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Herald photo

CANADIAN FORCES STOP TRAFFIC AT TEXAS GATE IN PORCUPINE HILLS

Military sifts through wreckage

Military investigators are sifting through the wreckage of a U.S. National Guard F-106 jet fighter today after it crashed early Thursday 20 miles northeast of Blairmore, killing the pilot, Lieut. David L. Denning, 28, of the Air National Guard base in Great Falls, Mont.

It was earlier reported that Denning survived the crash, when two emergency signals were detected about 20 miles from the crash site. It was thought the signal originated in an emergency transmitter located in the pilot's seat which would have been ejected if Denning had bailed out.

Major Gary Hindoién, base spokesman, said a team of investigators have been flown

to the scene to examine the wreckage. But, "we have no idea what caused the crash."

The aircraft had been taking part in a North America Air Defence Command (NORAD) training exercise over the northwestern U.S. and Alberta.

It carried four air-to-air missiles with conventional high explosive warheads. Dave Preikshot, Canadian Armed Forces spokesman, said no nuclear weapons were involved.

The aircraft went down about 12:30 a.m. Thursday near a Porcupine Hills forest ranger's lookout tower.

Forest Ranger George Hanes and his wife Marilyn were in their small trailer home at the base of the tower and were awakened by a thunderous explosion.

Hanes could not be reached for comment, but fellow ranger Peter Nortcliffe, described the events in a telephone interview.

"George heard the crash and went outside to find the hillside on fire.

"There was nothing he could do, and the fire was so close to the trailer he decided to clear out. I don't blame him one bit," Nortcliffe said.

Before Hanes left, he radioed in to the central lookout tower, and they got ahold of me," he said. "I went up with three RCMP officers and we were the first ones in. "It really shook me up."

Rescuers found Denning's

body near the wreckage after the forest fire caused by the crash was brought under control.

Hindoién said the smashed parts of the aircraft will be examined at the site and then sent to various logistics depots in the U.S. for detailed inspection.

"The plane was pretty well destroyed," Hindoién said.

"It took two walk-throughs by two experienced pilots to find the seat."

The investigation team, which includes a Canadian military official, will probably remain at the crash site until the middle of next week, Hindoién said.

He also said two explosives specialists have been flown to the crash site to search for possible undetonated missiles.

According to reports in the Great Falls Tribune, Denning was regularly employed as a Great Falls car salesman. He was a member of the National Guard for six years and qualified as a pilot in 1973.

National Guard spokesman Colonel Emmett Whalen, in a telephone interview from Great Falls today, told The Herald National Guard pilots are trained exactly the same as U.S. Air Force pilots and fly on a regular basis.

NORAD spokesman Lt. Colonel Fred Judd said jets carrying "live" warheads often fly over Alberta during the monthly defence exercises.

The "live" jets are utilized, because the American and Canadian security officials are confident the practice is safe and have only a limited number of aircraft available for exercises.

"We feel there is no extraordinary risk in using these aircraft," said Judd.

He said pilots take "double precautions".

"There is no possibility of inadvertent release," he said. Judd also said the missiles commonly carried are designed to detonate on impact, but would be unlikely to cause "large scale explosions".

The morning of the crash there were two live jets flying over Alberta, Judd confirmed.

Contrary to earlier reports, he said there are no precautions taken to avoid flying over Canadian or American cities.

Fire out, fighter wreckage probed

The fire in the Porcupine Hills is out and American investigators are still combing through the wreckage of

Trying to purchase jet 1977

The Crownest Pass Recreation board is looking into the possibility of obtaining a T33 Jet Fighter for the town of Blairmore. These planes are available free of charge through Leo Kyo of Devon, Alberta except for installation and transportation costs.

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Above, one of the large Canadian Armed Forces helicopters taking off from Blairmore during the search and rescue operations conducted here last week after the U.S. Jet fighter plane crashed. The helicopters combed the area for several hours trying to find the pilot of the plane, who they believed had ejected before the crash. The pilots body was later found in the wreckage of the jet about 20 miles northeast of here. See story below for further details.

Crash investigation may take two weeks

A team of special airplane crash investigators will be combing a swath of bush 2,000 yards long and a 100 yards wide northeast of here for at least the next week and a half to try and determine the cause of last week's jet fighter crash here.

A spokesman for the Canadian Armed Forces in Edmon-

ton, Capt. Craig Mills, told The Promoter earlier this week that the U.S. Air Force flight safety team, assisted by a Canadian Armed Forces flight safety officer, will be gathering the remains of the crash in an attempt to reconstruct the mishap. The area in which the jet fighter went down has been sealed off by members of the

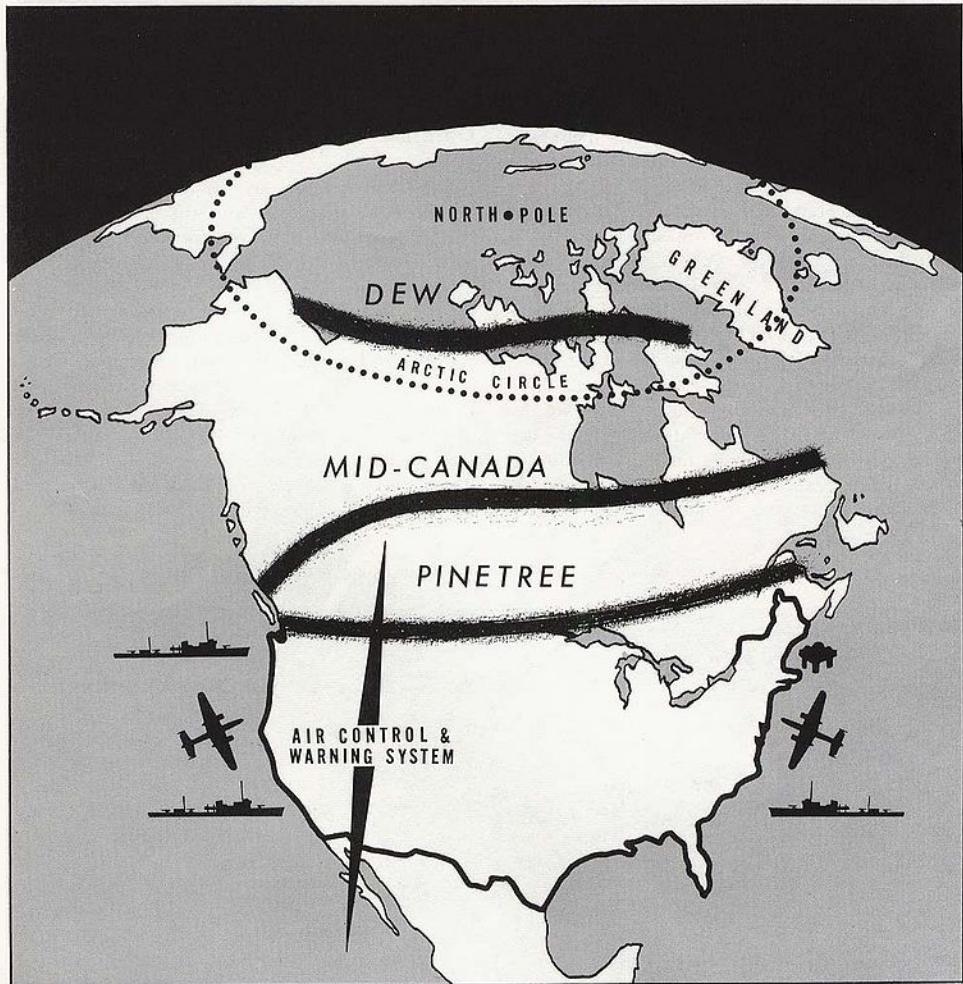
Canadian Armed Forces, and will remain that way until the on-site investigation is completed, said Capt. Mills.

He went on to add that it could be months before the report and findings of the investigation are released.

The U.S. National Guard F-106 fighter plane crashed early in the morning last Thursday, killing the pilot, Lieutenant David L. Denning, 28, of the Air National Guard base at Great Falls, Montana. The plane had been taking part with others in a NORAD exercise over the U.S. and Alberta at the time of the crash.

The jet crashed on a wooded plateau about 20 miles northeast of Blairmore, narrowly missing an occupied forestry lookout and setting off a forest fire which took several hours to put out.

Earlier indications following the crash was that Denning had ejected out of the jet before it crashed, and an intensive search and rescue operation was carried out just north of Blairmore. When the forest fire was squelched, Denning's remains were discovered along with other fragments of the desintegrated aircraft. The plane was carrying four air-to-air conventional missiles, which were also destroyed in the crash.



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Jet wreckage removed

This was the scene Thursday as United States Air Force officials allowed the first public glimpses of the wreckage and site where an American F106 jet fighter crashed June 19, 20 miles northeast of Blairmore. A Canadian Forces helicopter helped the Americans load a 5,000-pound engine and other debris — collected along a 300-yard swath cut through the forest by the plane — aboard a flatdeck truck. National Guard pilot David L. Denning, of Great Falls, was on a routine North American Air Defence Command exercise when the plane went down. He was killed and the crash ignited a small forest fire. The debris was taken to Malmstrom Air Force Base

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June 9 1977 Pilot bailed out near Blairmore

U.S. jet crash touches off fire



By MIKE LAMB
Herald Staff Writer
Three Canadian Forces aircraft are searching the mountains northeast of Blairmore for the pilot of a United States F-106 jet interceptor armed with conventional warheads that crashed early today.

Complicating the search for the pilot is a seven-acre forest fire burning out of control. Debris from the crash is believed to have started the fire, but it is not known if the warheads detonated, according to Capt. Craig Mills, Canadian Forces Information Officer in Edmonton. Firefighters are hampered by low water supplies in ponds in the area.

Mills said search aircraft were in the air shortly after the crash was reported at 1 a.m. Searchers picked up a signal from an emergency locator transmitter and spotted flares in a heavily-wooded area about 20 miles from the crash site.

Transmitter

The transmitter is located in the aircraft seat pack, and is designed to eject with the pilot.

RCMP and forestry officials have cordoned off the crash site in the Porcupine Hills.

The jet, operated by a single pilot, was on a routine monthly North American Air Defence (NORAD) exercise, according to Maj. Gary Hindoen of the U.S. National Guard. The warheads were contained in four air-to-air missiles.

Hindoen said American and Canadian aircraft take part in the exercises, conducted at night to avoid airspace conflicts with commercial

and private aircraft. Several jets that participate in the coast-to-coast NORAD exercises routinely carry high-explosive missiles, according to the Major.

The armed jets are referred to as "live" aircraft and often participate in the Canadian-American exercises, but only fly in Canadian air space during the NORAD missions, Hindoen said.

The pilot of the downed jet, Lieut. David L. Denning, 28, of the 120th Fighter Interceptor Group of the National Guard, is believed to have bailed out before the impact.

The pilot's emergency beacon was signalling about three to five miles north of Blairmore, according to RCMP Sgt. Jim Rice.

Denning did not indicate any problems during communications with the Great Falls Malstrom Air Force Base, according to Hindoen. There were no "May Day" signals nor any communication with the pilot shortly before the crash, Hindoen said.

The Canadian air search is being co-ordinated by a pilot in another F-105 fighter, similar to the one that crashed. Hindoen said the jet is circling high above the Canadian aircraft attempting to pinpoint the emergency transmitter signal.

Hindoen said the downed jet's four warheads may have exploded during or shortly after impact as they are sensitive enough to be detonated by a fire's heat.

Avoid cities

Live jets flown over Canada during NORAD exercises to intercept simulated aircraft invaders from the north are routinely directed on courses that avoid metropolitan areas, Hindoen said.



DEBRIS FROM DOWNED PLANE

Herald photos by DAVID BLY
FIREFIGHTERS BATTLING BLAZE
IN PORCUPINE HILLS

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