

NOTE

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CANADIAN FORCES HEADQUARTERS

Table of Contents

CONTENTS	PARAGRAPHS	PAGE
Introductory	1	1
The Dispute	2-8	1
The Area	9-10	3
United Nations Request	11-14	3
The Response	15-17	4
Arrival and Initial Problems	18-19	5
Organization	20-23	5
Role of 116 A.T.U.	24-28	6
Canadian Withdrawal	29-30	7
Achievements and Continuing Problem	31-32	8
Cost	33-34	9
References		10

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DIRECTORATE OF HISTORY

CANADIAN FORCES HEADQUARTERS

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Canada and Peace-keeping Operations
West New Guinea (West Irian)

1. The purpose of this report is to record the Canadian contribution to the settlement of the Indonesian/Netherlands dispute over the control of West New Guinea. The sources used in the compilation of the report include open publications and classified departmental files. Also used were copies of correspondence and messages held by Flight Lieutenant A.E. Richards, (now Squadron Leader), who was the Commanding Officer 116 Air Transport Unit [ATU] in Biak, and an unpublished paper by the same officer. These have been photostated and placed in the Director of History's Kardex files. The only papers of The Secretary of State for External Affairs that have been used are those that appear on the departmental files.

The Dispute

2. The United Nations is the ultimate organ of arbitration for nations in dispute and is dedicated to the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples.¹ The United Nations is also, by the terms of the same resolution,² dedicated to the principle that "any attempt aimed at the partial or total disruption of the national unity and territorial integrity of a country" is incompatible with the United Nations Charter. As the Netherlands laid their case on one principle and The Republic of Indonesia laid claim to the other, the United Nations faced a conundrum.

3. The Netherlands had transferred sovereignty of the Indonesian archipelago to the Republic of the United States of Indonesia on 27 December 1949. This transfer, however, did not include the western half of the island of New Guinea. As the new Republic became established the agitation to acquire West New Guinea increased. In the face of this agitation the Netherlands increased its efforts to prepare the native Papuans for eventual independence.

4. In 1958 Indonesia looked abroad for aid to its cause. This more militant outlook led the Netherlands, in 1960, to place before the United Nations a draft resolution based on the premise that West New Guinea should become independent. Indonesia spoke against the resolution and propounded the point of view that West New Guinea was an integral part of the Republic of Indonesia. The necessary

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- 2 -

two-thirds majority was not obtained at the Sixteenth Session of the United Nations General Assembly and the problem remained unsolved.

5. The Indonesian attitude stiffened and in January 1962 Indonesian motor torpedo boats attempted to strike at West New Guinea.³ They were repelled by Netherlands naval forces.

6. As early as 29 March 1960 the NATO nations had been made aware that the Netherlands was preparing for an Indonesian attack. NATO, Paris, informed the Canadian Secretary of State for External Affairs that the Netherlands government had decided to withdraw two destroyers and two submarines from its NATO commitment to be dispatched to the waters of Netherlands New Guinea.⁴ Dutch troops were also being diverted to the trouble area but these were not being withdrawn from the NATO commitment.

7. The United States, already involved in Far Eastern affairs, assigned Mr. Ellsworth Bunker, a retired U.S. diplomat, to study the situation and propose a plan acceptable to both parties of the dispute. The Bunker Plan proposed the formation of a United Nations Temporary Executive Authority [UNTEA] to act on behalf of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and thus allow a transition period between the ending of Dutch control and the time when Indonesia assumed control. This would eliminate or greatly reduce direct contact. The proposal was unique in that it propounded, for the first time, the concept of a United Nations agency to control an area and its inhabitants, and to supply a force to police the area during the period of its control.

8. The Bunker Plan, in itself a compromise, was modified by shortening the period of United Nations' control and by deferring the referendum on "freedom of choice" by the Papuan population until 1969. The vote to decide whether the Papuans were to be independent or part of Indonesia was a concept strongly supported by the Netherlands. While these negotiations were continuing, Indonesia dropped paratroopers in West New Guinea. These troops remained and eventually had to be supplied by the United Nations Temporary Executive Authority. An Agreement, signed on 15 August 1962, provided for UNTEA to control the area from 1 October 1962 until at least 1 May 1963, when control would be passed to Indonesia. During its period of control UNTEA was given authority to have its own security forces, to promulgate new laws and amend existing ones.⁶ Largely because of the unique method of financing UNTEA and its security force the Secretary-General was permitted to proceed with these negotiations before seeking the ratification of the General Assembly. The entire expense of the operation was to be borne equally by the Netherlands and Indonesia.⁷

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- 3 -

The Area

9. New Guinea is the second largest island in the world, exceeded in size only by Greenland. It is an undeveloped island and from a Canadian point of view very inhospitable. It lies just south of the equator. Except for a complex mountain range, running generally north-west along the center of the island, it is made up of tropical rain forests and marshes, many of which are inundated at high tide. The main island is surrounded by groups of smaller islands. One of the island groups north of West New Guinea is the Schouten Islands. Biak is the main island of this group and it is bisected by 1° south latitude. The average temperature of New Guinea is about 81°, with the average morning temperature being about 72° and the average noon temperature about 92°.

10. West New Guinea had a population of about 700,000 Papuans and about 10,000 Europeans, many of the Europeans immigrated after the Indonesian archipelago had been placed under the control of the Republic of Indonesia.⁸

United Nations Request

11. It is to this area that Canada was requested to send an Air Adviser for the United Nations Security Force [U.N.S.F.] Commander⁹ and a float-equipped Otter with flying crew, spare parts and a minimum maintenance crew.¹⁰ At this early stage the entire United Nations force was to be made up of an interim Military Observer Team seconded from UNEF and UNOC for a period of six weeks. The main security force was to consist of a 1000-man Pakistani contingent commanded by a Pakistani officer. The functions of the Observer Team were to observe the cease-fire and to locate the Indonesian infiltrators dropped by parachute. The United States had agreed to supply the Indonesians by air drop from C130s in order to eliminate the necessity of Indonesian flights over West New Guinea and thus avoid the immediate withdrawal of Dutch authorities.¹¹

12. On receipt of the request for aid, the R.C.A.F. studied the suggested requirement and on 22 August 1962 advised the Minister of National Defence of the estimated cost of the commitment and the number of air and ground crew required. It recommended that "to make this a sound operation and provide continuity in the availability of one aeroplane, it is necessary...to have a back-up, i.e. we should send two Otters".¹² R.C.A.F. Headquarters advised Air Transport Command of the possibility of having to supply the aircraft to the United Nations and ordered preliminary steps to be taken in order "to provide minimum reaction to U.N. request".¹³ On the same day the Permanent Mission in New York [PERMISNY] requested External Affairs,¹⁴ subject to Canada's meeting the U.N. request, that the Air Adviser,

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- 4 -

if he was available, be sent to West New Guinea prior to the dispatch of the amphibious Otters.

13. The Secretary of State for External Affairs informed PERMISNY¹⁵ of the Cabinet's decision "to accede to U.N. request", and said that he understood "U.N. has agreed to accept second Otter and bear additional expense". This was later confirmed.¹⁶ The Cabinet decision was taken 29 August 1962. On 30 August the message confirmed the acceptance of the second Otter also confirmed that the Otters¹⁷ would be based at Biak rather than at the capital, Hollandia.

14. The Netherlands Government informed the Department of External Affairs that there could be "no more acceptable source from Dutch standpoint for personnel and equipment for UN force than Canada. In short, Foreign Ministry would be pleased if Canadian Government met U Thant's request".¹⁸ The reaction in Jakarta to Canada's participation was slightly different. The head of the Indonesian West European Department "seemed pleased with Canadian participation"¹⁹ but reiterated his government's views on the desirability of a short period of United Nations control and of keeping the debate of the "Agreement" out of the General Assembly.

The Response

15. While the political decisions were being taken, the R.C.A.F. Air Transport Command had, in response to the directive from R.C.A.F. Headquarters, prepared for the rapid supply of the Canadian contingent and planes to West New Guinea. As a result of the Cabinet decision of 29 August, two Hercules C 130Bs left Trenton for Biak on 1 September, carrying the dismantled amphibious Otters, spares and necessary personnel.²⁰ These two C 130Bs arrived at Biak 2 September, via Wake Island. The R.C.A.F. was justifiably proud of its response to the Cabinet Directive: "only 81 hours elapsed between the time the R.C.A.F. was advised that the operation could proceed and the arrival of the Otter aircraft in New Guinea".²¹

16. Wing Commander R.G. Herbert, who was to act as Air Adviser to the United Nations Security Force [U.N.S.F.] Headquarters Staff in Hollandia, had been detached from 426 Squadron, St. Hubert, Quebec, and proceeded to Hollandia via New York by commercial aircraft. He also arrived at New Guinea on 2 September.

17. The two Hercules carried reinforced crews to eliminate the need for crew rest during the flight from Trenton to Biak. They also carried six technicians who assisted in the assembly of the Otters in Biak. The air and ground crews to remain in Biak comprised three flight lieutenant pilots, one sergeant, two corporals and five leading aircraftsmen of various trades.²² Numerically this group was to prove sufficient, but some re-arrangement of trades more suitable to the maintenance of amphibious Otters was suggested by the senior officer of the unit.²³

SECRET

.../5

SECRET

- 5 -

Arrival and Initial Problems

18. The two C 130Bs arrived at Mokmer Airport, Biak, on 3 September 1962,* but unfortunately their arrival was not expected.²⁴ Local arrangements were made with the Dutch Airport Manager, and the use of a heavy crane, a forklift truck and large hangar was obtained. However, the Otter fuselage had to be moved 300 yards over rollers and all other parts had to be carried. Despite these difficulties, the first Otter was ready for flight test by 9 September²⁵ and was air tested serviceable by 10 September.²⁶ The second Otter could not be made serviceable due to the lack of propeller parts. Unfortunately, these parts were not available until 14 October and the aircraft was therefore not serviceable until 16 October.²⁷

19. The problems faced in becoming operational were paralleled in obtaining messing and quartering for the personnel. The R.C.A.F. contingent was not self-supporting and the Commanding Officer did not have any financial authorization. The Royal Netherlands Air Force was running down as quickly as possible and the U.S.A.F. was in the throes of building up as quickly as it could. UNTEA did not officially take over control of West New Guinea until 1 October and, although some Pakistani troops were moving in their food was not suitable for Canadians, even if available. All this made arrangements for adequate quartering and messing very difficult to resolve. "It is estimated", the R.C.A.F. Commander wrote to the Chief of the Air Staff, "that the airmen lost an average of eight to ten pounds each"²⁸ in their first month in West New Guinea. The lack of passports and indecision about the allowances to be paid to all ranks added to the administrative burden of the Commanding Officer.

Organization

20. The Chief of U.N.M.O., on 6 September 1962, stated²⁹ that Lieutenant-Colonel Whitehouse, U.S.A.F., was appointed Commanding Officer, Air Transport Unit, United Nations Security Force [A.T.U. U.N.S.F.] and Commander U.S.A.F. contingent. Flight Lieutenant A.E. Richards, R.C.A.F., was appointed Commander R.C.A.F. Contingent. The units at Biak were advised that Wing Commander R.G. Herbert, R.C.A.F., had assumed the duties of Air Adviser to Commander for all matters and would act as Air Staff Officer at U.N.S.F. Headquarters.

*Crossing the International Date Line causes the differences in date quoted in Ottawa.

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- 6 -

21. These instructions were subsequently revised,³⁰ when Flight Lieutenant Richards was appointed Commanding Officer 116 A.T.U. Biak, responsible to Commander U.N.S.F. for department, discipline and welfare of R.C.A.F./U.N.S.F. personnel and to Colonel Whitehouse, Commanding Officer 13 A.F. Unit, Biak, for air operations and local administration.

22. It is interesting to note that the U.S.A.F. contingent increased from one Dakota and crew and two lieutenant-colonels on 3 September to a total of 25 officers and 79 airmen supporting two C 47 aircraft and two H 19 helicopters at Biak and 20 others supporting three H 19 helicopters at Sarong.³¹

23. The U.S.A.F. contingent considered itself a part of the U.S.A.F., seconded to support the U.N.S.F., and the R.C.A.F. contingent regarded itself as an integral part of the U.N.S.F. This divergent outlook and the appointment of the U.S.A.F. Colonel as Commanding Officer A.T.U. U.N.S.F. appears to have been the cause of some initial concern:

The USAF have also been authorized by the UN to liaise with the Dutch in Biak for the accommodation and transport requirements of the UN forces. This in effect means that the CC RCAF ATU is obliged to work through the USAF with respect to obtaining quarters and transport for RCAF personnel. This has created problems as the USAF tend to give first preference to their own commitments and personnel.³²

But by 4 March 1963 it was recommended that the "principle of one operational commander be used for all future U.N.S.F. ATU's where the composition it made up of representatives of two or more nations."³³

Role of 116 A.T.U.

24. The operation of aircraft was made hazardous by the lack of modern navigational aids, meteorological information and communication in the areas which had to be supported.³⁴ Even the sparse meteorological information available in the first month deteriorated when UNTEA assumed responsibility on 1 October 1962.³⁵

25. The pilots of the Dutch Kroonduif Airlines briefed the C.O. 116 A.T.U. on operating conditions in West New Guinea and provided route manuals and maps. These "proved to be invaluable as many of the landing areas required extreme caution and the use of special techniques".³⁶ The initial Canadian flights to the various parts of the territory being served were made using two pilots and a crewman. As the pilots became familiar with the routes a normal crew of one pilot and a crewman became standard practice.

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- 7 -

26. During the first month in West New Guinea it was reported that the operational role of the Otters consisted of escorting U.S.A.F. helicopters, communications, reconnaissance and the light transport of personnel and supplies in support of U.N.S.F. and UNTEA. The four areas of 'vital interest' to the U.N. were Merauke, Kaimana, Fak-Fak and Sarong. Only amphibious aircraft or sea transport could service Fak-Fak. The other areas were accessible to wheeled aircraft.³⁷

27. Until mid-January 1963, flights were made on an as-required basis. From mid-January until mid-April flights were made to Kaimana and Fak-Fak on a biweekly schedule³⁸ and the as-required flights to other areas continued. In fulfilling this role 116 A.T.U. flew a total of 675 hours and twenty minutes with the two amphibious Otters.³⁹ In all this operational flying under the most trying conditions, the only aircraft accident was caused by a U.N.S.F. truck at Kaimana. It was operated by a Pakistani trooper who backed the truck into the float of one of the Otters and caused some damage. However, after temporary repairs the Otter was able to fly back to Biak.⁴⁰ Garuda Indonesian Airlines, which took over from Kroonduif Dutch Airlines, lost a Beaver and Twin Pioneer in their first three months of operation.⁴¹

28. The logistic support of the two amphibious Otters was a source of constant concern to the C.O. 116 A.T.U. One of the two aircraft was unserviceable for three months while awaiting a shipment of brake discs.⁴² This, of course, only illustrates the prescience of A.F.H.C. when it requested that the U.N. supply two Otters rather than the one originally requested.⁴³

Canadian Withdrawal

29. As the Indonesian - and Indonesian-prompted Papuan - agitation for early UNTEA withdrawal⁴⁴ grew in intensity, so the problem of disposition of the two Otters grew.⁴⁵ It was considered more practicable to dispose of the Otters than to return them to Canada. Due to political considerations no firm decision could be given to the C.C. 116 A.T.U., and he hourly grew more desperate as the time to depart from West New Guinea approached and the equipment needed to dismantle the Otters was withdrawn from Biak.⁴⁶ By 24 April the U.N.S.F. Commander informed C.O. 116 A.T.U. that the unit would be released effective 1 May 1963,⁴⁸ and on the 25 April the Canadian government decided that the two Otters should be returned to Canada.⁴⁹ Two C130B Hercules aircraft left Canada for Biak on 26 April to ferry the Otters and the personnel of 116 A.T.U. back to Canada.⁵⁰ The Otters were dismantled and carried back to Canada in the same way as they had been transported to Biak. Canada's contribution to this U.N. operation ended when "the return operation was completed 2 May".⁵¹

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SECRET

- 8 -

30. Canada's prompt and efficient participation in this unique U.N. undertaking elicited a congratulatory note from the Secretary-General:

The Secretary-General of the United Nations presents his compliments to the Permanent Representative of Canada to the United Nations and, upon the successful termination of the task entrusted to the United Nations Temporary Executive Authority in West Irian (West New Guinea), has the honour to express to the Government of Canada his deep appreciation for their prompt and timely assistance in the provision of aircraft and crew to provide support for the United Nations Security Force in West Irian (West New Guinea).⁵²

Achievements and Continuing Problem

31. United Nations' responsibilities had begun with the supervision of the cease-fire and the arrival of the U.N.G.F. The political control had commenced on 1 October 1962 and ended on 1 May 1963. During this time Dutch authorities had been phased out of the administration and in turn Indonesians had been phased in with a minimum of direct contact, thus eliminating any breakdown of orderly administration.

32. The progress made by West New Guinea during the period of United Nations control is disputed. Dr. Djalal Abdoh, the Administrator, claimed that in addition to retaining the status quo with regard to "ensuring uninterrupted delivery of essential supplies, maintaining employment at a satisfactory level and continuing public works projects", the UNTEA had initiated some beneficial public works, trained Papuans for administrative and technical work and eradicated cholera from the territory.⁵³ These claims are disputed by Paul W. Van der Veur, a scholar working in Australia.⁵⁴ Regardless of the merits of these conflicting claims, by establishing an authority to rule the territory and span this critical period the United Nations reduced the friction and source of further violence in West New Guinea and, of course, its possible escalation. Politically the United Nations activities have not yet been completed. The referendum regarding the ultimate free choice of the inhabitants has not yet been held. In 1964 Indonesia withdrew from the United Nations and hopes dimmed for a final settlement in accordance with the original Agreement. However, with the re-seating of Indonesian delegates in September 1966, the situation has again brightened, although Van der Veur propounds the thesis that Indonesia has no intention of allowing a referendum that would permit "freedom of choice" by the native Papuans.

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SECRET

- 9 -

Cost

33. Under the general agreement by which the costs for UNTEA were to be borne by Indonesia and The Netherlands certain specific arrangements had to be made. Canada assumed the cost of the normal pay and allowances for the Canadian personnel involved. This policy holds for all U.N. activities in which Canada is involved.⁵⁵

34. The Netherlands and Indonesia, through the U.N., assumed all other costs, including special allowances, temporary duty travel outside Canada and living allowances for personnel. The U.N. was to supply "aircraft fuel, oil and lubricants as well as ground handling equipment, maintenance and aerodrome facilities".⁵⁶ These last items were paid for directly by the U.N. without recourse to the Canadian accounting system -- as illustrated by the correspondence between the Commanding Officer 116 A.T.U. and the UNTEA Air Liaison Officer.⁵⁷ Other costs incurred in New Guinea, such as spares for the support of the aircraft, temporary duty travel costs and the reconditioning of the Otters on return to Canada, were listed as "Recoverable Costs" and bills were submitted to the U.N. These amounted to 156,014.87 and were paid promptly.⁵⁸

35. This report was prepared by L/Commander Bryan.

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- 10 -

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SECRET

-11 -

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SECRET

SECRET

- 12 -

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