

Original

Addendum to Report No. 18
(dated 22 Mar 41)

26 May 41

The Director,
Historical Section,
General Staff
National Defence Headquarters
Ottawa, CANADA

1. The following addendum is presented to attachment to Report No. 18, dealing with the Canadian Light Anti-Aircraft Units at COLCHESTER.

2. Administrative Order No. 53, issued at Canadian Military Headquarters on 25 Mar 41, changes the title of the Canadian headquarters at this station (formerly "Headquarters Cdn. Troops, Colchester") to Headquarters Cdn. A.A. & A. Tk. Group, Colchester. As indicated by this title, anti-tank as well as anti-aircraft training is now to be carried on there; and one anti-tank battery (104 A-Tk Bty, R.C.A.) is now stationed at COLCHESTER (at SOBRAON BARRACKS).

3. 16 Lt. A.A. Bty, R.C.A. has now joined 3 Lt. A.A. Regt. at this station (as anticipated in Report No. 18, para. 5). It should be further noted that 4 Lt. A.A. Bty, R.C.A. is now serving detached, under Air Defences of Great Britain, at KEVINGTON MANOR, ST. MARY'S CRAY, KENT. 2 Lt. A.A. Bty, R.C.A. is still serving similarly at HARLIP, KENT; but arrangements are in progress for its relief by 5 Lt. A.A. Bty, R.C.A.

4. Four additional 40-mm. Bofors equipments have been released from May production for the units at COLCHESTER, thus increasing the number of light A.A. guns available for instruction there to twelve (see Report No. 18, para. 13). This may be said to typify the painfully slow manner in which the gaps in the equipment of the Canadian troops in this country are now being filled.

5. N.D.H.Q. was advised on 22 Mar 41 that it was considered likely that the accommodation at COLCHESTER would be required for at least a year. At a meeting held at the War Office on 19 Mar 41 on the question of accommodation for the Canadian Army in this country, Lieutenant-General McNAUGHTON informed the British authorities that this accommodation was required "as a Mobilization and Training Centre for Cdn Lt. and Heavy A.A. Arty A. Tk. Arty and Med. Arty." This indicates that Heavy A.A. and Medium Artillery units will be concentrated at this station as they arrive in this country. (See extract from Memorandum on this meeting in C.M.H.Q. file 6/Cdn. Area/1).

6. Lt.-Col NEVILLE has been replaced by Major K.B. LOCKETT, R.C.A., in the command of 2 Lt. A.A. Reqt., R.C.A. I gather that Lt.-Col NEVILLE has been considered too old for this appointment.

(C.P. Stacey) Major
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(Copied in Historical Section, Jul 43)

Visit to Canadian Light Anti-Aircraft
Units, COLCHESTER

Canadian Military Headquarters
2 Cockspur Street, S.W. 1
London, ENGLAND

The Director
Historical Section,
General Staff,
National Defence Headquarters
Ottawa, CANADA

1. A further report is submitted. This reports deals with a visit to the Canadian Light Anti-Aircraft units now concentrated for training at COLCHESTER.

2. It was recently decided to concentrate the light A.A. units for the Canadian Corps at this station (the only place where accommodation was available) under the command of Lt.-Col G.A. McCarter, R.C.A., for a period of training to fit them for taking their places in the Corps. As the Public Relations Officer, C.M.H.Q., had arranged a press visit to this group for 20 March, and Lt.-Col. McCarter had organized a programmed for the occasion, I took advantage of the opportunity for a simultaneous visit.

3. With Lieut. AUDRAIN, the official photographer of C.M.H.Q. I left the Sun Life Building about 1950 hrs, on 20 March. We drove to COLCHESTER via STRATFORD - ILFORD - ROMFORD - BRENTWOOD - CHELMSFORD, and arrived in time for lunch at the H.Q. Mess in DRURY LODGE, as previously arranged. After lunch we were joined by Lieut. GIBBS, A/P.R.O., C.M.H.Q., who was accompanied by Mr. ROSS MUNRO, the Canadian Press representative at H.Q. Cdn. Corps and by Mr. A.H. CHRISTENSEN of "Canada's Weekly (London)", both of whom are accredited and uniformed Canadian war correspondents.

4. There had been a great deal of anti-aircraft fire in London soon after

dark on the night of 19-20 March, but having heard little or nothing that could clearly be recognized as the sound of exploding bombs I had felt rather uncertain as to the extent of the attack. Passing through the East End in the course of this drive, however, we saw plenty of evidence that it had been heavy. We saw much H.E. damage, as well as places where fires were still smouldering. The attack appeared to have been especially fierce in the vicinity of BOW.

THE TROOPS AT COLCHESTER

5. The history of this group of anti-aircraft units at Colchester may be traced in C.M.H.Q. file 6/Cdn. Area/1 (secret). The units now present there are as follows:

1 Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment, R.C.A.

(Lt.-Col W.E. HUCKVALE)

89 Bty. (Woodstock, N.B.)

35 Bty. (Sherbrooke, P.Q.)

109 Bty. (Trail, B.C.)

2 Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment, R.C.A.

(Lt.-Col E.W. NEVILLE)

4 Bty. (later Permanent Force, Kingston, Ont)

54 Bty. (Brantford, Ont.)

5 Bty (Montreal).

3 Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment, R.C.A.

(Lt.-Col B.R. KER)

53 Bty. (Toronto).

15 Bty. (Winnipeg).

17 Bty. (Calgary).

An additional battery of the 2nd Regt., 2 Bty (formerly 1 Bty) (Yorkton, Sask.) is serving in the Thames Estuary under the Air Defences of Great Britain. A additional battery of the 3rd Regt., 16 Bty (Vancouver) is expected from Canada on T.C.10. The 1st Regt., for Corps Troops, is on a 3-battery establishment; the other two, as divisional regiments, have four batteries each.

6. The batteries bearing numbers 35, 89, 109, 54 and 53 have all been formed very recently in the United Kingdom. The procedure followed was that each field regiment, R.C.A., in the Canadian force in this country provided a nucleus (not less than one-third strength) for one Light A.A. (or anti-tank) battery; the new battery in each case adopting the surplus number and territorial affiliation of its respective regiment. Thus 1 Fd Regt provided 54 Lt. A.A. Bty., and 5 Fd Regt provided 89 Lt.A.A. Bty. The additional personnel required were provided from the Holding Units.

7. The Headquarters, 1 Light A.A. Regiment, was also organized recently in this country.

8. The Headquarters, 2 Light A.A. Regiment, and 2 Bty and 4 Bty have existed in this country for some time past.

9. The Headquarters, 3 Light A.A. Regiment, 15 Bty and 17 Bty arrived from Canada on T.C. 9 at the end of February, 1941.

10. The 4th Battery, as noted, is a P.F. battery formerly stationed at Kingston, which sped the early part of this war manning heavy anti-aircraft guns at Halifax, N.S. Lt.-Col. McCarter mentioned that while this battery is technically proficient it has given more disciplinary difficulty than any of

the others.

11. The Brigade Major at Headquarters, Canadian Troops, Colchester, is Major J.N. LANE, R.C.A. The D.A.A & Q.M.G. is Major J.W. BARRIE, THE SHERBROOKE REGIMENT (M.G.)

LIGHT ANTI-AIRCRAFT ESTABLISHMENT

12. At the present time, the authorized War Establishment for a Light Anti-Aircraft Battery, R.A., is 281 all ranks (8 officers). It consists of a Battery HQ and 3 troops, each composed of 4 sub-sections; its armament (apart from small arms) consists of twelve 40-mm, Bofors guns. As already noted, a Regiment may consist of either three or four such Batteries - in other words, of either 36 or 48 guns.

13. On this scale, the total number of guns required for the batteries already at Colchester would be 108; while a 25% training scale would require 27. The actual number of guns now at Colchester is eight. As already reported (see my Report No. 10) General McNaughton was told on 17 Jan last that the three Canadian Light A.A. regiments could be "equipped on a training scale in the near future and to full scale in about three months". Lt.-Col McCarter's understanding of the situation is that there is now very little chance of getting more guns from the British authorities for a good many weeks to come; production is going forward rapidly, but the weapons are needed elsewhere - probably in the Eastern Mediterranean, where a further violent crisis now seems imminent, in the shape of a German attack on Greece.

ACCOMMODATION AT COLCHESTER

14. Colchester is a considerable garrison center in peacetime, and the Canadian troops now occupy two units of the permanent barracks, SOBRAON BARRACKS and GOOJERAT BARRACKS. These are old buildings and not especially comfortable; a proportion of the men are sleeping on "biscuits" on the floors, as there is a shortage of beds. (The principle adopted by the British authorities is that no man must sleep on a concrete floor; therefore the buildings with such floors have first "call" on the beds, and men accommodated in buildings with wooden floors sometimes have to sleep on them.) On the whole, however, the troops do not appear to be badly off. Colonel McCarter has received very friendly co-operation from the British military authorities in the area.

15. DRURY LODGE houses the Headquarters, both for office and living accommodation. It is a pleasant house with a large garden attached, and Colonel McCarter and his officers are well pleased with their situation.

DEMONSTRATION

16. Despite the shortage of equipment, Colonel McCarter contrived to put on an excellent demonstration for the benefit of the press. We spend about two hours watching the units at their various activities. We saw various phases of gun and instrument drill in progress, as well as practical work with the predictor; in addition, we saw foot drill, rifle drill, physical training, and Bren gun and Anti-Gas training. Classes in Driving and Maintenance (involving both lorries and motorcycles) and in Map Reading were in progress on Abbey Field, and we also saw one in First Aid. We looked in on lectures on Aircraft Identification, the use of the predictor, Ammunition, and Map Reading. It will be gathered that the Canadian section of the barracks was a scene of considerable activity on this occasion. Extra training value was being

obtained from the equipment available by using the guns and predictors separately in some cases. The men appeared to be keen and in good spirits; the marching was smart and the gun-drill made an excellent appearance.

THE BOFORS GUN

17. The Bofors 40-mm. gun is a weapon designed for use against low-flying aircraft. It is the weapon for all Corps anti-aircraft artillery, Heavy A.A. Regiments being Army Troops. (As noted in my Report No. 10, it is proposed that Canada shall provide one Heavy Mobile Regiment. Presumably a 4th Light A.A. Regiment will come from Canada with the Third Division.) The gun fires at a very rapid rate shells weighing about two pounds, to which a relatively large propelling charge imparts a very high muzzle-velocity. If the firing number stands on the trigger the gun fires at a rate of 120 rounds per minute, but single rounds can also be fired. With a view to the safety of our own troops and civilians, the shell is self-destroying. The Mark II gun (which we saw at Colchester) is described as semi-mobile; it travels upon two pairs of wheels which, with their axles, are removed before the gun goes into action.

18. In view of the very high rate of fire and the consequent heating, spare barrels are provided. We saw a demonstration of the very rapid manner in which the barrels can be changed.

19. Each gun equipment includes a generator to supply electrical power to control the gun and operate the predictor which goes with it. When the predictor is used the gun-crew do not touch the gun itself except to load and fire it; laying is automatic - if the telescope of the predictor is kept focused upon the plane which is the target, the gun follows it. Sights are provided to enable the gun to be used independently of the predictor.

20. The Bofors can be used as an anti-tank weapon at ranges up to 400 yards. For this purpose a proportion of armour-piercing shell is carried with it in the field.

DESIGNATION

21. The reason for the recent alteration in the designation of the YORKTON Light A.A. Battery from 1st to 2nd was the decision to mobilize the 1st Field Battery (Ottawa) for the fourth Division (following the withdrawal of 4 Div. artillery units for the First Canadian Armoured Division) and to convert it into a Light A.A. Battery. To protect this battery's seniority it was decided to change the Yorkton battery's number. National Defence Headquarters was advised that this action had been taken, on 18 Mar 41 (cable G 437 Canmilitary to Defensor).

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(Copied in Historical Section, Jul 43)