



PRESS RELEASE

INFORMATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
OTTAWA - CANADA

FOR RELEASE NOT BEFORE 10:30 A.M. (E.S.T.)
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 1949.

NO.9.

February 4, 1949.

It was announced simultaneously today in Ottawa and Washington that, with a view to expediting the movement across the international boundary of aircraft and air-crew engaged in emergency air search and rescue operations, the Canadian and United States Governments had agreed in an exchange of notes to give special customs and immigration clearance to such planes and crews of either country when entering the other's territory. As a result of the new arrangements, it will no longer be necessary for the crews of planes involved in air search and rescue operations to make their own arrangements with the Customs and Immigration authorities of the country which they are entering. Instead, completion of these formalities, by telephone or telegraph, has now become the responsibility of the Rescue Coordination Centre in charge of the rescue operation.

In Canada the R.C.A.F. is responsible for coordinating air search and rescue operations, which have been so often in the news since the war as a result of the many spectacular rescues effected. One of the mostly highly publicized of these was the dramatic "Operation Canon", in the autumn of 1947, when the R.C.A.F., assisted by an Army paratroop team, evacuated Canon John Turner, wounded Church of England missionary, by air from his home in Northern Baffin Land.

Rescue operations are conducted from five R.C.A.F. Coordination Centres at Halifax, Trenton, Winnipeg, Edmonton and Vancouver. In most cases flights are handled by aircraft specially designated for such work; some 25 of these planes are based at different points across Canada, immediately available for rescue missions. In addition the R.C.A.F. maintains a detachment of specially trained "para-rescue jumpers", ready to leap to the aid of those in distress in remote areas. There are also special marine craft available on the East and West Coasts for water rescues.

When the need arises, the combined facilities of the R.C.A.F., of the other two Services, and of other Government agencies can be called upon to assist in rescue operations. The R.C.A.F. maintains close co-operation with all Government departments and municipal agencies and, when the latter are unable to carry out the task with the facilities at their immediate disposal, the Air Search and Rescue organization is brought into play.

Normally, R.C.A.F. Air Search and Rescue planes are only employed in assisting distressed flyers. In exceptional cases, however, - particularly when it is a matter of life or death - "mercy flights" within Canadian territory are also handled. Some fifty operations of all kinds have been carried out during the past twelve months and in three cases the men responsible for effecting the rescues were awarded decorations.

The texts of exchange of notes on this subject are attached:

(Text of Canadian Note)

Canadian Embassy
Ambassade du Canada

No. 35

Washington, January 24, 1949.

Sir,

I have the honour to refer to the discussions that have taken place in the Permanent Joint Board on Defence, with regard to the necessity of ensuring adequate cooperation between our two Governments in Air Search and Rescue operations along our common boundary.

2. As a result of the conclusions reached in the course of these discussions, my Government wishes to propose:

- (1) That, in future, public aircraft of Canada or the United States which are engaged in emergency Air Search and Rescue operations, be permitted to enter or leave either country without being subject to the immigration or customs formalities normally required by the Government of either country, provided that the Rescue Coordination Centre involved in the search or rescue, either directly or through some person delegated by it, assumes the responsibility of informing by telephone or telegraph:
 - (a) The immigration office at the port of entry nearest to the territory over which any search or rescue is to be instituted, of the intended operation, furnishing it with details concerning the purpose of the flight; the identification markings of each aircraft; and the number of persons comprising the crew of each aircraft.
 - (b) The customs office nearest to the territory over which any search or rescue is to be instituted, of the intended operation, giving details concerning the territory to be searched; the possible duration of the stay of the aircraft; the identification markings of each aircraft; and the number of persons comprising the crew of each aircraft.
- (2) That, should a landing be made by public aircraft of one country in the territory of the other in the course of such emergency search or rescue, an oral or telephonic report shall be made to the nearest Collector of Customs so that he may assist, in any way possible, in connection with any special

The Honourable Sean Acheson,
Secretary of State,
Washington, D.C.

importation required in the search or rescue operations. This report may be made by the Rescue Coordination Centre organizing the operation, or by the pilots concerned, whichever would best serve the interests of the rescue operations involved.

- (3) That, should any merchandise carried, in the aircraft in question, from one country to the other in the course of such search or rescue, remain in the latter country on conclusion of an operation, such merchandise will be subject to the customs treatment normally accorded in that country to imported merchandise.

3. The term "public aircraft", as used in this Note, refers to aircraft of the Canadian and United States Governments and such other aircraft of United States and Canadian registry as may be brought under the control of a Rescue Coordination Centre in either country for the purposes of an emergency search or rescue operation.

4. If your Government concurs in the foregoing proposals, it is the desire of my Government that this Note, together with your reply agreeing thereto, constitute an agreement between our two Governments that is to be effective from the date of your reply and to remain in force until sixty days after either party to the agreement has signified to the other a desire to terminate it.

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

H. H. Wrong

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

WASHINGTON

January 31st, 1949.

Excellency:

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your note No. 35 of January 24th, 1949, referring to the discussions that have taken place in the Permanent Joint Board on Defense with regard to the necessity of ensuring adequate cooperation between our two Governments in air search and rescue operations along our common boundary, and to this end proposing:

"2. As a result of the conclusions reached in the course of these discussions, my Government wishes to propose:

- (1) That, in future, public aircraft of Canada or the United States which are engaged in emergency Air Search and Rescue operations, be permitted to enter or leave either country without being subject to the Immigration or Customs formalities normally required by the Government of either country, provided that the Rescue Coordination Centre involved in the search or rescue, either directly or through some person delegated by it, assumes the responsibility of informing by telephone or telegraph:
 - (a) The immigration office at the port of entry nearest to the territory over which any search or rescue is to be instituted, of the intended operation, furnishing it with details concerning the purpose of the flight; the identification markings of each aircraft; and the number of persons comprising the crew of each aircraft.
 - (b) The customs office nearest to the territory over which any search or rescue is to be instituted, of the intended operation, giving details concerning the territory to be searched; the possible duration of the stay of the aircraft; the identification markings of each aircraft; and the number of persons comprising the crew of each aircraft.
- (2) That, should a landing be made by public aircraft of one country in the territory of the other in the course of such emergency search or rescue, an oral or telephonic report shall be made to the nearest Collector of Customs so that he may assist, in any way possible, in connection with any special importation required in the search or rescue operations. This report may be made by the Rescue Coordination Centre organizing the operation, or by the pilots concerned, whichever would best serve the interests of the rescue operations involved.

/...That

- (3) That, should any merchandise carried, in the aircraft in question, from one country to the other in the course of such search or rescue, remain in the latter country on conclusion of an operation, such merchandise will be subject to the customs treatment normally accorded in that country to imported merchandise.

"3. The term "public aircraft", as used in this note, refers to aircraft of the Canadian and United States Governments and such other aircraft of United States and Canadian registry as may be brought under the control of a rescue coordination centre in either country for the purposes of an emergency search or rescue operation."

In reply I have the honor to inform your Excellency that the Government of the United States concurs in the foregoing proposals and agrees that your Excellency's note and this reply shall be regarded as constituting an agreement between our two Governments that is to be effective from this date and shall remain in force until sixty days after either party to the agreement has signified to the other a desire to terminate it.

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

James E. Webb

His Excellency

H.H. Wrong,

Ambassador of Canada.