

2017

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Recommended Citation

Goette, Richard "The Command and Control of Canadian and American Maritime Air Power in the Northwest Atlantic, 1941-1943." Canadian Military History 26, 2 (2017)

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The Command and Control of Canadian and American Maritime Air Power in the Northwest Atlantic, 1941-1943

RICHARD GOETTE

Abstract: Operational, organizational, doctrinal, and cultural differences hampered effective command and control of Canadian and American maritime air power defending shipping against U-boats off the east coast during the Second World War. The American desire to implement US unity of command over both nations' maritime air forces clashed with the Canadian preference for simple cooperation. Canadian airmen resisted several American attempts to impose unity of command until the operational situation in the Battle of the Atlantic revealed inefficiencies in coordination which necessitated all maritime air power in the Northwest Atlantic be centralized under Canadian operational control in the spring of 1943.

ALTHOUGH CANADA and the United States (us) collaborated as continental defence partners to defend the east coast during the Second World War,¹ it was in a maritime air power role defending shipping from German U-boat attacks that the two nations' air forces conducted the majority of their combined operations. In addition to operating from Canada's Maritime provinces, the Royal Canadian

¹ On the continental defence roles, see Richard Goette, "The Acid Test of Sovereignty: Canada, the United States, and the Command and Control of Combined Forces for Continental Defence, 1940-1945," in Abe Roof and Christine Leppard, eds., *New Perspectives on Canada in the Second World War* (Calgary: University of Calgary Papers in Military and Strategic Studies, Occasional Paper No. 6, 2012), 23-43.

Air Force (RCAF) conducted maritime air power missions from Newfoundland air bases by agreement with the British government. The United States Navy (USN) and United States Army Air Forces (USAAF) deployed maritime air forces to Newfoundland in early 1941 following the British-American Destroyers-for-Bases deal concluded the previous September. Different national approaches to the command and control of maritime air power² complicated effective collaboration between Canadian and American air forces defending shipping in the Northwest Atlantic.

The Americans desired to implement their command and control practice of unity of command over all forces, including Canadian air forces, in Newfoundland. However, as Canadian official historian W.A.B. Douglas has noted, this type of command and control “was alien to Canadian doctrine and practice.”³ Instead, Canadian military leaders insisted that the relationship of the two nations’ air forces be one based on simple cooperation. What transpired was a series of disagreements between 1941 and 1943 as Canadian officers laboured to stave off American efforts to implement unity of command. This article shows how operational, organizational, doctrinal, and cultural differences in Canadian and American approaches to maritime air power hampered effective command and control of their forces in the Northwest Atlantic until all maritime forces were centralized under Canadian operational control in the spring of 1943.

² Whereas naval air power constitutes aircraft flying from naval vessels, maritime air power consists of fixed-wing aircraft flying from land bases and flying boats flying from the sea. See Marc Milner, “The Battle of the Atlantic,” in *Decisive Campaigns of the Second World War*, ed. John Gooch (London: Frank Cass Publishing, 1990), 58. Today maritime air power forces are called maritime patrol aircraft. During the Second World War the RCAF designation for them was bomber reconnaissance (BR). Both terms will be used interchangeably.

³ W.A.B. Douglas, *The Creation of a National Air Force: The Official History of the Royal Canadian Air Force Volume II* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press and the Department of National Defence, 1986), 382. Unity of command places operational command of forces under one clearly defined commander. When established, unity of command vests in one commander the responsibility and authority to co-ordinate the operations of the participating forces of both nations by the setting up of task forces, the assignment of tasks, the designation of objectives, and the exercise of such co-ordinating control as the commander deems necessary to ensure the success of the operations. Unity of command does not authorize a commander exercising it to control the administration and discipline of the forces of the nation of which he is not an officer, nor to issue any instructions to such forces beyond those necessary for effective co-ordination. This definition found in ABC-22, the joint Canada-US defence plan, which will be discussed later.

CANADIAN AND AMERICAN MILITARY FORCES IN NEWFOUNDLAND: SOME CONTEXT

By mutual agreement between Ottawa and London, Canada was responsible for the defence of Newfoundland (then still a colony of Britain) during the Second World War. By the summer of 1940, there was already a growing Canadian military presence in Newfoundland. The RCAF had established one flight of bomber reconnaissance aircraft there to patrol the British colony's sea approaches, and in August the small Newfoundland Militia was placed under Canadian command.⁴ The Canadian Army posted Brigadier-General Philip Earnshaw to St. John's as the commander of the Canadian Army's Force "W" (two divisions) in October 1940 and tasked him to oversee the military buildup. In November, the Chiefs of Staff Committee gave Earnshaw the title "Commander Combined Newfoundland and Canadian Military Forces, Newfoundland." It was not an independent command, but subordinate to the army's Atlantic Command under Major-General W.H.P. Elkins in Halifax.⁵

In September 1940, the United States and Britain concluded the "Destroyers-for-Bases Deal" where in return for fifty old US Navy destroyers the Americans received lengthy leases on British bases. The sites in Newfoundland included in this agreement were a naval base at Argentia, 131 miles west of St. John's, an air base at Stephenville

⁴ Governor of Newfoundland to Secretary of State for External Affairs, Ottawa, 22 November 1940 and Memorandum of Meeting – St. John's, Newfoundland, 28 November to 1 December 1940, Record Group (RG) 25, Volume 1991, File 1156-C, Library and Archives Canada (LAC); Memorandum from Commissioner for Justice and Defence to Commission of Government of Newfoundland, 19 November 1940, Secretary of State for External Affairs to Governor of Newfoundland, 29 November 1940, and same to same, 16 December 1940, reproduced in Paul Bridle, ed., *Documents on Relations Between Canada and Newfoundland, Volume I: 1935-1949* [hereafter *DRBCN*] (Ottawa: Information Canada, 1974), 886-88. The term "Newfoundland" will be utilized to describe the current Canadian province of Newfoundland and Labrador since that was the usage at the time examined. Due to financial issues in the 1930s, Newfoundland had been forced to abandon responsible government and revert back to colonial status, so the term "colony" will also be used. Newfoundland became Canada's 10th province in 1949.

⁵ Appendix, "Report from Service Members of Progress Made in Carrying Out Recommendations of the Board," attached to Sixth Meeting of the PJBD, Boston, 2 October 1940, PJBD Journals, Volume 1, Directorate of History and Heritage, Department of National Defence, Ottawa (DHH) 82/196, File 1b.; Secretary of State for External Affairs to Governor of Newfoundland, 29 November 1940, reproduced in Bridle, ed., *DRBCN*, 887.

on the island's west coast, and an army base named Fort Pepperrell on Quidi Vidi Lake, just outside of St. John's. These American bases, which opened at various points throughout 1941, were considered United States territory and were thus to be defended by US military forces.⁶ These developments led to an awkward situation whereby both American and Canadian forces were stationed in Newfoundland to defend the colony.

The first US forces began to arrive in Newfoundland in January 1941. US Army units came under Colonel Maurice D. Welty's Newfoundland Base Command at Fort Pepperrell and consisted of 1,000 troops and a squadron of US Army Air Corps (United States Army Air Forces after June 1941) B-17 bombers at the Newfoundland Airport in Gander. Starting in July 1941, Rear-Admiral A.A.L. Bristol commanded the USN's Task Force 4 and all other naval forces in Newfoundland from his base in Argentia on the west side of the Avalon Peninsula. Although Canadian service personnel accepted the US presence, they were cautious in their dealings with the Americans.⁷ So too was Canada's Cabinet War Committee (CWC).

Concerned about the situation in Newfoundland, the CWC sent the Minister of National Revenue, Colin Gibson, to St. John's in April 1941 as its representative. Later that month he reported on the huge resources of money, materiel, and personnel the United States was pouring into Newfoundland. Gibson also expressed his concerns that the US Army forces were taking unilateral actions without reference to higher authority and that this "raised difficulties in the matter of local command." As C.P. Stacey notes in the official history, "from

⁶ Douglas, *Creation of a National Air Force*, 381-83; Samuel Elliot Morrison, *History of the United States Naval Operations in World War II, Volume II: The Battle of the Atlantic, September 1939-May 1943* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1947), 68-69, 85; David MacKenzie, *Inside the Atlantic Triangle: Canada and the Entrance of Newfoundland into Confederation, 1939-1949* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 79, 81.

⁷ 12th Meeting of the PJBD, New York, 16 December 1940, PJBD Journals, Volume 1, DHH 82/196 File 1b; Earnshaw to Elkins, 3 February 1941, DHH 355.009 (D29); Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate, eds., *The Army Air Forces In World War II, Volume I: Plans and Early Operations, January 1939-August 1942* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), 156; Morrison, *The Battle of the Atlantic*, 68-69, 85; C.P. Stacey, *Official History of the Canadian Army in the Second World War Volume 1 Six Years of War: The Army in Canada, Britain and the Pacific* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer and Controller of Stationery, 1956), 179; Douglas, *Creation of a National Air Force*, 383

this moment the Cabinet War Committee watched the situation closely.”⁸ There was good reason for such attentiveness.

Different Canadian and American perspectives on how Newfoundland fit into the overall defence of North America amplified command and control issues. The Americans saw Newfoundland as a separate entity outside of the continental United States and Canada; as the larger partner in the Canada-US alliance, they naturally desired that one of their commanders be allowed to exercise unity of command over all forces, Canadian and American, there. The Canadians viewed Newfoundland as an integral part of the overall defence of eastern Canada. Having deployed forces in the colony first, at the behest of both the British and Newfoundland governments, Canada felt its special interests in Newfoundland were paramount.⁹ “There was no doubt that the [Cabinet War] Committee, and not least the Prime Minister,” Stacey records, “were of the opinion that all necessary steps should be taken to keep Newfoundland within the Canadian orbit.”¹⁰ Responsibility for the defence of Newfoundland – and how command and control should be carried out – should therefore be Canada’s prerogative. Stacey has addressed the challenges of Canadian-American liaison and command in the defence of Newfoundland in the official history.¹¹ What follows augments his account by emphasizing the vital issue of the command and control of the two nations’ maritime air power.

⁸ C.P. Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments: the War Policies of Canada, 1939-1945* (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer, 1970), 361.

⁹ Stacey, *Arms, Men, and Governments*, 362-63; Elkins to Pope, 30 and 31 December 1941, Massey Library, Royal Military College of Canada, Kingston, Maj. Gen. W.H.P. Elkins Papers, File 19 “Semi-Official Correspondence Vol. # 3 – November 1941 to May 1942”; AMAS to CAS, 5 March 1942, RG 24, Vol 5290, File HQS 15-73-4 Part 1, LAC; Memorandum from Joint Planning Sub-Committee to CSC, 8 August 1942, RG 24, Vol 5209, File HQS 15-73-4, Part 2, LAC, copy obtained through Department of National Defence (DND) Access To Information and Privacy (ATIP) Request A-2006-00357; Minutes of the 200th Meeting of the Cabinet War Committee, 21 October 1942, RG 2 7C, Volume 11, microfilm reel C-4874, LAC, copy at Information Resource Centre, Canadian Forces College (CFC IRC).

¹⁰ Stacey, *Arms, Men, and Governments*, 362.

¹¹ Stacey, *Arms, Men, and Governments*, 360-67. It is worth quoting his conclusion to this section: “The Canadian forces in Newfoundland had two tasks: One was to defend the area against the Germans in cooperation with the Americans. The other was to safeguard by their mere presence the permanent interests of Canada in the island and to ensure that no other influence became predominant there.” Ibid., 367.



Douglas Digby aircraft such as this one formed the backbone of RCAF Eastern Air Command's early efforts to counter U-boats in the Northwest Atlantic. [DND photo PA 140641]

EARLY CANADA-US MARITIME AIR POWER RELATIONS

German battleship and battle-cruiser incursions into the waters off Newfoundland in search of Allied convoys during the winter and spring of 1941 alarmed officials in Ottawa and Washington. Concerns that these Axis warships might also train their heavy guns on targets on Newfoundland's coast, notably the vital escort port of St. John's, led to a growth of American forces in the colony. When Royal Navy (RN) vessels and aircraft sank the battleship *Bismarck* in May 1941, however, the German surface raider threat declined significantly.¹² Thereafter the German Navy focused on utilizing its growing U-boat fleet to attack shipping in the North Atlantic. By the summer of 1941, these U-boats expanded their area of operations into the Western Atlantic, where sea and air convoy defences were weaker.¹³

¹² Douglas, *Creation of a National Air Force*, 386. See also Holger H. Herwig and David J. Bercuson, *Destruction of the Bismarck* (London: Stoddart Publishing Co. Ltd., 2001).

¹³ Douglas, *Creation of a National Air Force*, 378; W.A.B. Douglas, Roger Sarty, Michael Whitby, with Robert H. Caldwell, William Johnston, and William G.P. Rawling, *No Higher Purpose: The Official Operational History of the Royal Canadian Navy in the Second World War, 1939-1943, Volume II, Part 1*, (St. Catharines: Vanwell Publishing Limited, 2002), 183.

In response to the growing U-boat presence off Newfoundland, the Royal Canadian Navy established the Newfoundland Escort Force (NEF) at St. John's under the command of Commodore Leonard W. Murray in May 1941. This organization of navy escort ships was responsible for protecting North Atlantic shipping from German U-boat attack.¹⁴ The RCAF followed suit, establishing a new maritime air power formation in St. John's, No. 1 Group Headquarters, on 10 July. Under command of former First World War fighter ace Group Captain (later Air Commodore) C.M. "Black Mike" McEwen, No. 1 Group was responsible for all RCAF units in Newfoundland and, most importantly, to control air operations in support of the naval forces by flying Stranraer, Digby, Catalina, Canso and Hudson maritime patrol aircraft out of RCAF Stations Botwood, Gander, Goose Bay, and Torbay. Operational command of No. 1 Group, however, still remained with the primary RCAF formation on the Canadian coast, Eastern Air Command headed by an RCAF Air Vice-Marshal (AVN) in Halifax.¹⁵

Another response to the increased U-boat threat in the Western Atlantic was greater American involvement in the Battle of the Atlantic. The United States agreed to provide destroyer escorts for American ships in Commonwealth convoys. By July the USN assumed responsibility for the defence of all American and Icelandic merchant vessels travelling between North America and Iceland. Further British-American discussions culminated in mid-August when President Franklin Roosevelt and Prime Minister Sir Winston Churchill met at Argentia, Newfoundland for the Atlantic Conference. At the meeting the two leaders agreed to implement the USN's Hemisphere Defense Plan No. 4 (commonly known as WPL-51) by September. Canada was not consulted in this decision, and the Canadian naval leadership was perturbed to discover that the plan gave the Americans responsibility for the Western Atlantic and placed the operations of the RCN under American direction.¹⁶ Rear-Admiral Bristol was given "coordinating

¹⁴ Douglas et al., *No Higher Purpose*, 187, 195.

¹⁵ Douglas, *Creation of a National Air Force*, 387, 652-53; C.P. Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments: the War Policies of Canada, 1939-1945*, (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1970), 132; Air Officer Commanding Eastern Air Command to Minister of National Defence For Air, National Defence Headquarters, 6 August 1941, DHH 181.002 (D173); Minutes of a Meeting of the CSC, 25 June 1941, reproduced in Bridle, ed., *DRBCN*, 892.

¹⁶ Morrison, *Battle of the Atlantic*, 69; Douglas, *Creation of a National Air Force*,

supervision of the operations of Canadian escort units, which latter will be effected through and with” the senior RCN operational commanders on the coast, Commodore Murray of the NEF in St. John’s and Commodore G.C. Jones, Commanding Officer Atlantic Coast in Halifax.¹⁷

WPL-51 did not, however, specifically address command and control authority over Eastern Air Command’s maritime patrol aircraft. Nonetheless, as Douglas has noted in the RCAF official history, “since the American doctrine of unity of command assumed naval control and direction of maritime air operations far from shore, the US Navy was inclined to exercise command over the RCAF for these purposes as well.” Believing that they could dictate which air forces could be assigned to defend Allied shipping; the USN informed the RCAF in September 1941 that the USN and USAAF would conduct all long-range cover for convoys, while Eastern Air Command, including No. 1 Group, would be relegated only to the coverage of Canadian and Newfoundland coastal waters.¹⁸ Such responsibilities, however, fell under the operational command that Eastern Air Command exercised over its squadrons. The USN thus had no authority to dictate RCAF operations. Canadian air force officers began building a case to oppose having RCAF maritime air forces come under American unity of command.

In a letter to Air Force Headquarters, the RCAF’s top commander on the east coast, the Air Officer Commanding (AOC) Eastern Air Command Air Vice-Marshal N.R. Anderson observed that the RCAF had more experience in maritime patrol operations, having conducted sorties from distances of 600 to 800 miles to sea since the war began. It was, Anderson concluded, not logical, nor conducive to the maintenance of morale in the squadrons to relegate Eastern

387; W.A.B. Douglas, “Alliance Warfare, 1939-1945: Canada’s Maritime Forces,” *Revue Internationale d’Histoire Militaire*, No. 54 (1982), 166; Mike McNorgan, “Canada the US and Newfoundland, 1941,” draft narrative for the RCN official history, 30 June 1995, W.A.B. Douglas, Roger Flyn Sarty and Michael J. Whitby collection, DHH 2000/5, Box 17, File 267, 9; Admiralty to BAD Washington, 11 July 1941, DHH 75/191.

¹⁷ Marc Milner, *North Atlantic Run: The Royal Canadian Navy and the Battle for the Convoys* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 58-59; Commander-in-Chief, United States Atlantic Fleet [Admiral E.J. King] to Commander Task Force Four, Rear Admiral A.L. Bristol, USN, 10 October 1941, RG 25, Volume 11,505, File 1550-146/36-1, LAC.

¹⁸ Douglas, *Creation of a National Air Force*, 387-88.



RCAF Group Captain F.V. Heakes was an astute observer of American maritime air power aircraft operating from Newfoundland. As an Air Vice-Marshal he later served as the Air Officer Commanding No. 1 Group in St. John's. [DND photo PA 1309]

Air Command coverage to coastal zones.¹⁹ Group Captain F.V. Heakes, an officer on the staff of No. 1 Group in St. John's, agreed with Anderson. With a first-hand view of the military situation in Newfoundland, Heakes noted that the Americans in fact did not have sufficient maritime patrol forces in the colony to take on full-scale convoy coverage duties without "continued RCAF assistance."²⁰

¹⁹ AOC EAC to AFHQ, 21 September 1941, RG 24, Volume 5177, file S. 15-1-350, Part 1, LAC.

²⁰ Group Captain (G/C) Heakes to Chief of the Air Staff and AOC EAC, 23 September 1941, RG 24, Vol. 5177, S. 15-1-350, Part 1, LAC.

In early October, USN Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Harold Stark formally requested that the RCAF place Eastern Air Command under USN unity of command. He noted that the wartime Canada-US defence plan ABC-22 allowed for unity of command if the other country's chiefs of staff agreed to its implementation. Admiral Stark argued that unity of command was necessary to ensure "maximum efficiency" and the "complete coordination of the efforts of the Canadian Navy, the Canadian Air Force and the United States Navy in their common purpose of providing effective protection for shipping."²¹

The Air Staff in Ottawa disagreed with Stark's reasoning. Regardless of the fact that ABC-22 was not even in effect because the US was not yet a formal combatant in the war, the RCAF officers placed greater emphasis on clause 9.(b) of ABC-22,²² which only provided for unity of command "in case of extreme emergency" and subject to confirmation by both nations' chiefs of staff. As no such emergency existed at the time, USN unity of command was not necessary. Since the beginning of the war, the Air Staff explained, "co-operation had provided a satisfactory basis for the co-ordination and joint action of Canadian air forces with Canadian and British naval forces."²³ There was therefore "no reason to give to a foreign neutral power more than had been given to the Canadian and British Navies." The Cabinet War Committee, however, felt that refusal of the American admiral's request on such grounds would be too "political"; what they wanted was a RCAF refusal based on "some practical *operational* distinction."²⁴ There was such a distinction, and it had to do with the command and control organization and doctrinal practices of American maritime air power.

Unlike the Commonwealth nations, the United States did not have a separate air force but instead permitted the army and navy to develop their own air arms. In 1935, the USN and US Army finalized

²¹ Stacey, *Arms, Men, and Governments*, 362; USN CNO to CAS RCAF, 2 October 1941, RG 24, Volume 5177, S. 15-1-350, Part I, LAC.

²² Joint Canadian-United States Basic Defence Plan No. 2 (Short Title ABC-22), 28 July 1941, DHH 355.009 (D20).

²³ Air Vice-Marshal G. Johnson, Deputy Chief of the Air Staff, to C.G. Power, Minister of National Defence for Air, 9 October 1941, RG 24, Vol. 5177, S. 15-1-350, Part 1, LAC.

²⁴ Minutes of the 111th Meeting of the Cabinet War Committee, 9 October 1941, RG 2 7C, Volume 5, microfilm reel C-4654, LAC, copy at CFC IRC. Emphasis added.

an air agreement that granted the navy responsibility for all inshore and offshore patrol for the purpose of protecting shipping and defending the coastal frontiers. The US Army Air Corps was assigned responsibility for the defence of the coast itself through the tasking of long-range bombardment aircraft to destroy any approaching hostile forces. The agreement also included a provision that US Army aircraft could temporarily execute USN maritime patrol functions in support of or “in lieu” of the navy if it did not have sufficient aerial resources to fulfill its responsibilities.²⁵ This was precisely the scenario the United States faced in the Western Atlantic during the Second World War. The USN did not have enough maritime patrol aircraft to fulfill its maritime air power responsibilities, and thus had to rely on the long-range aircraft resources of the USAAF’s Number I Bomber Command to fill the gap.²⁶ The difficulty was that there was significant disagreement between the two services about the conduct of maritime air power.

USN doctrine emphasized the defensive focus of convoy air escort and patrol of fixed sectors of coastal waters (which mirrored British and Canadian practice). USAAF doctrine had more of an offensive focus. Influenced heavily by the strategic bombing theories developed at the US Air Corps Tactical School, USAAF doctrine emphasized the concept of “forward air defence,” an offensive form of defence that utilized aircraft to seek out and destroy attacking enemy forces.²⁷ The USAAF implemented a “seek and sink” approach to anti-submarine operations instead of the proven defensive one that Britain’s Royal

²⁵ *Joint Action of the Army and the Navy*, FTP-155, Prepared and Revised by the Joint Board, 15 November 1935, RG 165, War Plans Division (WPD) file 2917-35, National Archives and Records Administration II, College Park, Maryland (NARA); Kenneth Schaffel, *The Emerging Shield: The Air Force and the Evolution of Continental Air Defense, 1945-1960* (Washington, D.C.: Office of Air Force History, United States Air Force, 1991), 8-9; Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate, eds., *The Army Air Forces In World War II, Volume I: Plans and Early Operations, January 1939-August 1942* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), 62, 520; Max Schoenfeld, *Stalking the U-boat: USAAF Offensive Antisubmarine Operations in World War II* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995), 18.

²⁶ Schaffel, *Emerging Shield*, 33; Craven and Cate, eds., *Army Air Forces in World War II*, I, 522-23.

²⁷ Craven and Cate, eds., *Army Air Forces in World War II*, I, 521-22; Timothy A. Warnock, *Air Power versus U-boats: Confronting Hitler’s Submarine Menace in the European Theater*, (Washington, D.C.: Office of Air Force History, 1999), 2; Schaffel, *Emerging Shield*, 3-4; Phillip S. Meilinger, “The Historiography of Airpower: Theory and Doctrine,” *Journal of Military History* 64, 2 (April 2000): 476.

Air Force (RAF) Coastal Command had developed and the RCAF had adopted. Furthermore, because the USN-US Army agreement of 1935 stipulated that Number I Bomber Command's support to the USN was only a "temporary" expedient, it gave the USAAF little incentive to dedicate time and resources away from its strategic bombing role and towards the development of formal maritime air power doctrine.²⁸ It is therefore not difficult to see why the RCAF was so opposed to the idea of placing its maritime patrol forces in Newfoundland under an American commander.

Indeed, the Deputy Chief of the Air Staff, Air Vice-Marshal G.O. Johnson, was irked at what he saw as American hypocrisy. The USAAF was only required to *support* the USN's maritime patrol operations, yet "strangely enough" the RCAF was being asked "to place part of its forces under the *command* of the United States Navy." Assigning Eastern Air Command units under the operational command of a foreign country that was not even a belligerent would dampen the spirits of both Canadian airmen and the Canadian public. The AOC Eastern Air Command, Johnson concluded, should instead give as full support as possible to, and facilitate coordination with, the Americans by liaison between his command and the USN admiral at Argentina.²⁹

On 15 October, the RCAF's Chief of the Air Staff, Air Marshal L.S. Breadner, informed Admiral Stark that even though the closest possible coordination between all forces in the Northwest Atlantic was desirable, the situation at the time still did not necessitate unity of command. Instead, Breadner advocated continuing cooperation between Eastern Air Command and American air forces. He informed Stark that Eastern Air Command was setting up a system of coordination in the form of liaison officers, which was also provided for in ABC-22.³⁰ This was not the response Admiral Stark was hoping

²⁸ Craven and Cate, eds., *Army Air Forces in World War II*, I, 521-24.

²⁹ Air Vice-Marshal G.O. Johnson, Deputy Chief of the Air Staff, to C.G. Power, Minister of National Defence for Air, 9 October 1941, RG 24, Vol. 5177, S. 15-1-350, Part 1, LAC.

³⁰ RCAF CAS to USN CNO, 15 October 1941, RG, 24, Vol. 5177, S. 15-1-350, I, LAC; Minutes of the 112th Meeting of the Cabinet War Committee, 15 October 1941, RG 2, 7C, Volume 5, microfilm reel C-4654, LAC, copy at CFC IRC; W.A.B. Douglas, "Democratic Spirit and Purpose: Problems in Canadian-American Relations, 1934-1945," in Joel Sokolsky and Joseph T. Jockel (eds.), *Fifty Years of Canada-United States Defense Cooperation: The Road From Ogdensburg* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1992), 40.

for. However, unwilling to press the matter, he respected the RCAF's decision and issued orders for the USN air forces in Newfoundland to cooperate with Eastern Air Command. This satisfied the CWC, which considered the matter closed. Upon hearing of Stark's acceptance of the RCAF position, Breadner expressed the following message of relief to his minister: "We have held them off, so far!"³¹

RENEWED AMERICAN PRESSURE FOR UNITY OF COMMAND

Following Japan's devastating attack on Pearl Harbor and the United States' formal entry into the war, American officers began a fresh attempt to impose unity of command over Eastern Air Command's maritime air power operations. In Newfoundland, their main focus was to gain control over the RCAF's No. 1 Group. The American officers' primary concern was that the formation was not an independent command authority and that its commander, Air Commodore McEwen, "could not independently and without reference to the Eastern Air Command headquarters at Halifax take immediate action to support the [USN] Atlantic Fleet task force" in the protection of shipping.³²

They took their concern to the Canada-US Permanent Joint Board on Defence (PJBD). The PJBD was (and remains to this day) an advisory body consisting of civilian and military members that met secretly and made recommendations on North American defensive measures that required governmental approval before implementation.³³ On 20 December 1941, the PJBD released its Twenty-Second Recommendation. It called for the decentralization of command and control authority in order to permit easier local cooperation and give commanders in Newfoundland greater freedom

³¹ USN CNO to RCAF CAS, 27 October 1941, RG 24, Vol. 5177, S. 15-1-350, I, LAC; Minutes of the 115th Meeting of the Cabinet War Committee, 6 November 1941, RG 2, 7C, Volume 6, microfilm # C-4654, LAC, copy at CFC IRC; minute by CAS to Power on Admiral Stark's letter, 3 November 1941, RG 24, Vol. 5177, S. 15-1-350, I, LAC. Quote from latter.

³² Douglas, *Creation of a National Air Force*, 389; Stanley W. Dziuban, *United States Army in World War II Special Studies: Military Relations Between the United States and Canada, 1939-1945* (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1959), 124, 118. Quote from latter.

³³ George F.G. Stanley, *Canada's Soldiers: The Military History of an Unmilitary People*, third edition (Toronto: MacMillan of Canada, 1974), 408.

of action to deal immediately with the operational situation. President Roosevelt approved the recommendation on 24 December 1941, followed by the CWC on 14 January 1942.³⁴ However, as American official historian Stanley W. Dziuban has noted, the wording of the recommendation was not very precise, as it “gave broad scope to the measures that might be taken.”³⁵

The RCAF was also uncomfortable with the PJBD’s Twenty-Second Recommendation. Because it would decrease the AOC Eastern Air Command’s authority over RCAF forces in Newfoundland, the Air Staff suspected that the Americans would try to secure US unity of command over No. 1 Group. Indeed, Canadian airmen were even more suspicious of American intentions now that the United States was formally at war. They feared that any kind of unity of command under an American officer in Newfoundland would lead to the splitting of the RCAF in the colony into two parts, one under the operational command of the USN and one under the USAAF.³⁶

A division of Eastern Air Command squadrons on US service lines would be disastrous for the RCAF. In addition to the organizational and doctrinal issues mentioned above, it also contravened the concept of the indivisibility of air power.³⁷ Division of Eastern Air Command under the Americans would also mean a complete loss of the RCAF’s responsibility for both the defence of shipping off Newfoundland’s coast and the air defence of the colony even though Canada had more military aircraft in Newfoundland than the Americans. In addition, these factors threatened to have a negative effect on the RCAF’s morale

³⁴ Stacey, *Arms, Men, and Governments*, 363-64; Pope to Ralston, 2 January 1942, DHH 112.11 (D1A) Volume 3; Twenty-Second Recommendation of the Permanent Joint Board on Defence, 20 December 1941, DHH 79/35; Minutes of the 136th Meeting of the Cabinet War Committee, 14 January 1942, RG 2, 7C, Volume 8, microfilm # C-4874, LAC, copy at CFC IRC

³⁵ Dziuban, *Military Relations*, 124, 117; PJBD Journal of Discussions and Decisions, 20 December 1941, reproduced in Paul Bridle, ed., *DRBCN*, 910. Quote from former.

³⁶ AOC EAC to AFHQ, 21 December 1941, DHH 79/237.

³⁷ The concept of the indivisibility of air power dictates that all military air assets of a nation—including maritime air power—should be under a separate service, the air force, to ensure the proper concentration and specialized use of air power in the hands of those best trained for it, air force officers. James A. Winnefeld and Dana J. Johnson, *Joint Air Operations: Pursuit of Unity in Command and Control, 1942-1991* (Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 1993), 7; David MacIsaac, “Voices from the Central Blue: The Air Power Theorists,” in Peter Paret, ed., *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 631.

and also the efficiency of its maritime patrol operations.³⁸ This latter concern was one that Rear-Admiral Murray, the RCN commander in Newfoundland, shared. He feared that splitting the RCAF on US service lines threatened to “involve a loss of RCAF effort over the sea, thereby weakening the support now given to the RCN in its responsibility for the protection of trade in coastal waters.”³⁹

Group Captain Heakes echoed Murray’s sentiments and made another important observation. The strength of the American argument declined exponentially with the decreasing number of United States forces in Newfoundland: American commanders would no longer be able to argue that the country with the largest forces should exercise unity of command. He accurately predicted that the Americans would soon transfer many of their forces currently in Newfoundland to the Pacific to face the Japanese threat. The RCAF’s stance in favour of cooperation versus American unity of command would thus be strengthened.⁴⁰ Air Vice-Marshal Anderson agreed with these conclusions, adding, “Canadian commanders cannot relinquish their command or responsibility to their government.” Cooperation, Anderson concluded, would have to suffice to coordinate Canadian and American maritime air power operations.⁴¹

Anderson also understood that the responsibilities of both Air Commodore McEwen’s headquarters in St. John’s and his own in Halifax were growing every week. To ensure greater efficiency and to placate American concerns about McEwen’s lack of local authority over air operations, Anderson agreed to decentralize command and control of No. 1 Group aircraft in Newfoundland in fulfillment of the PJBD’s Twenty-Second Recommendation. However, because the RCAF still viewed Newfoundland as an integral part of the overall defence of the Canadian Atlantic coast, Anderson decided it was imperative that he retain operational command over all RCAF forces in eastern

³⁸ AOC EAC to AFHQ, 21 December 1941, DHH 79/237.

³⁹ Murray to Secretary of the Naval Board, 16 May 1942, DHH 355.009 (D20).

⁴⁰ Douglas, *Creation of a National Air Force*, 389-90; Eliot A. Cohen and John Gooch, *Military Misfortunes: The Anatomy of Failure in War* (New York: Macmillan, Inc., 1990), 74. The USAAF’s Forty-Ninth Bombardment Squadron is a good example. It was scheduled to arrive in Newfoundland in early December 1941 but had been delayed at Mitchell Field in New York due to poor weather. After Pearl Harbor, instead of proceeding to Gander, the squadron was re-diverted to Hawaii. See Air Commodore Cuffe for CAS to AOC EAC, 23 December 1941, RG 24, Volume 5174, File HQS 15-1-204, LAC.

⁴¹ AOC EAC to AFHQ, 22 December 1941, DHH 79/237.

Canada so that “the whole of the command’s resources [were]... immediately available to reinforce stations in any part of the region where the enemy struck.” Anderson therefore only granted McEwen “local operational control” over No. 1 Group forces in Newfoundland.⁴² The Americans reacted favourably to this measure, which came into effect on 20 January 1942. Thereafter, the AOC Eastern Air Command in Halifax gave only “general directives” to the AOC No. 1 Group in St. John’s. This arrangement ensured that McEwen’s maritime patrol aircraft would be available, through cooperation, to support USN forces based in Newfoundland.⁴³

In the US Army official history, Stanley Dziuban has written that with the implementation of the PJBD’s Twenty-Second Recommendation for No. 1 Group in Newfoundland, “the U.S. Navy task force commander at Argentia finally achieved the unified operational control of all the air and naval resources of the two countries available for his task” of protecting maritime trade.⁴⁴ This is an incorrect assessment. Actual operational control of RCAF aircraft in Newfoundland remained with the Air Officer Commanding No. 1 Group in St., John’s, Air Commodore McEwen, not with the USN’s Rear-Admiral Bristol. The command and control arrangement between Canadian and American maritime air power forces thus continued to be one based on the principle of mutual cooperation, as provided for in ABC-22.

The arrangement was realized in the form of a system of air coverage for convoys whereby “cooperation of the RCAF with the US Navy [was] accomplished by means of proposals mutually acceptable.”⁴⁵ In Argentia, Rear-Admiral Bristol sent “proposals” for air coverage to McEwen in St. John’s, who then had the right to decide whether or not he would employ his resources to meet the USN request. To ensure that proper air coverage was provided to shipping, the Americans and No. 1 Group also developed a system of mutual assistance: if one maritime patrol force (i.e., USN air forces

⁴² AOC EAC to AFHQ, 22 December 1941, DHH 79/237; Douglas, *Creation of a National Air Force*, 389. Quote from latter. See also Memorandum from Vice-Chief of the General Staff, Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff and Director of Plans to Chiefs of Staff Committee, 21 December 1941, DHH 355.009 (D20).

⁴³ Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments*, 363-64; Douglas, *Creation of a National Air Force*, 390.

⁴⁴ Dziuban, *Military Relations*, 124.

⁴⁵ “Air Coverage,” Notes on Convoy Organization Western North Atlantic, 20 March 1942, DHH 181.002 (D156).

at Argentia) was unable for any reason (i.e., weather conditions) to provide aircraft to protect shipping in any given area, it could request that another force (i.e., No. 1 Group RCAF or the USAAF at Stephenville or Gander) provide aircraft to perform the task in its stead.⁴⁶ This system worked well for most of 1942, as there were no instances of the AOC No. 1 Group refusing any of the US admiral's requests for air coverage. Developments in the war against the U-boats later in the year, however, put increased pressure on Canadian and American maritime air power formations and forced a re-assessment of their command and control arrangements.

THE INTENSIFICATION OF U-BOAT OPERATIONS AND THE FAILURE OF COOPERATION

Starting in March 1942, Canada and the United States faced a growing U-boat campaign against shipping in the Western Atlantic. Before Pearl Harbor, so as not to infringe on American neutrality and bring the United States into the war, Adolf Hitler had placed strict restrictions on U-boat operations in North American waters south of Newfoundland.⁴⁷ However, after Germany's declaration of war on the US, Hitler gave his U-boat commanders a free hand to attack all shipping in the Western Atlantic just at a time when the United States was moving the bulk of its maritime forces to the Pacific to make up for losses to the Japanese. After U-boats ravished unescorted shipping off the American coast in the first few months of 1942, the United States finally agreed to implement the proven convoy system in its waters.⁴⁸ Nonetheless, the RCAF pointed to the poor US anti-submarine performance off its coast against a relatively small number of German U-boats as further evidence of why Eastern

⁴⁶ See correspondence between the Canadian and American air forces in Newfoundland from 20 December 1941 to March 1942, DHH 181.002 (D173). Also see Douglas et al., *No Higher Purpose*, 595.

⁴⁷ Douglas, *Creation of a National Air Force*, 391; F.H. Hinsley, *Hitler's Strategy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1951), 59; Anthony Martienssen, *Hitler and His Admirals* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1948), 117-118.

⁴⁸ Elliot Cohen and John Gooch Describe this as a major American "failure to learn" from their British allies. Cohen and Gooch, *Military Misfortunes*, Chapter 4.

Air Command aircraft should not come under American unity of command.⁴⁹

By April 1942, with fewer easy pickings off the US east coast, German Admiral Karl Dönitz once again unleashed his U-boat wolf packs on convoys transiting the main North Atlantic shipping lanes. This development put greater pressure on Canadian and American maritime patrol forces in Eastern Canada and Newfoundland. By the middle of the year, it was becoming clear that Canadian-American efforts to coordinate their maritime air power based on mutual cooperation were insufficient, as naval escorts complained of poor communication and scanty air coverage.⁵⁰ To help solve this problem, the British sent experts from RAF Coastal Command to North America to assess the situation there and make recommendations for improvement.⁵¹

Coastal Command had been conducting maritime patrol operations in the North Atlantic since the beginning of the war. Its personnel worked closely with the Royal Navy in joint headquarters utilizing the British operational control system of command and control.⁵² This proved to be a very efficient means of coordinating maritime trade defence operations; and combined with the development of the best anti-submarine weapons and doctrine, Coastal Command became the premier maritime air power organization in the world. The British airmen who visited North America were therefore well placed

⁴⁹ See, for example, the following document written by Heakes: Memorandum "Unity of Command, Newfoundland" by Joint Planning Sub-Committee for Chiefs of Staff Committee, 8 August 1942, RG 24, Volume 5209, File HQS 15-73-4, Part 2, LAC. Heakes was an Air Commodore by this time and would become the AOC No. 1 Group commander in December 1942 after being promoted to Air Vice-Marshal.

⁵⁰ See, for example, "Review of Conditions by Local Escorts (March to September, 1942) and Suggestions for Increasing the Effectiveness," Memorandum by Commander J.M. Rowland, RN, captain of His Majesty's Ship (HMS) *Walker*, 21 September 1942, DHH 181.002 (D121).

⁵¹ Captain D.V. Peyton-Ward, *The RAF in the Maritime War, Volume III: The Atlantic and Home Waters – The Preparative Phase, July 1941 to February 1943*, RAF Air Historical Branch Narrative, 1947, 62-63, The UK National Archives (TNA), Public Records Office (PRO) Air Ministry (Air) File 41/47 [copy available at DHH, File 79/599]; Douglas, *Creation of a National Air Force*, 523; Douglas et al., *No Higher Purpose*, 595.

⁵² On the development of this system see Richard Goette, "The British Joint Area Combined Headquarters Scheme and the Command and Control of Maritime Air Power," *Royal Air Force Air Power Review* 14, 3 (Autumn/Winter 2011): 119-35.

to comment on Canadian and American maritime patrol efforts to protect Allied shipping in the Western Atlantic.⁵³

One of the British officers' main criticisms was the command and control organization in the Western Atlantic. In particular, the Coastal Command experts decried the existence of several Canadian and American command organizations in the area—what historian Sean Maloney has called “fragmented national commands”—and their reliance on cooperation to coordinate air forces for multiple tasks (i.e., the defence of shipping *and* continental defence against enemy attack). The British officers insisted on command and control centralization: Canada and the United States should implement the British operational control system and place all of their anti-submarine forces, naval and air, under one single authority.⁵⁴

The disadvantages of cooperation were especially beginning to show in Newfoundland. By autumn 1942, the RCAF had begun adhering to the RAF Coastal Command practice of only providing air coverage to convoys that intelligence indicated were actually threatened by U-boat attack. As a result, No. 1 Group frequently did not provide all of the air patrols that the USN admiral at Argentia (by now Rear-Admiral Brainard) proposed because intelligence from Ottawa revealed that there were no U-boats in the area.⁵⁵ The Americans did not adhere to the British practice, and this led to a number of instances where the USAAF commanding officer in Newfoundland, Major-General Gerald C. Brant, neglected to fulfill RCAF requests for assistance in prosecuting U-boat contacts based on fresh intelligence. One incident in late November was demonstrative of how cooperation was proving inefficient.

When fog at Argentia prevented USN aircraft from providing coverage to a nearby convoy, Air Commodore McEwen at No. 1 Group

⁵³ The best source on Coastal Command's maritime trade defence efforts during the Second World War is John Buckley, *The RAF and Trade Defence, 1919-1945: Constant Endeavour* (Keele, U.K.: Ryburn Publishing, Keele University Press, 1995).

⁵⁴ Report on Visit of EAC Halifax and RCAF Station, Dartmouth, N.S., by Wing Commander S.R. Gibbs, RAF Coastal Command, [n.d. July 1942] and Report by Commander P.B. Martineau, R.N. (from staff of RAF Coastal Command) on Visit to Eastern Air Command and Western Air Command, 31 October and 8 November 1942, Air 15/217, TNA, PRO; Sean M. Maloney, *Securing Command of the Sea: NATO Naval Planning, 1948-1954* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1995), 44. Quote from latter.

⁵⁵ Martineau, Memorandum to Staff, 31 October 1942, Air 15/217, PRO, TNA; Douglas, *Creation of a National Air Force*, 530.

in St. John's attempted to compensate by providing RCAF Bomber Reconnaissance aircraft from Sydney. However, when he requested further assistance from USAAF B-17 aircraft at Gander, Major-General Brant's headquarters failed to respond. The resulting absence of air protection allowed a German U-boat to sink one ship and damage two others. Incidents such as this greatly frustrated the RCAF. Its commanders on the east coast were fed up with both Major-General Brant's lack of cooperation and Rear-Admiral Brainard's constant "proposals" for air cover of convoys which intelligence indicated were not threatened. The Air Staff decided to join the RCN in its campaign during the winter of 1942-1943 to have all air and sea anti-submarine forces in the Northwest Atlantic brought under one Canadian authority.⁵⁶

CENTRALIZING MARITIME AIR POWER UNDER CANADIAN OPERATIONAL CONTROL

The command and control arrangements for naval and air defence of shipping that Canada and the United States agreed to in 1941 were based on a majority of American air and naval forces being located in the Western Atlantic. The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor changed this premise when the US was forced to re-deploy a large number of its forces to the Pacific to make up for losses. This left Canadian maritime trade defence forces greatly outnumbering American ones in the Northwest Atlantic. Regarding naval forces, Canada contributed 48 per cent of the convoy escorts in the North Atlantic, while the US contributed only 2 per cent.⁵⁷ In terms of maritime air power, by late November 1942 Eastern Air Command had ten bomber reconnaissance squadrons, four of which were in Newfoundland under No. 1 Group. The United States had only

⁵⁶ Douglas, *Creation of a National Air Force*, 531. See also Chapters 2 and 3 of W.G.D. Lund, "Command Relationships in the North West Atlantic, 1939-1943," MA Thesis, History, Queen's University, 1972; and Chapter 11 of Douglas, et al., *No Higher Purpose*.

⁵⁷ That 2 per cent consisted of USN ships and US Coast Guard cutters. Britain's Royal Navy provided the other 50 per cent of the escorts, though they were largely concentrated in the mid- and eastern Atlantic, not the Northwest Atlantic where the Canadians predominated. Douglas, *Creation of a National Air Force*, 546; Lund, "Command Relations," 42-43 and 46-48.

two USN flying-boat squadrons operating out of Argentia, plus two USAAF long-range B-17 squadrons operating out of Gander and Stephenville.⁵⁸

With the larger number of forces, Canada should have had greater command and control influence over maritime air power in the Northwest Atlantic. However, there was a holdover effect after Pearl Harbor in that the US was able to maintain its more favourable command and control position for several months despite the redeployment of most of its forces to the Pacific. This situation was not lost on Canada's naval and air force leaders; and it only added impetus to their push to centralize maritime forces under one Canadian authority. A Canadian commander-in-chief made sense for Eastern Air Command both in terms of operational efficiency, as the failure of cooperation had demonstrated, and because it had the majority of maritime air forces in the area. Furthermore, by late 1942 the RCAF was providing all of the convoy coverage to the north and east of Newfoundland, which is where the bulk of U-boat operations against Allied shipping were taking place.⁵⁹ Indeed, the U-boats' success against the convoys plying the North Atlantic run was causing much consternation to Allied planners.

By autumn 1942 shipping losses reached levels that threatened Operation "Bolero," the build-up in Britain of Western Allied forces for a re-entry onto continental Europe. Alarmed, Allied leaders put the defeat of the U-boat on the top of their list of priorities when they met in North Africa at Casablanca in January 1943.⁶⁰ Military planners from Britain and the United States concluded that the current anti-submarine effort lost "much in efficiency and economy of force through the lack of a central coordinating authority."⁶¹ Discussions continued in the weeks that followed on how to reorganize the command and control structure in the Western Atlantic. They soon began to bear fruit.

Canadian planners commenced consultations with their American service counterparts in the early winter of 1943. To the Canadians' pleasant surprise, the USN and the USAAF revealed that they were willing

⁵⁸ Douglas, *Creation of a National Air Force*, Appendix E.

⁵⁹ Douglas, "Alliance Warfare," 168; Douglas et al., *No Higher Purpose*, 595.

⁶⁰ Miner, "The Battle of the Atlantic," 56.

⁶¹ Air Force Combined Staff (AFCS) Washington to RCAF HQ Ottawa, 2 February 1943, RG 24, Vol. 5270, S. 28-1-2, LAC.

to surrender operational control over all of their anti-submarine forces in the Northwest Atlantic to Canada provided that one commander, i.e., a Canadian commander-in-chief (CinC), was made responsible for the trade defence effort in the area. This proposed arrangement definitely appealed to the RCAF leadership, as it would potentially allow the AOC Eastern Air Command to gain operational control of American maritime patrol aircraft in Newfoundland.⁶² What had led to this American change of heart?

Great changes were afoot in the USAAF regarding its effort against the U-boats, and the RCAF learned how effective the RAF Coastal Command officers' visit to North America had been. Analysis and constructive criticism from the British airmen had led the USAAF to re-evaluate its anti-submarine operations and its command and control organization.⁶³ The first step occurred on 15 October 1942, when the USAAF transformed Number I Bomber Command into the Army Air Forces Anti-Submarine Command by eliminating its continental defence bombardment role and tasking it solely with anti-submarine operations.⁶⁴ In mid-February 1943, the USAAF squadrons in Newfoundland passed to the Twenty-Fifth Wing of the USAAF Anti-Submarine Command and immediately began exploring better ways to counter the U-boat menace.⁶⁵

Also in February, the USAAF agreed that its forces in Newfoundland would abandon their primary "seek and sink" doctrine. They would now adhere to the RCAF practice of placing the protection of shipping as the first priority and the destruction of U-boats as a secondary

⁶² AFHQ to AOC EAC, 3 February 1943 and CNS to Commanding Officer Atlantic Coast (COAC), 4 February 1943, RG 24, Vol. 5270, S.28-1-2, LAC; DCAS Memorandum to Power, 4 February 1943, DHH 77/528; RCAF HQ Ottawa to Air Force, Combined Staff, Washington, 5 February 1943, DHH 77/528.

⁶³ See, for example, Group Captain P.F. Canning, RAF, to Chief of Staff to The Commander Eastern Sea Frontier, Liaison Officer Eastern Theatre of Operations and 1st Air Force, and Executive Officer, I Bomber Command, 17 February 1942, Air 15/217, PRO, TNA; Craven and Cate, eds., *Army Air Forces in World War II*, I, 541.

⁶⁴ Canning to Chief of Staff to The Commander Eastern Sea Frontier, Liaison Officer, Eastern Theatre of Operations and 1st Air Force, and Executive Officer, I Bomber Command, 17 February 1942, Air 15/217, TNA, PRO; Craven and Cate, eds., *Army Air Forces in World War II*, I, 537-53.

⁶⁵ Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate, eds. *The Army Air Forces In World War II, Volume II: Europe: Torch to Pointblank, August 1942-December 1943* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), 393; Douglas, *Creation of a National Air Force*, 546.

aim.⁶⁶ It was a remarkable concession, not only because it ensured common and united priorities in convoy defence efforts in the region, but also because it demonstrated good faith on the part of the Americans to carry out their responsibilities successfully. The most important effect of the Coastal Command officers, however, was that the USN and USAAF became amenable to the idea of centralizing command and control in the Northwest Atlantic under Canadian authority.⁶⁷ Discussions continued in Washington during the winter of 1943, culminating in the Atlantic Convoy Conference in March.

The major triumph for Canada at this meeting of Canadian, American and British experts on the anti-U-boat campaign was agreement on the creation of the Canadian Northwest Atlantic Command theatre of operations. Established on 30 April 1943, the new command organization was based on the British system of operational control. Canada was granted operational control over all air and surface escorts in the area west of 47°W and north of 40°N, including Newfoundland. Rear-Admiral Murray became the theatre CinC, exercising operational control over all naval forces. He also was also given operational direction over all maritime patrol aircraft, which he exercised through his deputy, the commander of Eastern Air Command, Air Vice-Marshal G.O. Johnson, who oversaw the detailed maritime patrol operations.⁶⁸

Johnson's official title was re-designated Air Officer Commanding-*in-Chief* Eastern Air Command. He now exercised "general operational control" over all Allied air forces employed in the

⁶⁶ Report of Convoy Conference, Argentia, 26-27 February 1943, DHH 181.002 (D96); Douglas, *Creation of a National Air Force*, 545-46.

⁶⁷ Canning to Chief of Staff to The Commander Eastern Sea Frontier, Liaison Officer, Eastern Theatre of Operations and 1st Air Force, and Executive Officer, I Bomber Command, 17 February 1942, Air 15/217, TNA, PRO; Craven and Cate, eds., *Army Air Forces in World War II*, I, 541; Craven and Cate, *Army Air Forces In World War II*, II, 393; Douglas, *Creation of a National Air Force*, 546.

⁶⁸ "Report of Sub-Committee on Command Relations," 9 March 1943, Atlantic Convoy Conference Minutes, 181.003 (D5027); Minutes of the 224th Meeting of the Cabinet War Committee, 11 March 1943, RG 2 7C, Volume 12, microfilm reel C-4875, LAC, copy at CFC IRC; Lund, "Command Relationships," 51; Douglas et al., *No Higher Purpose*, 624-630; W.A.B. Douglas, Roger Sarty, Michael Whitby, with Robert H. Caldwell, William Johnston, and William G.P. Rawling, *Blue Water Navy: The Official Operational History of the Royal Canadian Navy in the Second World War, 1939-1943, Volume II, Part 2* (St. Catharines: Vanwell Publishing Limited, 2007), 23-24; Stacey, *Arms, Men and Governments*, 367. Johnson had become AOC Eastern Air Command in January 1943.



As Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief Eastern Air Command, RCAF Air Vice-Marshal G.O. Johnson had operational control over Canadian and American maritime air forces in the Canadian Northwest Atlantic Command from 1943-1945. [DND photo PL-12772]

defence of shipping in the Canadian Northwest Atlantic Command. In Newfoundland, Johnson delegated the “local operational control” of all maritime patrol operations to the AOC No. 1 Group, Air Vice-Marshal (formerly Group Captain) Heakes.⁶⁹ “General” operational control meant that the AOCinC Eastern Air Command continued to pass “general directives” to the AOC No. 1 Group, although now they included directives for the use of USN and USAAF aircraft in the defence of convoys. “Local” operational control meant that Heakes retained operational control over RCAF forces in Newfoundland and now also had operational control over all American maritime patrol forces.

In order to carry out this new arrangement in Newfoundland, a team from the USAAF’s new Twenty-Fifth Anti-Submarine Wing joined Heakes’ staff at No. 1 Group Headquarters in St. John’s on 30 March 1943. Although the USAAF group technically did not have to make this move until the Canadian Northwest Atlantic Command formally came into existence on 30 April, they did so in

⁶⁹ Report of Sub-Committee on Command Relations, 9 March 1943, Atlantic Convoy Conference Minutes, DHH 181.003 (D5027).

good faith. They desired to get a head start on learning the RCAF's methods so that they would "be ready to operate under the new scheme immediately the word go is given."⁷⁰ Finally, the USN installed a liaison staff from Argentia at Heakes' headquarters in St. John's in May, shortly after he had assumed local operational control of all Newfoundland maritime patrol aircraft.⁷¹ The coordination of Canadian and American maritime air power by cooperation had finally been abandoned and replaced with the centralization of their forces under Canadian operational control.

The creation of the Canadian Northwest Atlantic Command was a significant event in Canadian air force history. It was not just the initial occurrence of a Canadian air force officer having commander-in-chief status in an active theatre of war;⁷² it was also the first time that American air forces came under Canadian operational control. By centralizing air forces under operational control, Canada and the United States also set an important precedent for their continental air defence command and control relationship in the early Cold War. It was indeed operational control that the RCAF and the United States Air Force implemented during this period, first to coordinate air forces defending the northeast approaches to Newfoundland during the early 1950s, and then centralized under the binational Canada-US North American Air Defence Command (NORAD) in 1957.⁷³ The NORAD operational control arrangement remains in effect to this day.

⁷⁰ No. 1 Group to EAC HQ, 30 March 1943, DHH 181.002 (D124).

⁷¹ Douglas, *Creation of a National Air Force*, 549.

⁷² For many years it was the *only* time that a RCAF officer held a major operational command position in an active theatre of war—that is until Lieutenant-General Charlie Bouchard became the coalition commander of Operation Unified Protector (Libya) in 2011.

⁷³ In Newfoundland during the early 1950s, the AOC RCAF Air Defence Command exercised operational control over USAF air defence forces. In the 1957 arrangement, the USAF NORAD Commander-in-Chief and his RCAF Deputy CinC exercised operational control over both nation's air defence forces. Joseph T. Jockel, *No Boundaries Upstairs: Canada, the United States and the Origins of North American Air Defence, 1945-1958* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987), Chapter 5; Richard Goette, *The Acid Test of Sovereignty: Canada, the United States and the Command of Continental Defence, 1940-1957* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, forthcoming 2018), Chapters 7 and 8.

CONCLUSION

There were indeed significant national differences regarding the command and control of Canadian-American maritime air power in the Northwest Atlantic from 1941 to 1943. Canadian military culture dictated that Canadian and American maritime air forces should simply cooperate, while the Americans insisted that their relationship should be based on the US military practice of unity of command. A compromise was reached accepting cooperation with a provision that unity of command would be implemented in the event of an emergency. Still, the Americans remained unsatisfied with this arrangement, and they tried several times to push for unity of command, especially after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor brought the United States into the war as an official belligerent. Canadian air force leaders, however, successfully resisted the USN and USAAF's numerous efforts to place RCAF maritime patrol forces under American unity of command.

The RCAF leadership continuously stressed to their American allies that the operational situation did not require greater centralization of command and control. Canada's air force leaders also feared that the convoluted organization of maritime air power in the United States and the USAAF's subsequent inefficient doctrinal approach to anti-submarine warfare would have a negative effect on any RCAF forces placed under an American commander. The declining number of US forces in the Northwest Atlantic also gave credence to the RCAF's argument that maritime air power in the region should not be centralized under American unity of command. It was for these cultural, organizational, operational, and doctrinal reasons that the RCAF was able to successfully insist that coordination of Canadian-American maritime air power continue to be accomplished through cooperation.

Cooperation proved to be an effective means to coordinate maritime air power when there was minimal enemy action. However, when the Germans intensified their U-boat offensive against Allied shipping throughout 1942, Canadian and American air forces' combined efforts to defend convoys in the Northwest Atlantic proved insufficient. When maritime air power was engaged in continuous operations against the enemy, more centralized command and control was needed to ensure effectiveness. After consultations with RAF Coastal Command experts and negotiations that culminated in the

Atlantic Convoy Conference in early 1943, Canadian and American leaders finally agreed to centralize all maritime air forces under Canadian operational control with the establishment of the Canadian Northwest Atlantic Command in April. Adopting the proven British operational control system solved the problem of how to properly coordinate Canadian-American maritime air forces. It meant more centralized and effective command and control of Canadian-American maritime air power and greater operational efficiency to coordinate maritime patrol operations. Such developments were important factors in the protection of shipping and eventual Allied victory over the U-boats in mid-1943.

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