

## Canadian Air Force notes 'significant' savings by hiring foreign pilots

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*Canadian air force notes 'significant' savings by hiring foreign pilots = John Ulan/The Canadian Press*

OTTAWA—The Royal Canadian Air Force reaps “significant” savings by hiring foreign military pilots to fly its aircraft, a briefing note says.

Thanks to their past experience flying transport aircraft, fighter jets or helicopters,

foreign pilots can quickly take place in the cockpits of Canadian military aircraft.

“They represent significant training cost avoidance and immediately bolster the . . . occupation to which they are enrolled,” reads the note, obtained under access to information legislation.

The June 24, 2014 note was prepared for Gen. Tom Lawson, chief of defence staff, the day after a Torstar News Service story detailed how Canada's air force has been recruiting pilots from foreign countries to train Canadian pilots as well as fly on operational missions around the globe.

Titled "RCAF Foreign Pilot Support," the note sets out how the air force has used the expertise of foreign pilots to bolster its operations.

At the time, the issue of foreign workers was in the news as the Conservative government brought in reforms to curb abuses as employers hired low-paid, low-skilled workers to fill positions.

However, the note to Lawson says that efforts by the Canadian military to recruit foreign military pilots "have no linkage" to the government's controversial temporary foreign worker program.

Instead, the note portrays the recruitment of former foreign military pilots as part of a larger effort to bolster pilot training and improve the experience levels within the ranks of the Royal Canadian Air Force.

The former foreign military flyers have been tapped to fly many of the aircraft in the RCAF fleet, including Hercules and Globemaster transport planes, CP-140 Aurora maritime patrol aircraft and CC-150 Polaris jet, used as a transport and refuelling aircraft.

Using pilots who had previously served with foreign air forces is part of a "structured and deliberate" strategy to help the ranks of Canadian military pilots return to "healthy status" while bridging an experience gap and supporting the RCAF's training capacity, the note says.

According to an air force spokesperson, the RCAF enrolled 31 former foreign military pilots between 2009 and this spring. During that same time, the RCAF enrolled 501 Canadians to train as pilots as well as welcomed back into uniform another 43 ex-RCAF pilots who had left the military.

Still, the briefing note cautions that the enrolment process for foreign pilots is "lengthy and expensive." It says that the RCAF works with Citizenship and Immigration Canada to speed the "timely" processing of foreign applicants since they need to be permanent residents before they can fly for the military.

It can take about 12 months to process the applications and the prospective pilots are responsible for

all expenses, including the move to Canada, the briefing note says.

Another strategy to bolster the ranks of Canadian military pilots is on the “loan” of experienced pilots from foreign air forces, the briefing note says. In these cases, the pilots are still enrolled with the foreign military, which pays their salaries while the RCAF picks up the incremental costs.

The RCAF has used such pilots to fill “pressing short term needs” such as instructors to help speed the training of Canadian pilots. As well, the “loaned” pilots assist the Canadian Air Force with the introduction of new aircraft into their fleet, such as the C-130J Hercules transport and Chinook helicopter.

The note doesn’t put a tally on how much the hiring of foreign pilots saves the defence department in training. However, the air force has said it can take seven years — and \$2.6 million — to train a pilot to fly the CF-18, Canada’s frontline fighter jet.