

# THE AIRBORNE SERVICES

## Air Tragedy

An investigation has been launched into the mid-air explosion of an RCAF B-25 Mitchell near Ottawa's Uplands airfield early this month which killed the eight persons aboard including Air Vice Marshal R. C. Ripley, AOC of Air Materiel Command.

The Mitchell, recently converted to a luxury VIP aircraft for use by high-ranking officers, was on a flight from Churchill, Manitoba to Rockliffe, Ottawa. After refuelling at North Bay, the flight continued on to the capital city where, due to ground fog which habitually plagues the low-lying Rockliffe base, it was diverted to Uplands. The explosion occurred during an instrument approach, the wreckage falling some 12 miles from the runway.

Any connection between the Mitchell accident in Winnipeg and the one which followed less than a week later at Ottawa has been discounted by the Air Force. Although the B-25 is of war-vintage, the two aircraft involved were less than 6 years old. They were purchased from the United States at that time as surplus goods, but are attested to as being "almost new."

## Missiles For Army

According to newspaper reports, recent developments at home and abroad have enhanced possibilities that the Canadian Army will acquire guided missiles before long. The missiles, without atomic warheads, likely will go first to the Canadian Infantry Brigade Group in West Germany. The

warheads would probably be supplied to the Army in event of emergency; i.e., Russian ground attack on western Europe.

All western armies now are planning to substitute more fire-power for a good part of their manpower. The British are reported to be preparing to cut their 80,000-man army in Germany to 50,000 men while maintaining four divisions. Until recently, defence planners did not intend that an army formation as small as a brigade would be equipped with weapons capable of firing nuclear packages. But these plans are changing as the fire-power of formations is increased.

In line with current Canadian Army plans for more mobility and flexibility, the 6,000-man brigade in Europe has almost reached the status of a division, which normally numbers some 18,000 men.

## Pioneer Retires

Group Captain Lewis Leigh, OBE, ED, a Canadian flying pioneer, retired from the RCAF last month. At the time of his retirement, he was Group Commander, No. 2 Auxiliary Group, Toronto.

Born in England, he came to Canada at the age of 3, was educated in Lethbridge where he began his flying career. After several years of barnstorming across the prairies, he formed his own flying school in Medicine Hat. During the thirties, he flew Canada's northlands as a bush pilot.

In 1936, when TCA was formed, he

was one of the embryo airline's three senior instructors. Later he was senior captain, flying the first passenger flights from Winnipeg to Vancouver, and later from Winnipeg to Montreal. Joining the RCAF in 1940, his experience and ability quickly carried him to the top in transport operations. He was senior air staff officer of the RCAF's No. 9 Transport Group, which is now Air Transport Command, and later the commanding officer of RCAF Station Goose Bay.

In 1946, G/C Leigh received the McKee Trophy for outstanding services to aviation in Canada. His decorations include the Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, and the United State's Legion of Merit.

## RCAF Takes Navy

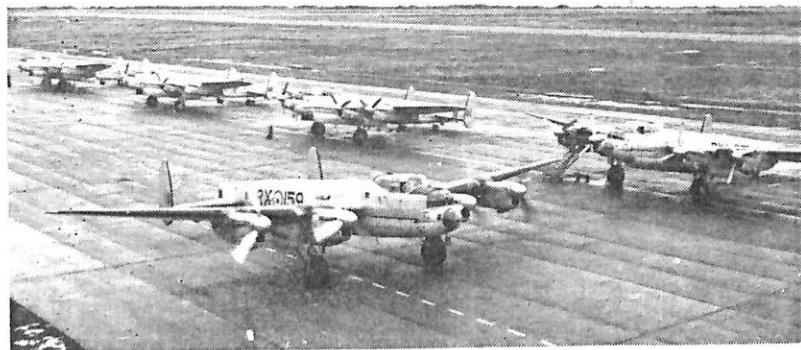
On the RCAF Overseas Ferry Unit's first trip of 1957, their 27th Random Operation since inception in October, 1953, were four Royal Canadian Navy aircraft. These four, a pair of Banshee fighters and two CS2F Trackers, are bound for flight trials aboard the HMCS Bonaventure, temporarily based at Belfast. To complete the menagerie being taken across with the Sabre 6 flights, was a CF-100 left in Blue West One during the last Nimblebat Operation. The big night fighter had been forced down at the Greenland alternate while enroute Goose Bay to Iceland.

Random 27, led by the Unit's commanding officer, Squadron Leader Don Cuthbertson, DFC, was made up of 22 Sabre 6's bound for No. 1 Fighter Wing, Marville, France. During its three-year life, the OFU has succeeded in delivering over 700 Sabre and T-33 aircraft to Europe without the loss of a single pilot. In command of the Navy aircraft accompanying the Random operation, was Commander H. J. Hunter. They have been flown to the Royal Naval Air Station near Portsmouth, England for initial trials.

## New Ejection Seats

At the present time the RCAF is fitting all its T-33 and F-86 aircraft with automatic "Z" type harnesses, incorporating the GQ Mark VII automatic ejection device. Tests on this device for the F-86 and T-33 are about three-quarters complete.

These modifications to the ejection seats will be fitted at the rate of 100 per week on Canadian-based Sabres and



NORTH PACIFIC EXERCISE: The RCAF's 407 Maritime (Squadron 407 Lancs above) based at Comox on Vancouver Island recently participated in routine exercises with the U.S. Coastguard and Naval forces in the Gulf of Alaska. The joint exercise, the first combined operation of its type to be held in the fog-shrouded Gulf of Alaska area lasted from March 5 to 9. One objective of the operation was to train the aircrews in the severe weather usually found in the Gulf of Alaska area.