and the promotion of security".

In a message Lord Ismay, the Secretary General of NATO, stated that he was gratified that these Sabrejets would strengthen "our means to defend ourselves against aggression", and that he was pleased "to see these aircraft turned over to the capable hands of the Royal Hellenic Air Force for assignment in a new country, but always for the same cause, the preservation of peace".

A similar number of aircraft for Turkey also arrived at a Turkish air base last week.

In order to complete the transfer smoothly, the R.C.A.F. has established in Greece a liaison mission which is headed by Squadron Leader R.M. Donaldson of Ottawa.

Among the group of R.C.A.F. pilots that ferried the first of the Sabrejets to Greece were: Squadron Leader P.L. Gibbs, Edmonton; Flight Lieutenant G.W. Patterson, Ottawa; Flying Officer C.A. Debenham, Sintaluta, Sask.; Flying Officer R.R. Smith, Kirkland Lake; Flying Officer H.G. Chiasson, 15 Reserve Row, Reserve, N.S.; Flying Officer G.S. Doucette, Yarmouth, N.S.

NOTE TO CORRESPONDENTS:

Attached are copies of the Prime Minister's statement and Lord Ismay's message which were read during the ceremony.

PUBLIC CEREMONY - GREECE

Prime Minister's Message:

"I am very pleased and honoured to have the opportunity of sending a brief message to the people of Greece.

"Today, pilots of the R.C.A.F. are handing over the first of 82 Sabrejet aircraft to the Royal Hellenic Air Force as part of Canada's Mutual Aid to countries, members of NATO. We in Canada feel happy that these aircraft will contribute to the common defence of peace as part of the Greek defence forces.

"We have watched with admiration your great achievements in reconstructing your country, which had suffered so much not only during the war but also during the post-war years. We therefore welcome this opportunity to assist you in strengthening your defence forces.

"NATO is a defence alliance of independent, free, peace-loving nations. It is the collective resources of all its members which are the strength of NATO, and we are confident that this strength, because it ensures that aggression could be successfully resisted provides a strong deterrent to aggression against any NATO member from whatever quarter.

"These aircraft will also, I am sure, make it clear that, although our two countries are oceans apart, we are, in fact partners in the defence of peace and the promotion of security."

PUBLIC CEREMONY - GREECE

Lord Ismay's Message:

"I am very sorry that I cannot myself be present at this hand-over ceremony. Apart from the gratification all of us in the Atlantic Alliance draw from the strengthening of our means to defend ourselves against aggression, I have a particular, personal interest in these particular Sabrejets.

"I saw them drawn up on St. Hubert's airfield, near Montreal, in Canada, in March, 1953, just before their Royal Canadian Air Force crews were to take off in them across the Atlantic to add their impressive weight to NATO's defences. It was an icy-cold, wintry day at St. Hubert's, when the Canadian Defence Minister, Mr. Brooke Claxton and I had the honour of wishing good fortune and happy landings to that magnificent body of men.

"But that does not end my association with these particular Sabrejets, for I was privileged to see them again at Grostenquin in France, when that airbase was formally handed over by the French Government to the Canadians.

"It would have given me great pleasure to be present in Greece today to see these aircraft turned over to the capable hands of the Royal Hellenic Air Force for assignment in a new country, but always for the same cause, the preservation of peace."