

CANADIAN UNIT MAKES FLIGHT TO FAR EAST 1942

Squadron Safely Covers Long Distance From Its Former Base in Ireland

By LOUIS V. HUNTER

London, May 21 (CP).—Canada's air arm, growing stronger day by day as airmen of the Dominion stream in increasing numbers from the "airdrome of democracy," has been extended to a strategic corner of the Far East.

A brief announcement by R.C.A.F. overseas headquarters told today of the safe arrival in the Oriental war theatre of the first Canadian squadron to serve elsewhere in this war than Canada or the United Kingdom.

A flying boat squadron, commanded by Wing Commander Johnny Plant of Ottawa, which has done valuable, though somewhat monotonous, work as a Coastal Command in this part of the war-torn world, left from a secret base in Northern Ireland and has completed its flight of thousands of miles without mishap.

The movement required several weeks of preparation. Hundreds of ground crewmen who set out on the hazardous journey by ship were followed recently by the aircraft which were flown out singly or in pairs. Word of the movement was withheld from the public for security reasons until the last flying boat reached its destination.

It is expected that other squadrons will be operating on other fronts in the near future.

It is understood that a new flying boat squadron will be formed in Britain to replace the one despatched to the Far East.

The squadron had put in many hours of monotonous patrol and convoy escort work before its departure, but two of its members, Squadron Leader L. J. Birchall of Saint John, N.B., and Warrant Officer C. Onyett of Huntsville, Ont., already had distinguished themselves in helping stem the Japanese thrust at the island of Ceylon in April. Their feat was officially described as "one of the greatest achievements of Canadian fliers of the present war."

They were crew members of the flying boat which first sighted the Japanese fleet approaching Ceylon. Nothing was heard of them after they flashed the alarm by radio to their base and they were listed as "missing after flying battle."

The flying personnel of the squadron spent a preliminary training period at the Irish base practicing dinghy launching and boarding rescue craft "just in case" while two of them, Squadron Leader L. H. Randall of Bristol, N.S., and Squadron Leader J. C. Scott whose family lives in Galt, Ont., spent their time off sunning themselves in an effort to acquire sufficient tan to avoid sunburn when they reached their new sphere of action.