

The N° 1 Overseas Ferry Unit

(Robert G Pelley, 2019-06-09)
bobsganderhistory.com

I have been asked for information about the 1 OFU and particularly if it was a unit that flew aircraft across the Atlantic in World War II. The answer is that no, it did not ferry aircraft during that war. However, it did do the same job some years later, starting in the early 1950s.

A first squadron insignia found for this unit is shown below:



This may be more a patch than an official badge, and most likely was used on jackets by pilots and ground crew as unofficial identification.

The photo below shows what could be the official badge, as it includes a Queen's crown.



The inscription is not quite Latin and shows a sense of humour seldom seen in officialdom:

"DELIVERUM NON DUNKUM"

Much of the information given below comes from official Canadian government websites and in certain cases may include direct extracts. There were several specific delivery operations but the general context was explained as follows:

With the stand-up of NATO and the emergence of the Cold War, Europe was seen as the next potential battleground,

so much so that even the Korean War was seen as a diversion. Canada committed herself to providing 12 squadrons of aircraft as well as ground forces in an effort to deter attacks and defend Western Europe.

The aircraft would be flown to Europe using the North Atlantic ferry route that had been developed during the Second World War by the RAF's Ferry Command. Leaving from Goose Bay or Gander in Newfoundland, aircraft would fly to Greenland, Iceland and on to Scotland and England.

More flights went through Goose Bay than Gander because of its proximity to Greenland, but Gander was on occasion the main airfield and always the alternate.

The first aircraft to make the flight were F-86 Sabres, on their way to create the 1 Canadian Air Division in continental Europe. Three squadrons of Sabres flew the route, trailed by a 426 Squadron North Star carrying servicing personnel, in operations Leapfrog 1, 2, 3 and 4 from May 1952 to September 1953.

A similar 4-phased operation called "Nimble Bat" from October 1956 to August 1957 flew over four squadrons of CF-100 Canuck fighters. During the same general period 1952-59, 1 OFU also delivered, to Canadian or foreign bases. a variety of other aircraft such as T-33 Silver Stars and Beech C-18 Expeditors.

The CF-104 Starfighters were not sent in the same manner as the others. They went the lazy man's way - carried over in C-130 transports! This operation was from 1962 to 65. The route via Greenland and Iceland was not required by C-130s, so Gander could be used more frequently.

The 1 OFU also brought aircraft back from Europe. All was done in the best traditions of the Atlantic Ferry Organization, ATFERO, that sent the first bombers, Lockheed Hudsons, in November 1940.