

The Party Line

THE R.C.A.F.'s POLICE FORCE

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INTRODUCTION

ALTHOUGH our Air Force Police is one of the youngest military police forces in the world, with a history of only sixteen years, it is nevertheless rich in experience gathered during the Second World War and during the uneasy peace that has followed. Furthermore, its roots are grounded in 300 years of military police tradition.

It was in 1643 that King Charles the First of England issued the following instruction:

"The Provost must have a horse allowed him and some soldiers to attend him, and all the rest commanded to obey and assist, or else the service will suffer, for he is but one man and must correct many, and therefore he cannot be belovéd. And he must be riding from one garrison to another, to see the soldiers do no outrage nor scathe the country."

In point of fact, the Provost Marshal's organization, although not as the strictly military body we know today, goes back 900 years to the Norman Conquest, when the first Provost Marshal accompanied William the Conqueror to England. From that time until the 17th century, the Provost held powers of life and death over soldiers and civilians alike. According to a 15th century historian, it was not lawful for the men of the Provost Marshal to go about at any time without their halters, withes, and strangling-cords.

Since the 17th century, when the Provost Marshal's organization became a military body, its rôle has changed to the protection of the Serviceman and his equipment in order to preserve his efficiency as a fighting man.

HISTORY OF THE AIR FORCE POLICE

Before the outbreak of war in 1939, the R.C.A.F. had no police organization, and such police duties as were necessary were carried out by General Duties airmen without special training. The number of personnel employed in this capacity was small, and in June 1939 the total establishment for R.C.A.F. Station Trenton was one corporal and three aircraftmen.

In July 1939, thought was given to the creation of a trade of Service Police. After successful completion of a suitable course, personnel were to qualify for the trade of Service Police with a "C" grouping. Nothing was done, however, until October of that year, when the first provost officer was appointed. The first police course began at Toronto on the 2 December 1939, and classes were held in the "Bull Ring" of the Canadian National Exhibition — which doubtless seemed an appropriate place in which to conduct a police course!

The first Provost Marshal was appointed in March 1940. Authorized to form, within the Directorate of Personnel, a Guards and Dis-

cipline Branch, he selected seven assistants who, with commissioned ranks, would represent him in the Commands. Of these seven, six came directly into the Service from civil police agencies.

In late 1941, the Guards and Discipline Branch reached sufficient size to warrant the formation of a separate directorate; and the Directorate of Provost and Security Services, embracing the Service Police and Security Guard Branches, was formed. A Special Investigation Section was created within the Directorate, with the responsibility of conducting all criminal investigations in the R.C.A.F. It is interesting to note that many of the personnel of this Special Investigation Section went on after the war to distinguish themselves in senior police positions in towns and cities across Canada.

After the war the Service Police dwindled from a peak of nearly 5000 officers and men to some 5 officers and 60 airmen. The outbreak of the Korean War, however, together with Canada's responsibilities under N.A.T.O., brought about a general expansion in the R.C.A.F. and a consequent increase in the Police Branch. In November 1950 the Directorate of Air Force Security was formed and made responsible for the prevention of espionage, sabotage, and subversion, for the maintenance of law and order, and for ground defense training of all personnel in the Air