



FULL WING DESIGNATION FOR 5 WING GOOSE BAY

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JCSP 50

Service Paper

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FULL WING DESIGNATION FOR 5 WING GOOSE BAY

AIM

1. 5 Wing, Goose Bay was built to assist trans-Atlantic operations during World War Two and found a raison d'être as a forward operating location and training ground during the Cold War. Following the collapse of the USSR in 1991 and the subsequent departure of the Allied forces from Goose Bay in 2005, 5 Wing's existence teetered between complete closure and an uncertain future. Selecting a plan for holding the base in "caretaker" condition, the base military structure was vastly reduced and Goose Bay became designated a "little wing". This designation would see the Wing Commander reduced to a Lieutenant Colonel position and shrinking the Wing staff accordingly. With the resurgence of Russian aggression in Europe as well as new technologies, allied nations are again interested in a Low-Level Training environment. This paper will outline the evolving role of 5 Wing Goose Bay since the late 1990s and early 2000s. This paper aims to validate the necessity and solicit restoring 5 Wing Goose Bay to a fully operational wing with corresponding rank and staff structure to meet present and future roles.

INTRODUCTION

2. Amidst the early days of World War Two, the risk to sea lines of communication by German submarines became severe. Developed through "Project Alkali", a joint effort by the United States Air Force (USAF) and Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF), a site was selected on the shores of Lake Melville in Labrador¹. The base played an important role in Anti-submarine warfare (ASW) as well as allowing Ferry Command to deliver aircraft to the European theatre. Following the war and the emergence of the Soviet threat, The USAF heavily invested in the development of the base, stationing 12,000 members and families. Goose Bay was one of the sites where nuclear munitions were forward located to deter threats². By 1976 the USAF began to withdraw their forces in Labrador, however were quickly replaced in the 1980s by European nations. The German, Dutch, Italian, and British Air Forces all developed permanent detachments on the base to benefit from the sparsely populated training environment. The airspace surrounding Goose Bay proved to be an ideal location as it had both the size and complex terrain, similar to that of Europe, to teach low-level flying which had become the required technique to defeat Soviet radar and surface-to-air missiles. A similar range could not be established in Europe due to population density, size of nations, and European flight regulations making Goose Bay a valued NATO training contribution. Goose Bay would also play key operational roles in

¹ CFB Goose Bay, Wikipedia, 10 February 2024, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/CFB_Goose_Bay

² Robert J. Burns, "Bombs in the Bush", *Canada's History*, January 17, 2017, <https://www.canadashistory.ca/explore/politics-law/bombs-in-the-bush>

Operation GHOST RIDER, the practice run for bombing Libya in 1985³, as well as a transit hub for flights during Operations DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM, in 1991⁴.

3. With the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, and Russia in near financial ruin, the threat of invasion in Europe was perceived to have disappeared. Even the RCAF began to look at ways to shift staffing to other bases and find alternative means of operating the base. In 1998 Serco Canada was signed as the Alternate Service Delivery (ASD) contract at Goose Bay allowing many of the service trade members to be stationed out. The Wing establishment was subsequently reduced by 100s of members. Additionally, by 2005 all Allied nations had ceased flight training at 5 Wing leaving the only user as 3 Wing Bagotville, and the occasional location for NORAD training. In Jul 2008, Col Matheson handed command over to LCol Legresley, the Acting Wing Commander at the time⁵. At this point, 5 Wing essentially entered its caretaker phase, where a skeleton military core operated the base, while the ASD provided the physical servicing duties. All positions were reduced in rank and 5 Wing became one of the two “little wings”⁶. By 2014 due to cost versus benefit, Goose Bay was evaluated for closure⁷. Considering the economic impact on the local communities in Labrador, it was determined that the station would remain open in caretaker status. This paradigm would begin to shift in 2020 as the global pandemic took hold. Goose Bay was designated as the Eastern Airport of Entry with all Atlantic military flights routing through it. The Wing would be stretched with its existing staff to execute this new level of responsibility and would require supplementary members to be attached⁸. This trend would continue to the present day and indicated future projects will see a dramatic change in 5 Wing Operations over the coming years.

DISCUSSION

4. Expansion of Sub-Arctic Training: As early as 2007 the German Special Forces, the Kommando Spezialkräfte (KSK), began using Goose Bay as a winter warfare training ground. With a more predictable harsher winter climate, the KSK conducts basic and advanced training to qualify their support troops and assaulters. In addition, 5 Canadian Army Division established a logistical hub to facilitate winter training serials which can number into the hundreds of soldiers.

³ Paul Evancoe, Operation El Dorado Canyon – The 1986 Bombing of Libya, *US Military.com*, <https://usmilitary.com/operation-el-dorado-canyon-the-1986-bombing-of-libya/>

⁴ McKay, James R. "CFB Goose Bay and Operation “Desert Shield”." *Canadian Military History* 14, 3 (2005)

<https://scholars.wlu.ca/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1354&context=cmh>

⁵ Confirmed by a conversation with Ms B. Duffett, WComd EA since 1998.

⁶ 9 Wing Gander is the second Wing considered a “little Wing” and commanded by a LCol.

⁷ Rob Antle and Kate Adach, “DND briefing questioned cost, role of 5 Wing Goose Bay”, CBC News, Jan 21, 2014, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/dnd-briefing-questioned-cost-role-of-5-wing-goose-bay-1.2503881>

⁸ The program was initially staffed with the CO OSS, and one civilian receiving all flights. This was later increased with 3 2Lt OJT members as no officers were available.

During the winter season, the Operation Support Squadron (OSS) is stretched to with its existing Range Control Team (3 members) as well as the Plans Team (2 members) to provide proper coordination and support to the exercise. This is partly due to one or more of the positions not being filled on an annual rotation based on staffing priority and the ability to attract members to be stationed in Goose Bay⁹. During winter months when sub-arctic training is at its peak, the operational focus is on these activities diminishing the ability to conduct concurrent events. Both visiting units often bring visiting dignitaries from foreign nations in the Colonel and General Officer ranks. Expansion of the establishment would allow for more depth in these sections as well as allow for routine base functions or multiple mission mandates to occur simultaneously. Elevating the rank structure would decrease the rank disparity of visits and ensure a proper level of RCAF representation.

5. Diplomatic engagements: Goose Bay is often regarded as an isolated out-of-the-way location, however, it is a strategically located airport along the Trans-Atlantic corridor. Based on wind patterns and North Atlantic Tracks (NATs) dozens of commercial flights overfly Goose Bay every day. In addition, it is an important location for fuel stops in either direction. As such Goose Bay becomes a location where a wide variety of flights come and go. Between 2020 and 2023, Goose Bay hosted the President of Iraq twice, the Prime Minister, the Governor General, former President Trump twice, and a Qatari Prince. In this regard, Goose Bay conducts many more high-level and heads-of-state visits than its counterparts across the Division. Moreso when the current Wing Commander (WComd) is absent, the position is filled by a Major. Based on weather and diplomatic schedules, VIP fuel stops can often be unscheduled and result in last-minute adjustments. Elevating and expanding the establishment would decrease the possibility of a lapse of protocol and ensure proper representation during scheduled and no-notice events.

6. NORAD mandate: Before 2020, The North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) would exercise deployments every few years, with the last large-scale event taking place in 2016¹⁰ and 2018. Goose Bay is designated as a Deployed Operating Base (DOB) where training takes place under the NORAD concept of operations (CONOPS). 5 OSS has a minimal staff to maintain the Quick Reaction Area (QRA), and coordinate routine training and visits. Commencing in 2020, Goose Bay would see a series of five major deployments over the subsequent three years. Initially, 5 Wing played a supporting role to a deployed Air Task Force (ATF), however later iterations would see the entire Wing senior staff filling exercise leadership roles. During these periods the Wing's focus was completely dedicated to these exercises to the detriment of

⁹ Goose Bay is an isolated posting requiring members to screen for three years. Members with complicated family requirements are often ineligible for a number of reasons.

¹⁰ Government of Canada, Canada.ca, National Defence, "NORAD begins annual VIGILANT SHIELD exercise", News Release, October 17, 2016, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/news/2016/10/norad-begins-annual-vigilant-shield-exercise.html>

routine operations. These exercises have been used as messaging, as Russia continues to exercise its strategic bomber fleet and has developed staging bases to allow armed fighter escort to the Canadian and Alaskan Identification Zones¹¹. In addition, the introduction of hypersonic weapon systems changes the characteristics of the threat, reducing decision-making and reaction time¹². As such NORAD's operational capability and readiness will remain at the forefront for the foreseeable future. While exercises of limited duration have been successful, any extended deployments may prove to be problematic for the existing base structure. Given the minimal staff embedded in the OSS¹³, expanding the rank structure would allow for positional depth and ensure that present NORAD functions as well as periods of extended deployment are sustainable.

7. Resurgence of Low-Level Training: With both the resurgence of Russian aggression, the introduction of hypersonic weapons, and increased competition in the South China Sea, Allied nations have demonstrated a desire to recommence training in Goose Bay. The German Air Force has expressed interest in resuming low-level training with both their tactical transport fleet as well as their fighter force as early as the fall of 2022. This was required to be put on hold as significant consultation with the indigenous communities in the region was required. During this period the WComd was involved in many high-level discussions including the local community, indigenous governments, and the province, as well as ministerial and Chief of the Defence (CDS) level briefs. This was often accomplished with limited support staff as the Wing establishment is still structured at a caretaker level. When the Low-Level Training Area was first established, it was done so without the consultation of local communities. This resulted in protests and vocal concerns by the indigenous communities which exist even today¹⁴. In today's environment of Truth and Reconciliation as well as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), the restoration of the Low-Level Training Environment in Goose Bay will take considerable high-level negotiations and staff work which exceeds the caretaker posture of 5 Wing. The service contract has been amended to allow for some future training and expansion, however, there are functions which must be coordinated by military members. To support the HQ while ongoing negotiations

¹¹ Hunter Crowther, "Russian jets spotted flying near Alaska twice this week: NORAD", CTVNews.ca, Feb. 9, 2024, <https://www.ctvnews.ca/world/russian-jets-spotted-flying-near-alaska-twice-this-week-norad-1.6763118>

¹² Ashley Burke, "NORAD commander warns Canadian officials about the threat posed by hypersonic missiles", CBC News, Nov 30, 2021, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/commander-norad-hypersonic-weapons-canada-position-1.6268141>

¹³ 5 Wing is an isolated Pri C staffing posting, which can result in positions not being filled. For several periods between 2020-2023 the NORAD cell was staffed by just a Sgt, or by an 2Lt OTJ member.

¹⁴ Brent Patterson, "The struggle of Innu land defenders against NATO low level flight training over Nitassinan", *Peace Brigades International-Canada*, August 26, 2020, <https://pbicanada.org/2020/08/26/the-innu-struggle-against-nato-low-level-flight-training-over-nitassinan/>

take place, as well as coordinate and operate the airspace in the near future, expansion of the OSS staff must take place to maximize the use of Goose Bay.

8. Development of Future Fighter Ranges: The announcement of NORAD modernization and Canada's purchasing of the F-35 fighter is very significant for Goose Bay¹⁵. In the Spring of 2023, OSS staff began discussions with fighter force representatives to determine the requirements for training and operating the new aircraft¹⁶. The F-35 fighter's capability allows the aircraft to operate significantly differently than its predecessors and will require considerably more airspace. In conjunction with the F-35 project is the requirement to ensure that infrastructure, systems, and networks are all compatible with the new platform. This staff work will be required over the next few years and will be a considerable workload. While Canada will most greatly benefit from these advances, NATO allies fielding the F-35 will also have the need for a training area. Even the USAF does not have sufficient ranges where full exploitation of the aircraft's capabilities can be employed. Both Cold Lake and Goose Bay will more than likely play a significant future role to NATO partners providing advanced training ranges to ensure readiness for F-35 fleets, as well as interoperability of NATO countries. 4 Wing Cold Lake is well situated for this growth in their ranges; however, Goose Bay lacks sufficient staffing to support operations and planning. To ensure the proper development and future operation of the Goose Bay Low-Level Airspace, additional dedicated staff officers will be required.

CONCLUSION

9. Where Goose Bay's future was once uncertain, the current world paradigm and projected future capabilities indicate that it will only become more important. During a visit to Goose Bay in 2021, Deputy Comd Canadian NORAD Region (CANR), Brig. Gen. O'Malley indicated the strategic importance of Goose Bay to the United States as well as North America¹⁷. This was even before the February 2022 invasion of Ukraine by Russia or the release of Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy¹⁸. It is now clear as great power competition increases as well as the fielding of advanced weapons systems, that Goose Bay's importance as both a training ground as well as a strategic location in North American security is assured. The existing caretaker establishment is designed to provide oversight of the ASD and basic operation of the airfield. The elevation and expansion of 5 Wing's establishment is not only appropriate given its renewed importance but also necessary to ensure its ability for continuous operations. Many of the military

¹⁵ Government of Canada, Canada.ca, National Defence, Backgrounder, North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD), 2022-06-22, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/news/2022/06/north-american-aerospace-defense-command-norad.html>

¹⁶ The Author was CO of 5 OSS during this period and represented 5 Wing during these meetings.

¹⁷ Office call between BGen O'Malley and CO OSS Fall 2020.

¹⁸ Canada's strategy for the Indo-Pacific, His Majesty the King in Right of Canada, as represented by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, 2022, <https://www.international.gc.ca/transparency-transparence/assets/pdfs/indo-pacific-into-pacifique/indo-pacific-into-pacifique-en.pdf>

duties which once existed can be reinvigorated through the ASD contract, however, this will entail both training and time to develop procedures. In other cases, duties will have to be taken on by the existing minimal and overtasked staff. The expansion of key positions will still significantly fall short of other DOB locations, however, will be appropriate given the requirements and duties expected in the near future. Given the nature of establishment changes, these adjustments need to take place early on to allow for training, development of procedures, and a full understanding of the complex problem of future development.

RECOMMENDATION

10. Given that the arguments outlined in paras four through six already exist it would be recommended that the elevation of the Wing structure take place at the soonest possible review. This would include the WComd elevated to a Colonel rank and the Wing Chief Warrant Officer (WCWO) to the rank of Chief Warrant Officer¹⁹. Beneficial growths would be to elevate the OSS and Mission Support Squadron (MSS) Commanding Officers to a Lieutenant Colonel rank and the Administration Officer and Wing Comptroller to a Major rank. This establishment growth would allow for the addition of deputy positions, five positions in total, addressing the existing rank disparity, staffing shortages, and ability to better supervise and operate the Wing.

11. Para's seven and eight address current planning intentions and what is expected to be future capabilities. In order to realize the full potential of these desired outcomes it is recommended that as planning progresses in these areas, expansion of the establishment be considered at the appropriate time. This would include the addition of deputies as outlined in para ten (if not already accomplished), as well as bolstering support cells with additional members, and staff officer positions. In total, it would be recommended to elevate a total of six positions and an establishment growth of approximately ten to twelve positions over the next five years to adjust to the existing elevation of Wing operations and potential future commitments.

12. Given the realities of establishment growth, it is recommended to explore non-traditional methods for filling the establishment positions to include:

- a. The inclusion of USAF NORAD exchange positions assigned to the Wing, NORAD cell, or Deputy CO OSS positions;
- b. Exploring opportunities in the Reserve Flight to create Reserve Force positions to meet the establishment's needs.
- c. The increase of the salary wage envelope (SWE) funds to create civilian positions to provide long-term continuity; and

¹⁹ The Wing Chief Warrant Officer position is currently a Master Warrant Officer Rank

- d. The examination of the ASD contract to look for areas where duties can be incorporated into the existing contract, or submit a contract amendment to allow for future growth.

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