

ROYAL CANADIAN AIR FORCE RESTORED

BY JOANNA CALDER

Defence Minister Peter MacKay announces the return of the historic titles Royal Canadian Navy, Canadian Army and Royal Canadian Air Force.

Photo: Cpl Dan Bard

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“The three elements of the Canadian Forces will have their historic names restored: Maritime Command will now be known as the Royal Canadian Navy, Land Force Command will be the Canadian Army and Air Command will be the Royal Canadian Air Force.”

With these words from Defence Minister Peter MacKay on Aug. 16, the Royal Canadian Air Force returned to its historic name, which was first granted on April 1, 1924 – the date the Air Force still celebrates as its anniversary.

“In 1968 the government of the day passed a Canadian Forces Reorganization Act which unified the Royal Canadian Navy, the Canadian Army and the [Royal] Canadian Air Force into a single service, the Canadian Forces,” said Minister MacKay during the announcement in Halifax. “An important element of Canadian military heritage was lost when these three former services were required to relinquish their historic titles.

“Restoring these historic identities is a way of reconnecting today’s men and women in uniform, and the proud history and traditions that [they] carry with them as members of the Canadian Forces.”

The name changes take effect immediately. “You can now proudly say you are a member of the Royal Canadian Air Force,” said Lieutenant-General (LGen) André Deschamps, Commander of the Royal Canadian Air Force, told Air Force members.

He emphasized, however, that the return to the historical names for the three services does not undo or change the 1968 unification of the forces. “This does not represent a divergence from the unification of our Canadian Forces,”



Defence Minister Peter MacKay (centre), and LGen André Deschamps (left), Commander RCAF, present F/Sgt (ret'd) Michael Nash Kelly with the historical ensign of the Royal Canadian Air Force during the announcement of the restoration of the RCN, CA and RCAF's. Photo: Cpl Dan Bard

he said. “We continue to be a tri-service, unified force with no change to our organization.”

Reaction to the change was greeted positively by members of the Canadian Forces, veterans, and many Canadians. While some expressed concerns about the potential costs and the return to the designation “royal,” others were plainly delighted.

“It’s a proud moment,” said Lieutenant-Colonel (ret’d) David Bashow, a former fighter pilot and associate professor of history at Royal Military College in Kingston, ON. “My flying training course (6907) was the last to get issued RCAF pilot wings for wear on the (old) blue flying suits!”

The reintroduction of the historical names is intended to be carried out at minimal cost and with no impact to the activities of the Canadian Forces.

“The reintroduction of the RCAF as our official name will be carried out in a phased approach, and will have no impact on our capabilities, rank structures or rank insignia, command relations, organization or operations,” said LGen Deschamps.

“Over the coming months, we will, however, make necessary changes to documentation and staff titles, and adjust the current insignia, motto and colours, which were specifically designed for Air Command.

“As we move forward, I will keep you informed of further developments,” he said. 🇨🇦