

437 Squadron flies PM to special Summit of the Americas

PART 2

One of the many important tasks performed by 437 Transport Squadron (437(T) Sqn) is VIP airlift of dignitaries such as the Prime Minister, the Governor General and even the Royal Family when they visit Canada. Prime Minister Paul Martin recently made his first trip aboard the CC-150 Polaris (Airbus A-310) to attend the Summit of the Americas in Mexico between January 10-13. Here is Part 2 of Major John Komocki's account of this important tasking.

Our departure day from Ottawa starts early, with alarms and wake up calls sounding at 5:30 a.m. throughout the hotel, as the crew awakes to assemble in the hotel lobby an hour later.

As in all Code I VIP flights, we arrive at the aircraft three hours prior to our 10 a.m. departure. The activity is continuous, as all final preparations are made: flight plan confirmed and flight management systems programmed, baggage carefully screened and loaded, the aircraft weight and balance sheet calculated, the catering prepped and stored.

At 30 minutes prior to departure we are ready and changed into our finest VIP dress uniforms. Unfortunately, as we await the arrival of the 65 passengers, which include the Prime Minister and his wife, his staff and a host of accompanying press, we watch as the winter snowstorm intensifies. It is of no great surprise that we are informed that the PM's motorcade is behind schedule, slowed by the worsening conditions. There is also no question that we will require de-icing prior to take-off, which will further delay our departure and oblige us to make up as much time as possible en route.

Now 20 minutes behind schedule, it is with great relief that Mr. Martin's entourage

finally arrives. As plain clothes RCMP keep a close watch on the proceedings and television crews record every moment, the Prime Minister gives a final snowy wave and mounts the stairs to greet Lieutenant-Colonel Dave Murphy's salute with a nod and a smile. With the runways plowed and aircraft de-iced, "Can Force 01" finally lifted off from the snow bound Ottawa airport over one hour later than originally scheduled.

The flight en route to Monterrey is thankfully smooth, allowing us to make up time for our late departure by flying at lower altitude to increase our true airspeed and putting the "pedal to the metal" by cruising at Mach 0.83.

The instrument approach into General Mariano Escobedo International Airport is capped by a flawless touchdown, as the first half of our journey is nearing an end. A reception awaits the Prime Minister, who is whisked away by a police-escorted motorcade soon after our engines have shut down. However, the crew's day is not quite done: repositioning the aircraft for parking, refuelling, unloading baggage, organizing catering needs, cleaning the cabin area and co-ordinating security arrangements. Two hours after our wheels touched Mexican

soil, a tired crew is finally loaded aboard a bus to have a much-earned rest after a long and challenging day.

Mexico in January sounds like an exotic dream come true and escaping our miserable winter weather the envy of all. The city of Monterrey is a landlocked business and government centre, two hours south of the Texan border and three hours west of the Gulf of Mexico. Daytime highs were reaching 14°C, with overnight lows dipping to 5°C. As the crew was staying in the same hotel as a number of heads of state and their delegations, security was exceptionally high and our conduct under constant scrutiny.

Our departure from Monterrey on January 13 at 8:15 p.m. was carried out with the same thorough planning and preparation as always. The flight arrived in Ottawa on schedule at 1:25 a.m. January 14. At 3:30 a.m. Trenton Air Traffic Control welcomed us home and cleared us for landing. With post flight duties finally finished at 5 a.m., the crew called an end to another Code I VIP mission and our brief Mexican adventure.

Congratulations to all members of the crew on this successful mission: LCol David Murphy, Maj John Komocki, Capt Mike Mawson, Sgt Marc Roy, WO Pierre Robert, LS Tom Desgroseilliers, LS Donna Fowler, Cpl Nadine Bonnier, Cpl Carol Lebrecque, Sgt Andre Michaud, John Janas, Peter Popoff, Cpl Pierre Murray, WO Debbie Cochrane, Sgt Sherry Wedel, MCpl Richard Ferland, and Cpl Max Murphy.

SITREP



DND/MDN

Seulement des opérations de recherche et sauvetage pour le CH-149 Cormorant

Au début février, la Force aérienne a imposé une restriction de vol à sa flotte de 15 hélicoptères Cormorant, limitant temporairement l'aéronef à des opérations de recherche et sauvetage, à la suite de la découverte d'une fuite de carburant dans la principale tuyauterie d'alimentation de carburant du moteur.

La découverte de cette fuite le 29 janvier dernier, durant une vérification périodique à la 19^e Escadre Comox, est le deuxième incident de ce genre à survenir sur ce type d'aéronef. L'automne dernier, on a décelé une fuite sur un Cormorant de la 9^e Escadre Gander, à T.-N.-L. À ce moment, on a procédé à une enquête et on a considéré que l'incident était un cas isolé, étant donné que l'inspection d'un tuyau d'alimentation de carburant sur un autre aéronef à utilisation élevée n'avait montré aucun signe de défektivité.

CH-149 Cormorant restricted to SAR operations only

The Air Force imposed a flying restriction on its fleet of 15 Cormorant helicopters in early February, temporarily limiting the aircraft to search and rescue operations only, following the discovery of a fuel leak on an engine main fuel supply line.

The discovery of the leak, made during a routine inspection at 19 Wing Comox on January 29, is the second incident of this type to be discovered on this aircraft type. Last fall, a leak was found on a Cormorant stationed at 9 Wing Gander, Nfld. The incident was investigated at the time and considered to be isolated as the inspection of another high-time aircraft fuel line showed no sign of defect.

Pour plus de détails sur cet article, veuillez consulter le site www.forceaerienne.forces.gc.ca

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PHOTOS: CPL MAX MURPHY

Capt Mike Mawson flies the CC-150 Polaris to the General Mariano Escobedo International Airport in Monterrey Mexico.

Le Capt Mike Mawson pilote l'avion CC-150 Polaris jusqu'à l'aéroport international Général Mariano Escobedo, à Monterrey (Mexique).



Physician Capt Sandra West of the CF Medical Group climbs onboard the CC-150 Polaris enroute to the Summit of the Americas.

Le Capt Sandra West, médecin avec le Groupe médical des FC, monte à bord du Polaris CC-150, en route vers le Sommet des Amériques.