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REPORT NO. 44  
HISTORICAL SECTION (G.S.)  
ARMY HEADQUARTERS

The Announcement of Canadian  
Participation in Operation "HUSKY"

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## APPENDIX "A"

Identification of Canadians in Sicily by Official Allied Communiqués or Press Dispatches.

REPORT NO. 44  
HISTORICAL SECTION (G.S.)  
ARMY HEADQUARTERS

1 Oct 51

The Announcement of Canadian  
Participation in Operation "HUSKY"

1. With the invasion of Sicily began the first sustained land action involving the Canadian Army in the Second World War. This invasion did not take place until 10 Jul 43 whereas Canada had declared war on 10 Sep 39. For almost four years then, Canada had participated in a war in which she had already spent over \$2,000,000,000<sup>1</sup> on her Army alone and yet had felt no tangible return. Despite repeated assurances of the importance of Canadian aid in the air, at sea and in supply, the average Canadian had not accepted this as a satisfactory contribution to victory.

2. The feeling of dissatisfaction with Canada's past performance and present role began to mount until there was active agitation in the press and in Parliament to commit the Canadian Army to battle. Largely as a result of the inactivity of the Army, almost all phases of Canada's contribution came under critical discussion, with emphasis on the Hong Kong disaster, the Dieppe raid, and most particularly the so-called "McNaughton Policy" of keeping the Army intact. In addition, the Army itself was becoming a problem, or so it would seem from despatches of the war correspondents. L.S.B. Shapiro was convinced that, without action, high morale could not be maintained through the summer of 1943.

After that, our men may take it for granted that they are destined to remain the British home guard for the duration and they will be instinctively let down to a corresponding level.

(The Gazette (Montreal), 22 Jan 43).

Other terms like “the forgotten army” and “the county constabulary in the English countryside” were used. Things had reached such a state that news of any participation by the Canadian Army in active operations<sup>2</sup> became of first importance. Canada’s leaders both military and political clearly recognized this fact.

#### PRELIMINARY ARRANGEMENTS REGARDING PUBLICITY

3. Routine military preparation for publicity began two months before the date of the actual invasion. At that time, it was decided that one historical officer, one war artist, a certain number of press and radio representatives, nine film and seven photographic personnel should accompany the Canadian troops to Sicily ((H.S.) 232C1.019 (060): Brigadier N.E. Rodger to 1 Cdn Inf Div, 11 May 43). On 23 Jun, N.D.H.Q. first raised the matters of the nature and time of the announcement that Canadians were going into action.

#### Para V

- a) Request advice as to what arrangements are being made by you in regard to the initial announcements relating to future operations.

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<sup>1</sup> Up to 31 Mar 43 (Report of the Department of National Defence, 31 Mar 48, p. 60).

<sup>2</sup> For the background to the decision to commit Canadian troops, see McNaughton File P.A. 1-14-1. The matter is fully discussed in Volume Two of the Official History of the Canadian Army in the Second World War.

- b) Consider Minister [of National Defence] must be in position to make an announcement here simultaneously with one there of Canadians going into action. Obviously the numbers involved and names of commanders would be pressed for here.

(4/Sicily/1: C.G.S. 701 N.D.H.Q. to C.M.H.Q.,  
23 June 43).

C.M.H.Q. sent the following reply:

Original announcement will be made by official communiqué issued by Supreme Commander in theatre on world basis.

- Simultaneous individual government releases impracticable.
- Security considerations require that facts relating to size and composition of force, names of commanders etc... should be made public only when Supreme Commander in theatre so decides.
- You will appreciate that our formations are only a small portion<sup>3</sup> of total forces involved and we are bound to comply with security and other requirements of Supreme Commander...

(Ibid: G.S. 1510, C.M.H.Q. to N.D.H.Q., 28  
June 43).

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<sup>3</sup> Of the 12 Allied divisions participating in the conquest of Sicily, the Canadians supplied only one. (The Conquest of Sicily from 10<sup>th</sup> July 1943 to 17<sup>th</sup> August 1943, Despatch by Field Marshal Viscount Alexander of Tunis (published as supplement to The London Gazette, 12 Feb 48), p. 1012).

4. Nevertheless, N.D.H.Q. continued to request that no other Government announce the news before Ottawa and to press for early release of the number of Canadians engaged and the name of their commander.

MOST SECRET FOR MCNAUGHTON FROM MURCHIE

Para I – Thanks for information.

Para II – We would like to be absolutely certain respecting situation. Can we taken it (a) that communiqué will be issued to press and world over wire and radio so that it will reach Canada as quickly as London, Washington and all other points (b) that there will be no government statement from any of the countries interested until this communiqué is made public (c) that Canadian correspondents you name and representatives of press associations operating in Canada will received communiqué simultaneously with all others?

Para III – If answers to these questions are in affirmative, it would be expected that Prime Minister or Minister would be in position immediately to follow publication of communiqué with statement probably by radio amplifying as much as possible and giving particularly some idea of number of Canadians involved and name of Commander. As you can understand, this will be regarded by Canada as most important information and hesitancy about giving it is likely to be misunderstood. Realize that considerations of security must govern but hope may be able to go just as far as possible in these respects.

Para IV – What we must avoid is that Canadian statement is in any way less complete on essential points than statements by any other governments and that it is no later than that of any other governments. This is what we referred to in Para V our C.G.S. 701.

Para V – Kindly consult Troopers and advise as promptly as possible.

(Ibid: Tol G.S. 738, Murchie to McNaughton, 2 Jul 43).

5. On receipt of this telegram, C.M.H.Q. made further requests concerning the nature and coordination of press releases. There remained, however, the problems of meeting military security and respecting the authority of the Theatre Commander, General Eisenhower. A notation by the Brigadier, General Staff, C.M.H.Q., illustrates that these problems were not ignored:

Discussed (G.S. 738) AT Army H.Q. with Army Comd and C.G.S. on 3 Jul with a view to their taking any appropriate action while in North Africa to give Canada information desired. Both took the view that any real security need must take priority over giving information to public and also that Eisenhower must have ultimate say in what may be given out.

(Ibid: Brigadier N.E. Rodger's minute to G.S. 738, 3 Jul 43).

#### EFFORTS TO ENSURE EARLY ANNOUNCEMENT OF CANADIAN PARTICIPATION

6. If Canada were to be mentioned, her name would have to be included in one or more of the three types of announcement that were to be made concerning the invasion of Sicily:



- a) The initial communiqué,
- b) The AVIS to the French people warning them that the invasion of Sicily was just the first stage in the liberation of Europe and that they were to remain inactive for the present,
- c) The Proclamation to the Italian people.

All of these were to be issued by General Eisenhower from his Headquarters. His signal, N.A.F. 277, dated 5 Jul 43, set forth the text of these announcements, all of which omitted any reference to Canadian troops. The terms employed were “Allied Forces” and “Anglo-American Forces”. (Ibid: Tel N.A.F. 277, Eisenhower to Combined Chiefs of Staff, 5 Jul 43).

7. The arrival in Ottawa of N.A.F. 277 late on 7 Jul resulted in the following urgent efforts to obtain specific mention of the Canadians in the very first announcements:

- (a) Mr. L.B. Pearson, the Canadian Minister in Washington, saw President Roosevelt and his special adviser, Mr. Harry Hopkins, on the evening of 8 Jul, both of whom expressed sympathy with the “force and reasonableness” of Canada’s request. Mr. Hopkins in turn contacted Prime Minister Churchill, who promised definite mention of the Canadians in the Churchill – Roosevelt Proclamation which it had been decided should replace Eisenhower’s proclamation to the Italian people. (Ibid: Tel 1171, External to Dominion, 8 Jul 43). But this was now to be held up until there was some success in Sicily to give it point. Hence, inclusion in the Proclamation did not mean Canadian mention in the beginning.
- (b) The Canadian High Commissioner in London, the Rt Hon Vincent Massey, approached the Rt Hon Clement Attlee, Deputy Prime Minister, and Lt-Gen Sir Hastings Ismay, Chief of Staff to

the Minister of Defence, both of whom “took a sympathetic attitude to Canada’s contention that she should be properly associated with the proclamation to the Italian people and the AVIS to the French”. (Ibid: High Commissioner’s memo on Sicily, Item 2, undated).

- (c) A telegram was despatched from London to General Eisenhower stating that it had been decided by the British Chiefs of Staff that Canadian forces should be mentioned by name in the Churchill – Roosevelt Proclamation to the Italian people and that it was assumed that Canada would be mentioned by name in the AVIS to the French people. (Ibid: Tel 3799, War Office to Eisenhower, 9 Jul 43).
- (d) On the same day, Washington advised General Eisenhower that the Combined Chiefs of Staff approved mention of the Canadians in the AVIS to the French people. (Ibid: FAN 155, Combined Chiefs of Staff to Eisenhower, 9 Jul 43).

#### GENERAL EISENHOWER’S DECISION

8. Nevertheless, General Eisenhower remained firm. Early on the morning of 10 Jul, he signaled the British Chiefs of Staff that Canada would not be mentioned in the initial communiqué; accordingly, it would be inconsistent to have her named in the AVIS. The General gave as his reasons security requirements<sup>4</sup> and the desire of the Canadians to be the first to make the announcement. At C.M.H.Q. there appears to have been general acceptance of security requirements as a legitimate reason. “His (Eisenhower’s) reasons were undoubtedly strictly military and probably reflected his desire to conceal the fact that part of the invasion force had been brought from the United Kingdom, in the event that the initial landings failed and the operations had to be postponed or cancelled”. (Ibid: Chronological notes by Brigadier Rodger, 28 Jul 43). It should be noted, however, that the first actual announcement was not made until 0624 hours, at which time Canadians had already been ashore for 3 ½ hours.

9. To enable Ottawa to make its “scoop”, the Supreme Commander, Mediterranean, had authorized the Canadian Prime Minister to issue a special communiqué 24 hours after the first landing. It was to confine itself to these words: “A Canadian force forms part of the Allied Forces which are undertaking landing operations in Sicily”. (Ibid: Tel W/4888/8977, A.F.H.Q. to War Office, 9 Jul 43). Further information concerning the identity and size of this force and the name of its commander was to await later release. Eisenhower realized that the Canadians were not actually asking for a “scoop”, but only that they should not be “scooped”. This meant simultaneous release in Algiers, London, Washington and Ottawa, which, as Eisenhower put it, “at this late hours (0133 hours 10 Jul) is impossible of fulfillment”. (Ibid: N.A.F. 287, Eisenhower to Brit Chiefs of Staff, 10 Jul 43).

10. Eisenhower’s first press release at 0624 hours 10 Jul 43 stated, “Allied Forces under command of General Eisenhower began landing operations in Sicily”. It made no mention of the Canadians, nor did the AVIS which immediately followed. (Ibid: Chronological notes by Brigadier Rodger, 28 Jul 43).

11. In the light of all that had happened, the numerous telegrams, the hurried conferences and the positive refusal, it is extremely surprising that not ten minutes after the Algiers release came this announcement from the War Department in Washington, “British, American and Canadian troops, commanded by General Eisenhower, began landing operations in Sicily”. (Ibid).

12. Why this difference between the two announcements? Possibly someone erred. It seems more likely that Washington did not receive Eisenhower’s decision in time and presumed that its final message of 9 Jul to him had been accepted. The Supreme Commander’s refusal to change the working and include mention of Canadians was sent at 0133 hours 10 Jul 43 and did not arrive in London until 0323 hours. The chances are it was even later getting to Washington.

13. At the time of the invasion, this was the position of the Rt Hon W.L. Mackenzie King:

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<sup>4</sup> For details of actual Allied and German identification of Canadians, see Appendix “A” to this Report.

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- a) He knew that Canada was to be identified in the Churchill – Roosevelt Proclamation to the Italian people. This Proclamation was not to be made until military operations in Sicily were proceeding successfully.
- b) He had received word that both London and Washington approved mention of the Canadians in the AVIS to the French.
- c) He had requested that General Eisenhower identify the Canadians in his official communiqué and authorize Ottawa to make an announcement simultaneously with those in Algiers, Washington and London. He did not know that these requests had been denied.
- d) Lacking approval, he was to wait 24 hours and make his own announcement as outlined in Eisenhower’s message of 9 Jul 43.

14. The reason that Canada was not to be mentioned in the official communiqué must have puzzled Mr. King, for as late as 15 Jul he was under the impression that Eisenhower had identified Canada in the AVIS.

Just why in the first announcement the words “allied forces” were used, instead of “forces of Great Britain, the United States and Canada” I cannot say. But in the announcement (AVIS) made to the French people almost immediately after, I noticed that General Eisenhower did make specific reference to Canadian as well as to British and American troops.

(Debates, House of Commons: 1943, Vol. V, p. 4826).

Despite the fact that Mr. King believed that Canada was mentioned in the AVIS, he still felt himself bound to withhold his own announcement for 24 hours. It was only when Washington made its break that Mr. King felt himself free. “When I heard the announcement made, I felt there was no obligation on my part which would bind me further not to make an announcement to the Canadian people”. (Ibid). Within 20 minutes of the Washington break at 0032 hours, Ottawa time, 10 Jul, Mr. King told the press,

Armed forces of Britain, the United States and Canada are now in the forefront of an attack (on Sicily) which has as its ultimate objective the unconditional surrender of Italy and Germany. All Canada will be justifiably proud to know that units of the Canadian Army are a part of the Allied force engaged in this attack.

(The Ottawa Citizen, 10 Jul 43).

He repeated this announcement by radio at 0800 hours.

#### DEVELOPMENTS IN PARLIAMENT AND THE PRESS

15. The matter did not end there. The original hunger for full and immediate news remained. Mr. King was not satisfied with merely a reference to the fact that some Canadians were fighting in Sicily. He wanted to be able to announce the size, identity and commander of the Canadian force. Just how badly he wanted to reveal this information is indicated in a message from N.D.H.Q. to C.M.H.Q. “We are under extreme pressure to furnish information referred to Para 3 my G.S. 738<sup>5</sup>. (Ibid: Tel G.S. 782, Murchie to Montague, 11 Jul 43).

16. The problem was not only when such information could be released but also who was to release it. Ottawa was anxious to guard against a repetition of the earlier unfortunate incident. “The Government should not be placed in position of, at a given moment, denying information to Parliament for security reasons and finding that the information had been released from Allied Headquarters, perhaps at the very time the information was denied here”. (Ibid: G.S. 793, Murchie to Montague, 13 Jul 43). It was exactly such a position in which the Government was placed.

17. On 15 Jul 43, after news that 1 Cdn Inf Div was engaged had first come from London, Mr. M.J. Coldwell put the question in the Canadian House of Commons:

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<sup>5</sup> Para 3 concerned the identity, size and commander of the Canadian force.

I am asking why announcements with respect to operations of the Canadian Forces are made from London or from Washington. Does the Minister of National Defence not think that announcements regarding our Canadian Commanders or Canadian troops should be made from Canada?

(Debates, House of Commons: 1943, Vol. V, p. 4825).

18. In answering these questions on behalf of the Minister, Mr. King made the following statements:

I could not see why we in Canada should be precluded or why I should be precluded from telling the Canadian people that Canadians were participating.

What I cannot understand is why at the last minute, I, as Prime Minister of Canada, could not get authority to make any statement.

I am going to keep all the military secrets I can, but certainly so far as Canadian forces are concerned I am going to regard their services as being on a par with those of the British and United States forces, not necessarily in the extent of service they may render because of numbers, but from the point of view of quality and efficiency and of right they are entitled to equality in all the statements that are made in reference to military service...

(Ibid, p. 4827).

19. Having dealt with the Sicilian invasion as far as it was then possible, the House went on to discuss an elevator accident in the Jackson Building and the shortage of butter boxes in the province of Quebec. But the press gallery did not pass on to elevator accidents and butter boxes. Soon news items of this nature appeared: "Canada Makes A Protect". (Daily Sketch, 16 Jul 43), "Canadian Premier Asks News Parity". (The New York

Times, 15 Jul 43). "Canada Is Being Cold-Shouldered". (Saturday Night, 24 Jul 43). The release of information had become a political question. The Army authorities realized that this was "as much a governmental matter as a military one". (4/Sicily/1: Tel G.S. 793, Murchie to Montague, 13 Jul 43). In making the release of news a governmental concern, Mr. King received widespread support. Almost every Canadian and British newspaper backed his action at the time.

20. Mr. Churchill felt the matter important enough to deal with in the British House of Commons. In general, he was quite sympathetic to Mr. King's views and termed the incident a misunderstanding. "I have had a very agreeable interchange of telegrams with Mr. Mackenzie King and this misunderstanding for which nobody is to blame can now be regarded as closed". (4/Sicily/1: Prime Minister's Statement Regarding Participation of Cdn Forces in the Invasion of Sicily, 20 Jul 43).

21. And so it was almost closed, although the exaggerated emphasis given by the newspapers to the part played by Canadian troops in Sicily left a "bad taste". One editorial speaking of the "ballyhoo and bellowing" about the prowess of Canadian troops, said:

Prime Minister King did right in expressing his desire to have the information released to the Canadian public at the earliest possible date. He must have been somewhat embarrassed since, however, to observe some of the consequences.

(Ottawa Citizen, 21 Jul 43).

Mr. King may have done right in voicing his objections; but right or wrong, his objections were critical of the wrong people. He declared that it was the British who had prevented mention of Canada: "It was the opinion of the military authorities in Great Britain that no reference should be made to Canadians". (Debates, House of Commons: 1943, Vol. V, p. 4826). He also gave undue credit to the Americans for releasing this information: "I can only thank the United States authority for having made public the information that it did". (Ibid, p. 4827). Actually, one man and one man alone decided that news of the Canadians should be delayed and that man was General

Eisenhower;. Both London and Washington did as much as they could do in complying with Mr. King's desire for early recognition of Canada's participation in the invasion of Sicily.

## CONCLUSION

22. With the passing of time, the newspapers became more critical of the Prime Minister's action. By the end of July, the Vancouver Daily Province was able to describe Mr. King's protests as "small and puerile" and Mr. King himself as "needlessly sensitive". Possibly Mr. King was needlessly sensitive, but, if he was, he was only responding to the sensitivity of his country. Moreover, for months previous to the invasion of Sicily, Mr. King had faced frequent criticism in the press, in Parliament, and by the public over the non-employment of the Canadian Army. The Prime Minister's protest was a natural result of the pressure put upon him and in keeping with the sensitivity of the country as a whole.

23. This report was prepared by Capt. J.R. Madden.

for (C.P. Stacey) Colonel

Director Historical Section.



IDENTIFICATION OF CANADIANS IN SICILY BY OFFICIAL  
ALLIED COMMUNIQUÉS OR PRESS DESPATCHES

- 10 Jul 43 From Washington the War Department announced "British, American and Canadian troops, commanded by General Eisenhower, began landing operations in Sicily". (4/Sicily/1: Chronological notes, 28 Jul 43).
- 13 Jul 43 A story by Ross Munro bearing this dateline "With the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division" was passed by the censors (H.Q.S. 6265-6-1, Vol. 3). The story was first published in the Ottawa Citizen, 14 Jul, before Parliament itself had been told the identity of the actual division engaged.
- A radio broadcast over station C.B.O. at 1345 hours during Claire Wallace's "They Tell Me" programme named the O.C. 5 Cdn Gen Hosp in Sicily. The source of information was Molly McGee, a free lance correspondent in the U.K. Her message was presumably passed by the U.K. censors. (Ibid).
- 15 Jul 43 There was newspaper speculation that Maj-Gen G.G. Simonds commanded the force. It is interesting to note that the Ottawa Journal, 10 Jul 43, considered that General McNaughton might be in command of the Canadians, implying that the bulk of the Canadian Army was engaged. Both the newspapers and Parliament were critical of the fact that the commanders of the American and British forces had been named but not the Canadian commander. These senior commanders could be identified, however, without giving a real clue as to the size of the forces under their command. Once it was revealed that a Major-General commanded the Canadians, it indicated that there was only one division of Canadians employed. In addition, there is some likelihood that the names of the British and American commander should not have been released. "C.I.G.S.

considers today's release of names of senior comds in Theatre was premature". (4/Sicily/1: Tel G.S. 1639, Montague to Murchie, 13 Jul 43).

17 Jul 43 Mr. King announced that the commander of the Canadians was Maj-Gen G.G. Simonds, C.B.E. (Debates, House of Commons: 1943, Vol. V, p. 4965). There is no record here that Mr. King had Eisenhower's permission to release this information.

#### IDENTIFICATION BY GERMAN INTELLIGENCE

10 July 43 For the ten days preceding the landings in Sicily, the daily sitreps of the German C.-in-C. South (Kesselring) to the Army High Command carried numerous identifications of Allied ground, parachute and air landing forces on the African rim, but made no reference to Canadian forces.

11 Jul 43 Kesselring's intelligence report stated tentatively that there was a Canadian division in Sicily.

12 Jul 43 While an intelligence report at 0320 hours named 1 Cdn Inf Div and located it north of Pachino, the first identification characterized as positive was made in the morning report at 0940 hours and placed 1 Cdn Inf Div west of Pachino.

After this, there were frequent references to operations carried out by 1 Cdn Inf Div, Canadian brigades and battalions.

(G.M.D.S., - H 22/137, O.B. South, Daily  
Sitreps, July 1943, 981 MF.009 (2)).