

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF



NORAD

By Karen Christiuk

May 12, 2008 marks the 50th anniversary of the most significant military agreement between Canada and the United States—the North American Aerospace Defense Command—more commonly known throughout the world as “NORAD.”

Although originally created during the Cold War to defend North America against possible air invasion, NORAD’s structure, name and complexity have evolved throughout the years, particularly in response to the 2001 World Trade Centre attacks.



CF Photo by Cpl. Steven Ingle

NORAD's mission is to provide aerospace warning and aerospace control for North America through the command center at NORAD-United States Northern Command (USNORTHCOM) in Colorado and three regional headquarters: 1 Canadian Air Division / Canadian NORAD Region (1 Cdn Air Div / CANR) inside 17 Wing (Winnipeg), Alaskan NORAD Region (ANR) inside Elmendorf Air Force Base, and Continental NORAD Region (CONR) inside Tyndall Air Force Base (Florida).

"Through CANR, Canadians play a major role in NORAD," explains

Maj Jason Proulx, Assistant Deputy at NORAD-USNORTHCOM Public Affairs. "When you look at a map that shows the NORAD airspace, you will notice that the Canadian region comprises the largest area to cover and

protect—nearly 10 million square kilometres. This air coverage is particularly vital in less populated areas such as Canada's vast Arctic."

Although the main NORAD jubilee celebrations take place in Colorado Springs, a Canadian public celebration took place in Winnipeg on May 30th on the south grounds of Manitoba's Legislative Building at 10:00 a.m. The event included a military parade and dramatic flypast by the Snowbirds and CF18 Hornet National

Demonstration Teams. In honour of the jubilee, the Snowbirds have "NORAD 50" imprinted on their tails, while the CF18 demonstration team has made the Golden Jubilee one of its themes for the 2008 season.

"Activities surrounding the 50th anniversary of NORAD are designed to remind all Canadians that NORAD plays a vital role to the security of North America," notes Maj Proulx.

"Canadians and Americans work together 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to watch the skies over both countries. We've also recently added a maritime warning mission which is meant to enhance, not replace, the important roles played by other

organizations such as the Navy and Coast Guard, by improving information sharing on both sides of the border. Defence is a team effort, and we are proud to be a part of the team."

Unquestionably, the modern NORAD of today is vastly different from what it looked



CF Photo by Capt. Steve Neta



CF Photo

like five decades ago. During the early days of the organization, one of Canada's main contributions came in the form of the Distant Early Warning (DEW) Line, a massive engineering marvel of radar stations that stretched across the Arctic and remained in operation for 30 years. Two other radar systems (the Pinetree Line and the Mid-Canada Line) also worked in conjunction with the DEW Line as additional sites for detection. For air defence fighter aircraft, Canada relied on nine Royal Canadian Air Force squadrons headquartered at Air Defence

remained constant for the last 50 years, recent events such as the 2001 attacks on the World Trade Centre have had a significant influence on NORAD. One person who can speak with first-hand knowledge about NORAD's post 9/11 evolution, and the new spotlight on homeland security, is Col Christopher Coates, the current Director of Operations for 1 Cdn Air Div / CANR.

"We've developed procedures and means to look inward to extend our air defence capabilities over the continent," explains Col Coates. "Operationally, our protection used to start at the edge of our continent and we focused outward and tried to keep the threats at a distance. We've now learned to integrate our military air defence with the civilian air traffic control, and so we've developed links with domestic agencies. It's a whole set of capabilities that didn't exist prior to September 11—both personnel and procedures."

Col Coates says that another major outcome of 9/11 has been the implementation of "Operation Noble Eagle" also known in military circles as "O-N-E." The mission of Operation Noble Eagle is to look for potential air threats from within the continent, particularly by civilian aircraft and assist with homeland defence.

"Since 9/11, when there is suspicious activity within our country, we will investigate,



Command in St-Hubert, Quebec.

Today, in addition to the Canadian NORAD Region Headquarters in Winnipeg, NORAD is also supported in Canada by the Canadian Air Defence Sector at 22 Wing North Bay. CANR also maintains CF18 Hornet aircraft on standby at 4 Wing (Cold Lake, Alberta) and 3 Wing (Bagotville, Quebec).

Although its general mission to protect and watch the skies over North America has

sometimes with fighter aircraft, or by other means.”

Furthermore, NORAD has also taken on public responsibility for providing air defence coverage for special events inside North America.

“NORAD has provided aerospace warning and control for recent events such as the North American Leaders’ Summit in Montebello, Quebec,” says Col Coates. “Working closely with the RCMP and other agencies is critical to providing a safe and secure environment for these special events. Similarly, the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver will be a very important event for us.”

With its long and complicated history, and new threats occurring continually throughout the world, it is difficult to imagine what NORAD will look like in the next 50 years. Nonetheless, with the thick backbone of the first five decades behind them, the future of NORAD definitely looks bright for both Canada and the U.S.

“The strength of NORAD comes from a team—a bi-national command—it increases the voices of both countries,” says Col Coates. “NORAD will continue to evolve to meet the needs of Canada and the US as we face the threats of the future—whatever they may be.” More information about the NORAD 50th anniversary celebrations is available at www.norad.mil/50 ■

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List of Abbreviations

1 Cdn Air Div	1 Canadian Air Division
ANR	Alaskan NORAD Region
CANR	Canadian NORAD Region
CONR	Continental NORAD Region
DEW	Distant Early Warning
NORAD	North American Aerospace Defense Command
USNORCOM	United States Northern Command
FOL	forward operating location

Photos 1 & 2: In recognition of the jubilee, Canada’s CF18 Hornet National Demonstration Team is proud to feature the NORAD 50th Anniversary as one of its themes for the 2008 air show season. These photos were taken on a recent team flight over the Saguenay region in Quebec, Canada.

Photo 3: Canadians and Americans working together inside the Air Operations Centre, 1 Canadian Air Division / Canadian NORAD Region Headquarters (1 Cdn Air Div / CANR HQ) in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Photo by Cpl Steven Bogue.

Photo 4: A CF18 Hornet from 4 Wing Cold Lake flies next to a Russian Tu-95 Bear bomber on September 5, 2007. The Canadian NORAD Region aircraft visually identified and monitored Russian aircraft as they passed through the North American Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ) in international airspace. The Russian aircraft were taking part in a publicly announced exercise. All aircraft returned to their bases without incident. DND Photo