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RCAF adds depth in '55

Completion in the build-up of Canadian-based CF-100 Canuck squadrons, consolidation of the 12-squadron Air Division in Europe, re-equipment of Maritime Air Command's operation squadrons and an increase in strength to make the Air Force the largest of the three Canadian services.

These are the highlights of activity by the Royal Canadian Air Force in 1955.

► **Top Strength.** RCAF strength during the year just passed exceeded the 50,000 mark, just short of the 51,000 which has been set as maximum strength.

Operating out of bases ranging from Comox on Vancouver Island to Bagotville, Que., Air Defense Command squadrons flew their all-weather CF-100 Mark 4 Canucks in continuing exercises with units in the Pine Tree Warning Line.

The year saw the All-Weather Operational Training Unit for future Canuck crews moved from North Bay, Ont., to the RCAF's new weapons firing range at Cold Lake, Alta.

► **Big Show.** Largest workout was exercise "Carte Blanche" in Europe which saw squadrons of the Air Division fly some 2,500 sorties in nine days.

Back in Canada, RCAF tactical units, both active and reserve, took part in large-scale manoeuvres with Army forces at Camp Gagetown, N.B.

Exercise "Cracker Jack" held early in December was the big show for Air Defense Command's CF-100 squadrons.

Maritime Air Command had an opportunity to work any kinks out of some of its new Neptunes in Exercise "New Broom" undertaken with other NATO maritime forces.

Transport Command also had a busy year continuing with ferry operations, particularly Operation "Random" in which new Sabre 6s were flown across the Atlantic for placement with the Air Division.

In northern operations, the command's Photo Squadron completed aerial photographic coverage of 352 linear miles on Ellesmere Island, well within the Arctic Circle. Another 36,900 linear miles of vertical photography operations as well as 7,841 linear miles of Shoran-recorded photo work was completed in the Arctic regions.

There was a notable expansion during the year in use of helicopters. No. 108 Communications Flight, one of the force's newer units, picked up extra 'copters and carried out extensive work in connection with construction of the Mid-Canada Line.

The Neptunes turned over to Maritime Air Command's operational squadrons at Greenwood and continuing delivery of Mark 6 Sabres to the four fighter wings in Europe were high points in re-equipment programs completed throughout the year.

► **NATO Training.** During the year Greece became the 10th NATO nation to send aircrew trainees to Canada under the NATO Aircrew Training Program. More than 500 pilots and navigators completed their training in Canada during the year, bringing the total number of NATO aircrew graduates since the scheme was set up in 1950 to over the 4,000 mark.

During the summer months more than 2,000 high school students were trained in various air force trades under the Reserve Trades Training Plan. Royal Canadian Air Cadets attended summer camps held at RCAF stations at Greenwood, Clinton, Ont., and Abbotsford, B.C.

Search and rescue operations were continued through the year, supplemented by a number of "mercy" flights to isolated regions, particularly in the Arctic.

The air force construction program during the year was concentrated on operational needs, including lengthening of runways to accommodate the latest types of fighters and a continuing program to replace wooden hangars with fire-resistant units.

► **Decorations.** Two Air Force officers were decorated for gallantry and devotion to duty during the year. F/Lt. David E. MacLeod of Pictou, N.S., was awarded the Queen's Commendation for Brave Conduct as a result of his attempt to save the lives of two officers in a burning aircraft at North Bay.

F/O Sydney E. Burrows of White Rock, B.C., received the Air Force Cross for courage and devotion to duty when he succeeded in landing his Sabre jet while suffering intense pain and almost blind from the shattering of the aircraft's perspex canopy when struck by a bird in flight.