

aviation intelligence

Oribtron Development

Possible Canadian contribution to missile/satellite research which is attracting wide interest is the super-secret Oribtron system now being jointly developed by Sir Robert Watson-Watt's Adalia Ltd. of Montreal and Spartan Air Services Ltd. of Ottawa. Believed to represent a major scientific breakthrough incorporating new principles, Oribtron is said to have extensive civil applications and good prospects for use in the detection underwater of missile-carrying submarines. The system is currently receiving careful study by Canadian and U. S. defense officials.

Canada - U.S. Routes

Indications are for early meetings between Canadian and United States government air transport officials aimed at broadening present reciprocal agreements covering commercial air routes between the two countries. Canada has long been anxious to extend present route patterns, at the instigation of Canadian carriers, but lack of interest on the part of U. S. air lines in any new services has left American government representatives with little inclination to bargain. More recently, U. S. carriers have evidenced interest in extending their Canadian routing. Negotiations are expected to open in a few weeks.

Canadian Car Order

Canadian Car Co. Ltd. is supplying two to three million dollars in Harvard spares to the West German government. Company representatives recently completed arrangements for delivery on the order, placed some months ago. The Harvard line continues as one of the Fort William firm's bread and butter aviation items, with the durable trainer still in wide service with the Western world's air forces.

"Budworm" Avengers

A number of the Royal Canadian Navy's retired TBM Avengers are going "into moth balls, but in far from the ordinary sense of the phrase. Wheeler Airlines Ltd. plans to put a dozen of the former submarine killers to work in this year's "Operation Budworm" over the forests of New Brunswick and Eastern Quebec. The giant air spray operation is scheduled for some time in May-June, with the Avengers expected to substantially lighten the aircraft load in getting this year's program completed.

North Atlantic Traffic

Scheduled airlines broke the million passenger mark on the North Atlantic route during 1957. In addition to setting a new record in air traffic for the route, the preliminary figure of 1,023,000 passengers for the airlines also represents close to an even split of regular trans-Atlantic traffic with the steamship lines, which report carrying 1,030,000 passengers for the year. The 1957 total for airlines is 10.8% above the figure reported in 1956.

Atomic Aircraft

The de Havilland Engine Co. of England, in association with the UK Atomic Energy Research Establishment is hoping to have an atomic reactor practical for use as an aircraft power plant built before the end of next year. A de Havilland spokesman sees "no insurmountable obstacle" to making the atomic engine small enough for an aircraft. As it is being specified in present plans, the unit would be capable of keeping the aircraft in the air for up to 100 days at a time. Main problem in the project remains that of shielding crew and any passengers from radiation without paying too large a weight penalty.

West German Sabres

Canadair Ltd. has passed the 100 aircraft mark in flight testing on its 225 Sabre VI order for the West German Air Force. With bulk delivery not required until next fall, the Montreal firm is not being pressed at all to maintain an adequate production rate, expects to finish up on the contract by late in the year. Production may be accelerated slightly to make way for the new Canadair 540 Cosmopolitan line which will replace the long established Sabre line.

TCA's Turbine Centre

Work has begun on Trans-Canada Airlines multi-million dollar turbine maintenance and overhaul centre at Montreal's Dorval airport. The project is scheduled for completion in the fall of 1959 to coincide with delivery of the first of TCA's six Douglas DC-8 pure jet (Rolls-Royce Conway bypass engines) airliners.

Canadian Army Helicopter Studies

The Canadian Army is stepping up studies on helicopter operations co-incident with consistent reports that the Royal Canadian Air Force is to gradually relinquish its responsibilities in the helicopter transport field. Royal Canadian Army Service Corps and Royal Canadian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers have been observing the last phases of the RCAF's helicopter transport operations on the Mid-Canada Line in recent months. The Army has announced formation of a helicopter evaluation unit which would presumably conduct tests to establish the most suitable vehicles for operational requirements.

RCAF Comets

Transport Command of the Royal Canadian Air Force has provided a capsule preview of air travel tomorrow on the North Atlantic route. Weekly communications flights between Montreal and Marville, France, with the recently reactivated de Havilland Comet 2s saw established the only regular trans-Atlantic jet transport service now in operation. In addition to the transport chores, the Comets are also being used to exercise the Air Defense Command detection and interception system.