

VETERAN CANADIAN RAIDERS GO INTO NEW BOMBER GROUP

Dominion's First Squadron Comes Into Being at New Year's

BROOKES IS CHIEF

Ottawa, Jan. 4. — (CP) — Canada's first bomber group came into being with the start of the new year, it was announced to-day. Into it went a group of R.C.A.F. squadrons which have been bombing Germany, Italy and enemy-occupied territory for many months as part of various other bomber groups.

Brookes in Command

The organization of an all-Canadian bomber group within the R.A.F. has been planned for a long time and active preparations for it have been under way for months.

The announcement from R.C.A.F. headquarters to-day said the new group came into being at one minute past midnight January 1 and is under the command of Air Vice-Marshal G. E. Brookes, former air officer commanding No. 1 training command, Toronto. Headquarters are in an old English mansion, around which are situated the bomber stations from which big two and four-engined bombers, manned by Canadian crews, take off for their attacks on the enemy.

"A bomber group is one of the most highly complex fighting units and Canada's own bomber group has been building up over the last two months operationally," said the statement.

All that was necessary to bring it into being was to instruct the bomber stations composing it to take their orders from a new group headquarters.

Greetings From Harris

Air Marshal Sir Charles A. T. Harris, chief of the bomber command, greeted the new group in the following message:

"A happy birthday and a prosperous New Year to the R.C.A.F. group. As individuals and as R.C.A.F. squadrons you have done fine work already. As the R.C.A.F.

group I know that you will maintain and even surpass your own high standards. We are proud to have you with us. Hail Canada. Hail Hitler, but with bombs."

In reply Air Vice-Marshal Brookes said:

"Your good wishes for our birthday much appreciated. We are proud to be part of bomber command and will do our utmost to maintain its high traditions."

Headquarters staff of the new R.C.A.F. group is comprised of experienced men. Under the air officer command are: Group Captain C. R. Sleman, Bowmanville, Ont., Senior air staff officer; Wing Cmdr. J. Fauquier, D.F.C., Ottawa, chief operations officer; Sqdn.-Ldr. C. H. N. Ashlin, Toronto, chief intelligence officer; Sqdn.-Ldr. F. W. Stanley, Weston, Ont., senior flying control officer; Sqdn.-Ldr. A. Lambert, D.F.C., Saint John, N.B., chief navigation officer; Sqdn.-Ldr. W. H. Swetman, D.F.C., Kapuskasing, Ont., group training inspector; Wing Commander C. G. Durham, M.M., Calgary, senior administration officer; Sqdn.-Ldr. S. T. Douglas, Fredericton, organizer officer; Flt.-Lt. W. Biggar, Westmount, Que., camp commandant; Flt.-Lt. D. D. Millar, Ottawa, engineering officer; Sqdn.-Ldr. J. C. Whyte, Ottawa, medical officer; Sqdn.-Ldr. D. O. Shaw, Arnprior, Ont., armament officer; Flt.-Lt. N. M. Coull, Montreal, gunnery leader, and Sqdn.-Ldr. C. B. Guest, Ottawa, equipment officer.

One of Earliest Members

Air Vice-Marshal Brookes was one of the earliest members of the R.C.A.F., joining the service in 1921. He left his position as A.O.C. with No. 1 Training Command in Toronto to take the leadership of Canada's first bomber group.

Group-Capt. Sleman worked under the air vice-marshal when the latter was the flight-lieutenant who taught Sleman to fly at Camp Borden, Ont., in 1924. Since that year Group-Capt. Sleman has flown several thousand miles on bush operations in peace-time and when war broke out was senior air staff officer of western air command in Vancouver. He gave up his post as director of operations at air force headquarters in Ottawa to go to Britain to join the bomber group.

Veterans Included

Five members of the First Canadian bomber squadron to be formed in Britain, in June, 1940, are in the headquarters staff:

Wing Cmdr. Fauquier, who commanded it after a long tour of operations as a flight-commander; Squadron-Leader Swetman, who joined the first bomber squadron as a sergeant soon after it was formed; Squadron-Leader Lambert, who had a long and distinguished record with R.A.F. squadrons before he joined Canada's first bomber squadron as bombing leader; Flight-Lieut. Coull, who was the first squadron's gunnery leader for more than a year after serving as an air crew member with an R.A.F. squadron; and Flight-Lieut. Millar, one of the squadron's original members, joining as engineering officer.

Wing Commander Durham was administration officer on an R.C.A.F. fighter station in Britain before taking up his new task; Flight-Lieut. Biggar served on the air staff in Toronto with Air Vice-Marshal Brookes and for some time was assistant camp commandant at R.C.A.F. headquarters in London, Eng., before joining the group.

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