

# Wing Mate

Royal Canadian Air Force Association of Canada  
Newsletter 408-437 Wing



C102 Jetliner



December  2025

## AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION of CANADA MISSION STATEMENT

The Air Force Association of Canada is a national aerospace and community service organization whose aim is to commemorate the noble achievements of the men and women who have served as members of Canada's Air Force since its inception, advocate for a proficient and well equipped Air Force and, support the Royal Canadian Air Cadets.

### 2025 Executive

President..... Nick Czernkovich  
[ncz@aerosafety.ca](mailto:ncz@aerosafety.ca) 416-654-2832  
401-21 Tichester Road, Toronto, M5P 1P3  
Immediate Past President..... Kurt Abels (deceased)  
Vice President..... John Wreglesworth  
416-473-5972  
Secretary/Membership..... Cécile Thompson  
416-579-0199  
Treasurer..... David Ouellette  
416-449-0618  
Wing Mate Editor..... Terry Sleightholm  
[tsleight46@gmail.com](mailto:tsleight46@gmail.com) 416-573-7724  
Events Coordinator..... John Wreglesworth  
Fellowship Chair..... Barbara Newman  
416-223-7840

Air Cadets

818 Squadron..... Jackie Johnston  
110 Squadron..... Cécile Thompson



### Sick and Visiting

Be sure to advise Barbara Newman, Fellowship Chair, if you are aware of a Wing member who is ill or in distressed circumstances.

Barbara can be reached at 416-223-7840.

## Happy Birthday! December 2025

5th..... Jackie Johnston

12th..... Doreen Wilson



948 Sheppard Ave. Legion Building

Monday, December 8  
Christmas-  
Hanukkah Dinner



## President's Report



Dear members,

On behalf of your Executive, a Happy Hanukkah and Merry Christmas! May this season bring happiness and joy to your family.

Our next General Meeting is on 08 December, our Christmas Dinner. By now you should have received by mail or snail mail the invitation. Your presence is most welcome. The contact is Dave Ouellette. Please call Dave, we need the numbers for the kitchen.

On 24 November our AGM was held by Skype. About a three-hour session, not much fun. I logged on expecting more of the usual. I've been attending faithfully for the last 14 years and after each one other than being a pleasant social event I didn't really see a point to it. Each time I came back one of the first questions to me . . . "was it worth the money?" I had to say not really.

To my mind there was no real business plan for the future. Each time I stood up to speak, I prefaced with "You know what I'm going to say I've been saying it since 2015 AGM" If you have read the *Wing Mate* regularly then you will know what I'm referring to.

Along comes 24 November 2025. I was very pleasantly surprised to listen to a real business plan, from people who understood the predicament. An honest discussion of where we are now, where we want to be and, more importantly, how we will get there in a doable way. We're not out of the woods but the light at the other end of the tunnel is not a freight train anymore.

The Board of Directors understand that bringing in new members has to be a coordinated effort from Ottawa a.k.a. Wing membership drive. Not attempts by individual Wings, kind of do your-own-thing. It is understood that prospective members first have to know we even exist, what we're about and why 'they' should join. But more importantly there is a plan how to accomplish this. I always maintained that it's crazy that in a city of three million plus, we're now reduced to one Wing of now 25, because nobody knows we exist and what we represent.

Funding has been an issue it seems, like for ever. There seemed to be too much reliance, to my

mind, on membership dues. As our Association shrank because of the aforementioned, funds became a bigger problem. The new direction is less reliance on dues and to approach businesses, organizations etc. to raise funds, to sell ads in our magazine. This will not be easy, given the current financial situation in this country, but the confidence was clearly there.

The *Air Force* magazine is now digital, which will save us about \$20,000 per annum, and we are in control of the content. It will be more Association-centered. Wing, members, will be able to submit articles of interest and stand a good chance of being published. As I understand it because it is now digital, there is no strict limit on size.

Most importantly there is a path for any member to speak to any member of the Board of directors if you feel you need to. None the least there is still a chain-of-command to follow. There is a number of other important things that were discussed of course. I just mentioned some key issues. I have the current financial report. If you want a copy to see where we stand, send me an e-mail and I'll forward it to you.

*Nick Czernkovich*

The AVRO Jetliner — America's First Jet Transport



*happier passengers...relaxed crews*

Two most comfortable passenger seats ever designed become a fatiguing spot to sit in when the roar and vibration of piston engines raze energy and then nerves. Only Jetliner is the AVRO Jetliner makes perfection.

Up front with the crew there's a restful quiet that keeps them fresh throughout the run when the machine is powered by the smooth thrust of jet engines.

The extra speed, safety and phenomenal quiet of Jetliner will make all other forms of transport obsolete. With greater carrying capacity, easier and faster maintenance, fewer spares needed and the prospect of more flying hours per day, the price tag becomes a potential major asset of Jetliner operation.

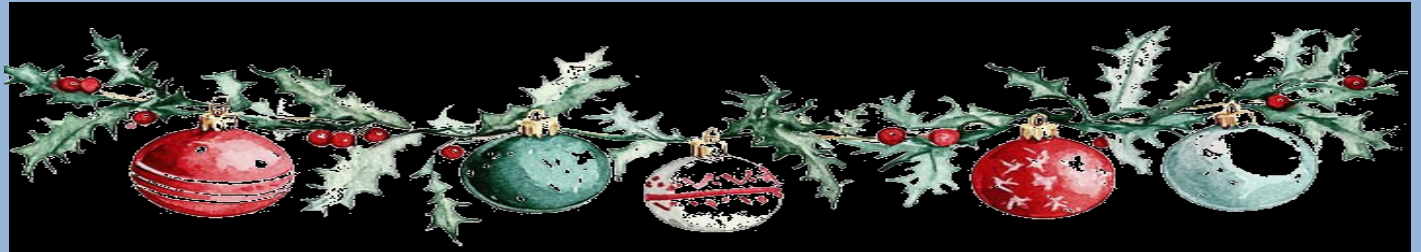
For more detailed consideration you will need Jetliner operational studies. AVRO Canada is prepared to submit them on request from interested airline operations.

**A. V. ROE CANADA LIMITED**   
MILTON, ONTARIO



VENUES OF THE HEAVENLY SIGNATURE





## Monday, December 8 Christmas-Hanukkah Dinner



Sheppard Ave. Legion Building

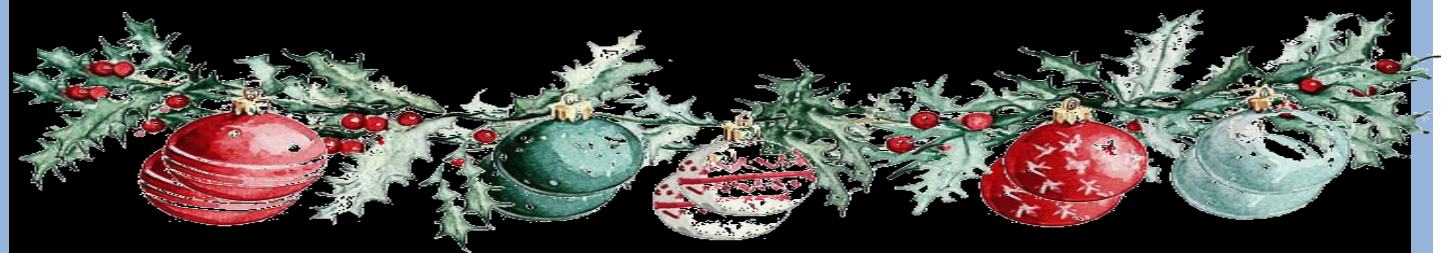
RSVP: David Ouellette  
416-449-0618



7:00 for 7:30



Bring a friend !



## *“Life Depends On A Silken Thread”*

By Cathy Newman RN

One Canada Day, when off from work, I visited my 88 yr old father-in-law, Ed, a veteran of World War II, who as soon as I walked in the door, handed me a box wrapped in Christmas paper.

“Forgive that paper,” he chuckled, “it was all I could find. With Marge gone, I don't know where anything is around here.”

Marge, my mother-in-law died the year before, so Ed was alone in the house they'd bought in 1947, and that was now crammed with furniture, appliances, and the countless possessions that Marge referred to as “all our nice things.”

“Aw, thanks Ed”, I said. “ You shouldn't have gone to the trouble.”

I did not want whatever was ever in the box, or any of the “nice things,” that Ed gave me, “so they stay in the family.” One week, the gift was a 1940's wind-up/flashlight/shortwave radio, “in case you get stuck somewhere.”

“Thanks Ed, it's good to be prepared,” I'd said, then dropped the radio off at Value Village.

I'd become a ruthless minimalist, since my work as a community nurse first exposed me to “hoarding”, a mental health disorder experienced by some of my clients.

One man slept on top of his “hoard”, a pile of junk so high his nose was mere inches from the ceiling. Another client, a woman in treatment for breast cancer, lived in a homeless shelter but actually owned a house willed to by her long deceased parents. She had “hoarded” the house so dangerously, the City condemned it, and levied fines which she could not afford to pay. However, she refused to sell the house, or part with even one item from the generations of junk that was treasure to her. It never ceased to perplex me that my client was essentially homeless, while raccoons

lived in her house.

I realized my parents- law- weren't hoarders in a disordered way. It's just that I felt overwhelmed by the responsibility to, sooner than later, clear out their 75 year old house, and disperse all the “nice things” they'd accrued over a lifetime.

As I peeled the Christmas wrap off this latest gift from

Ed, I asked, “what's the occasion?”

“It's Canada Day!” he smiled, “this is from World War II, when I was in the RCAF (Royal Canadian Air Force), Bomber Command. I was 19”.

The box was too small for another radio, so I expected more medals. He'd already given me his “ War Medal”, the one awarded to Commonwealth and British Forces, who fought together for peace and freedoms, I realize now that I'd taken for granted.

However, what I did find in the box was a little gold pin in the shape of a caterpillar with tiny rubies for eyes. “What's *this*, Ed?”

“ We got hit over Holland”, he said. “ I was a tail gunner, the plane caught fire, and I had to jump out. They gave these pins when you used their parachute to bail out. Call us the Caterpillar Club!”.

“ For God's sake, Ed. You're telling me you jumped out of a burning plane, and all they gave you was a lapel pin? You were a teen-ager!”

“Better than a kick in the ass!” Ed said, with a smile.

I laughed, and gave him a hug. “Thanks, Ed. I'm keeping *this forever*.”

And I have.

---

*I was fortunate to meet Cathy and her sister Chris at an art class in October and discovered that we have several common interests, including the RCAF and military history. Terry*

## Caterpillar Club 1922

The Caterpillar Club is an informal association of people who have successfully used a parachute to bail out of a disabled aircraft. After authentication by the parachute maker, applicants receive a membership certificate and a distinctive lapel pin.

The Airborne Systems company of New Jersey continues the tradition of certifying members and awarding pins to this day.

The club was founded by Leslie Irvin of the Irvin Airchute Company of Canada in 1922. The Caterpillar Club, which has no officers, no local chapters, and no formal organization, has been around since 1922. On October 20th of that year, Harold Harris, an army test pilot, engaged in combat practice in a monoplane over Dayton, Ohio. Harris lost control of the aircraft, slid out the top of the fuselage, and deployed his never-before-used parachute. He landed shaken but very much alive. (Though Leslie Irvin is credited with inventing the first free-fall parachute in 1919, parachutes stored in canisters had saved the lives of observers in balloons and several German and Austro-Hungarian pilots of disabled military aircraft in the First World War. The name "Caterpillar Club" refers to the silk threads that made the original parachutes, thus recognizing the debt owed to the silkworm. Other people have taken the metaphor further by comparing the act of bailing out with that of the caterpillar letting itself down to earth by a silken thread. Another metaphor is that caterpillars have to climb out of their cocoons to escape and survive.

In 1922 Leslie Irvin agreed to give a gold pin to every person whose life was saved by one of his parachutes. At the end of the Second World War the number of members with the Irvin pins had grown to over 34,000 though the total of people saved by Irvin parachutes is estimated to be 100,000.

The successor to the original Irvin company still provides pins to people who have made a jump. In addition to the Irvin Air Chute Company, other parachute manufacturers have also issued caterpillar pins for successful jumps. GC Parachutes formed their Gold Club in 1940. The Switlik Parachute Company of Trenton, New Jersey issued both gold and silver caterpillar pins. The Pioneer Parachute Co. in Skokie, Illinois, also presented plaques to people who packed

the parachutes that saved lives.

There are no annual fees, though the Switlik club charges a nominal enrollment fee. Both the Irvin and Switlik clubs issue gold and silver pins depicting caterpillars. The Irvin Golden Caterpillar has amethyst eyes. Prospective members must send documentation of the incident to the manufacturer,



which then conducts its own research.

I was fortunate to befriend two members of RCAF 6 Group Lancaster rear gunners who earned the silk worm pin: P/O Bill and P/O Victor Trueman of No. 428 Ghost Squadron.

RAF Flight sergeant Nicholas Alkemade, who during the Second World War baled out of an Avro Lancaster without a parachute and survived, was refused membership because a parachute had not been used!

Terry Sleightholm



## Canada's Avro C102 Jetliner

Today, Canada retains one of the world's most significant aerospace industries (notably with Pratt & Whitney Canada, Bombardier, Airbus Canada, and others). But in the 1940s and 1950s, Canada held promise to be so much more. One of the projects that could have catapulted the Canadian aviation industry to the next level was the Avro Canada C102 Jetliner.

The aircraft was produced as a prototype at Malton and then heart-wrenchingly cut up and scrapped (as were Canada's Avro Canada CF-105 Arrow Interceptor prototypes). The dual cancelations of the C-102 and CF-105 spelt doom for Avro Canada and much of the Canadian aviation industry.

The Jetliner first flew on August 10th, 1949. The first flight of a jet transport in North America, second in the world. The de Havilland Comet flew on 27 July 1949.)

On its second test flight, the prototype's landing gear failed to extend, and the jet was forced to make a belly landing. In April 1950 the Jetliner, with a maximum speed of 500 mph, made the first international jet-transport flight in North America, from Toronto to New York. It aroused much interest in the US and was one of the outstanding aeronautical achievements of its day; however it never saw production. Trans-Canada Airlines lost interest even before the first flight, and in the Cold War atmosphere the federal government stopped its further development in 1951

in order to force the company to concentrate on the CF-100 jet fighter. A lost opportunity for Canadian aviation, to be followed a few years later with the Arrow disappointment!

The RCAF, the first air force to operate jet transports, ordered 2 Comets in November 1951. The Jetliner was offered to the National Research Council but only its nose was saved, due to lack of space! Pity. It was sold for scrap in 1956, but the nose section is on display in the Canada Aviation Museum. A similar situation occurred in 1958 when all of the Arrows were scrapped with the exception of the nose. Only the aircraft's nose and some engines were kept, due to lack of space. The rest of the aircraft was sold for scrap. The main wheels ended up on a farm wagon and the autopilot was used for many years in a Douglas DC-3.

Only one Jetliner was made when the program was cancelled when priority was given to the Avro Canada CF-100. Believe it or not, this prototype was flown and tested by Howard Hughes. Hughes personally tested the Jetliner for his airline, flying it from his private airfield at Culver City in California. Little was known about jet engines in their early days. An airport manager in New York City insisted that the Jetliner park away from the terminal and had pans placed under the "fire-spitting" engines to catch any dangerous drippings.

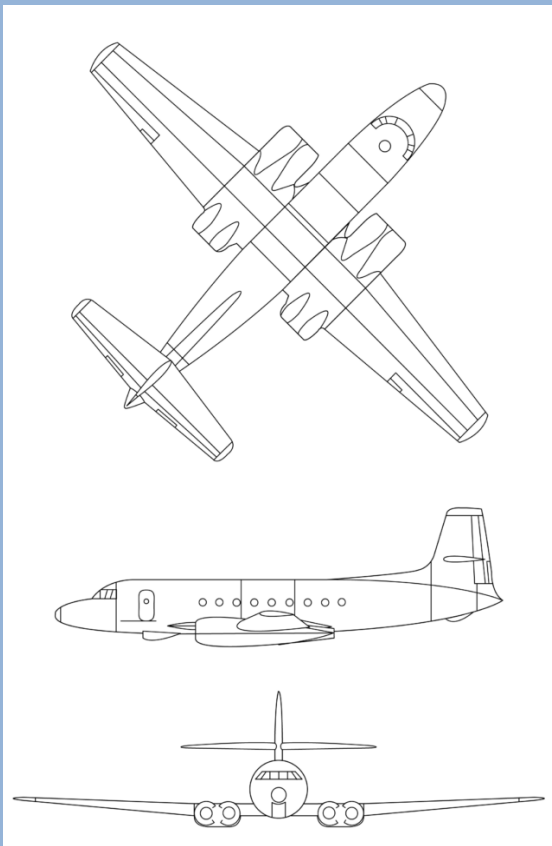
The C-102 was ahead of its time, short to medium range jetliners did not go into service until 1959 with the French Caravelle.



St. Hubert, P.Q. 1950



Dr. James C Floyd, previously chief project engineer at Avro's Yeadon site in Yorkshire, led the Avro Canada Jetliner project.



## Wing Mate December 2025

TCA signed a contract in 1947 stating they would pay CA\$ 350,000 per airframe and that Avro Canada would not sell the type to any other airline for at least three years. Avro President Fred Smye was unable to uphold these demands and subsequently, TCA chose to end its association with the Jetliner. Work continued on the project thanks to a \$1.5 million cash injection from Canadian Liberal Party politician C. D. Howe.

Its maiden flight would be carried out by the British company's chief test pilot, Joseph Harold (Jimmy) Orrell, who'd successfully flown the experimental Nene-powered Tudor 8 a year earlier. Construction work at Malton airfield meant only its shortest runway was available and, on August 8, in sweltering temperatures and with a crosswind, a high-speed run ended in incident when Orrell blew out four tires trying to stop the Jetliner on the short strip. The chief pilot claimed another two tires in a similar episode a day later.

In April 1950, the C102 flew from Toronto to New York, becoming the first jet in the world to carry air mail. The flight was over in just 58 minutes. Upon arrival in New York, the aircraft was met with much fanfare and press attention.

Only one airframe was fully built, and development stopped in December 1961. Avro Canada dropped the project in favor of the manufacturer pursuing military projects.

There was no lasting damage and, on August 10, the C-102 took to the air, climbing up to 13,000ft and remaining aloft for more than an hour. Donald Howard Rogers, Avro Canada's chief test pilot and Orrell's number two that day, reported: "She was the perfect lady, and gave us a very fine flight. Noise – we could talk to each other in ordinary voices, used the loud-speaker with the volume turned down instead of headphones. The controls and services operated just as they should."

In Ottawa and St Hubert, the Jetliner was again flown before RCAF personnel; at Dayton, Ohio for the United States Air Force; and at Washington for the US Navy.



During its six-month stay at Culver City, the C-102 recorded just 13½ hours' flying time, but it was enough to convince Hughes to acquire the type for TWA.

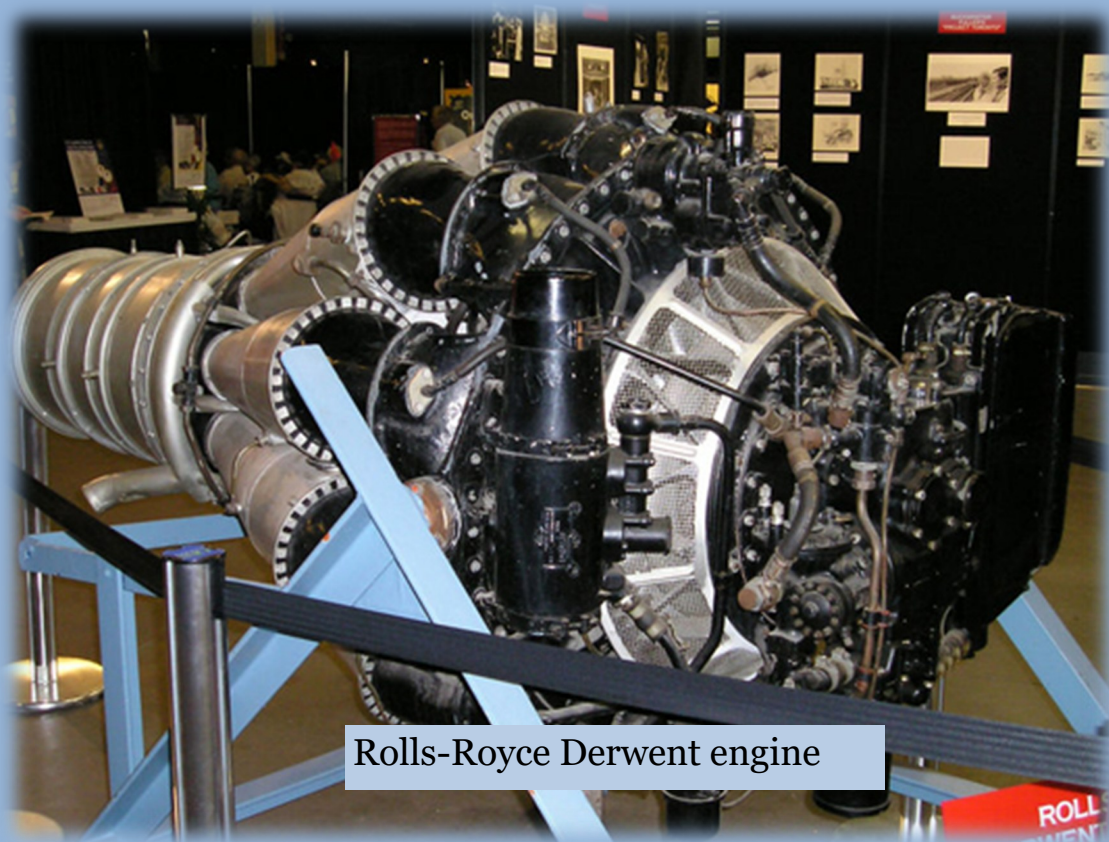
Hughes, no stranger to high performance aircraft, leased the prototype and took it for a test flight himself around Culver City, California. He immediately formed plans to supply TransWorld Airlines (TWA) and National Airlines, two carriers in which he had a controlling interest, with a fleet of C-102s. He tried to order 30 aircraft for flights between New York and Florida, but was frustrated in these efforts when Avro cited its limited production capacity and the fact that it was under pressure from the Canadian government to focus on the CF-100 production line. C.D. Howe had directed that only the CF-100 was to enter production. Sadly for the Jetliner, efforts to persuade Avro Canada to build 30 examples were blocked the Canadian government, while a proposal for US manufacturer Convair to produce the type under licence similarly fell flat.

It was the death knell for the C-102. In late 1952 the Jetliner returned to Toronto where it was used to photograph CF-100 rocket-firing tests and other trials. It occasionally appeared at Canadian air shows or ferried the great-and-good until November 1956 when, with just over 500 hours total flying time, it was permanently grounded. Avro Canada offered the type to the National Research Council (NRC) but, with no room to keep the entire aircraft, it was cut up. Today, just the Jetliner's nose and cockpit section remain, currently displayed at Ottawa's Canada Aviation and Space Museum - a tragic end for a remarkable airliner that would almost certainly have changed commercial aviation for the better.

After flying in support of the CF-100 flight test program, after more than seven years of almost faultless flying and paving the way for the new generation of jet transports. The Jetliner attracted respect and admiration for Canada's aviation capability, expressed by British aviation writer Bill Gunston in his "Encyclopedia of Commercial Aircraft" which included this quote: "The C 102 Jetliner was Canada's first jetliner. It remains an example of how a talented and motivated team could work together to produce a unique aircraft in record time."



Howard Hughes



Rolls-Royce Derwent engine



# Today in *Aviation* History



## First Flight Hawker Hurricane

1935

**Ninety** years ago today, on November 6, 1935, the legendary Hawker Hurricane took to the skies for the first time. Designed by Sir Sydney Camm and powered by the Rolls-Royce Merlin engine, the Hurricane became one of Britain's most important fighters of World War II. Though often overshadowed by the sleek Spitfire, the rugged and reliable "Hurri" accounted for 60 percent of Luftwaffe losses during the Battle of Britain and went on to serve in every major theater of the war. From its debut flight at Brooklands Aerodrome to its lasting legacy in aviation history, the Hurricane remains a symbol of British engineering and resilience.

The first production aircraft made its initial flight in October 1937. Within a matter of weeks, Hurricanes were being delivered to their operational squadrons.



## Howard Leslie Edwards WW 1 Ace

**B**orn in Perth, Ontario in 1893, Edwards joined the CEF in June 1918, and after being wounded, decided in recovery in England to enlist in the RAF. He was promoted to 2nd Lieutenant and joined No. 20 Squadron on 28 July 1918, flying in Bristol F.2 Fighters.

Of his total 21 claims, 19 were in one month! (September 1918) He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

"2nd Lieut. Harold Edwards. (FRANCE) When on offensive patrol, during 16 September, this officer with nine other machines, engaged twelve enemy scouts. In the combat that ensued he destroyed one as an observer, his pilot accounting for a second, and they took part in destroying a third. In all 2nd Lieutenant Edwards has accounted for nine enemy machines, setting an excellent example of gallantry worthy of high praise."

After the war, Edwards lived in Toronto for the rest of his life and died in 1951.







## RCAF Patrols Near North Korea

Canada is stepping up its role in one of the world's toughest security missions. Members of the Royal Canadian Air Force and Royal Canadian Navy have been deployed to Japan as part of Operation Neon, a mission to monitor North Korean ships suspected of violating UN sanctions.

It's become a morning ritual for Royal Canadian Air Force personnel based in Okinawa, Japan. Several times each week, around 15 members climb aboard their ageing CP-140 Aurora aircraft just after dawn, depart the U.S. Kadena Air Base on the southern tip of Japan, and begin patrolling the waters around North Korea.

Their mission – to enforce sanctions targeting North Korea's nuclear weapons program at a time when experts say dictator Kim Jong Un has never been in a stronger position.

North Korea regularly receives illegal maritime shipments, which provide vital resources and revenue to sustain its ruling regime and advance its nuclear weapons program.



A Chinese fighter jet intercepts a Royal Canadian Air Force patrol aircraft over international waters Oct. 2, 2025.

[Operation NEON is Canada's contribution to enforcing UNSC sanctions that aim to pressure North Korea into abandoning its weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missile programs in a complete, verifiable, and irreversible manner.

RCAF has conducted multiple deployments since 2019. Most recently, a CP-140 Aurora aircraft was deployed from mid-September to mid-October 2025, marking the fourteenth such aircraft deployment since 2018. A Royal Canadian Navy frigate, HMCS *Max Bernays*, also conducted monitoring and surveillance activities in September 2025.]

Source: Global News, October 2025



RCAF personnel boarding their CP-140 Aurora aircraft at the U.S. Kadena Air Base in Okinawa, Japan, to conduct patrols around North Korea.