



427 (Lion) Squadron

History and Cenotaph Project

Ferte Manus Certas

Official History

427 (Lion) Squadron was formed on November 7, 1942, as the eighth of fifteen Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) Bomber Squadrons formed overseas. The squadron flew Wellington aircraft out of Croft, Yorkshire; and then Halifax and Lancaster bombers out of Leeming from May 3, 1943. Its first Commanding Officer was Group Captain Dudley Burnside, DSO, OBE, DFC & Bar. Initially part of 4 Group, the Squadron was transferred to 6th Bomber (RCAF) Group where it remained until the end of the war.

The Lion Squadron amassed an enormous amount of flying hours and won an impressive list of Battle Honours and individual distinctions. In 3,200 sorties comprising 26,000 flying hours, they dropped an incredible amount of high explosives on Fortress Europe and its ports. There were a total of 557 427 Squadron aircrew shot down or interred in WW II from the Squadron's inception to the end of the war. Of these, 6 became internees in Ireland, 14 evaded capture and 118 were POWs. However, 419 lost their lives. Indicative of the selfless bravery of the Lion crews were four Distinguished Service Orders, two Conspicuous Gallantry Medals, 16 Distinguished Flying Medals, and 147 Distinguished Flying Crosses.

On May 24, 1943, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer adopted the Squadron and allowed the names of such stars as Lana Turner, Greer Garson, Joan Crawford, Heddy Lamarr, and others to be displayed on the aircraft.

Another highlight was the adoption of one of Prime Minister Winston Churchill's lion cubs, named Mareth. In addition, MGM presented a bronze lion to the Squadron. This gift and the affiliation with the MGM lion mascot strengthened the Squadron's nickname.

1952: Re-Activated as Fighter Squadron

On August 1, 1952, the Lions were reactivated as a Fighter Squadron flying F-86 Sabres at St-Hubert, Quebec, before moving to Zweibrucken, Germany. The Squadron subsequently served in France, Morocco and Sardinia, as ambassadors for Canada, before becoming the first Canadian squadron to be equipped with the CF-104 Starfighter in 1962. The Squadron was again disbanded on July 1, 1970.

1971: Re-Activated as Tactical Helicopter Squadron

The Lions returned on January 1st, 1971, as a Tactical Helicopter Squadron based at Petawawa, Ontario, where they are to this day. Originally equipped with the L-19 Bird Dog, they received soon after the CH-136 Kiowa light observation helicopter, as well as the CH-135 Twin Huey utility helicopters. The Squadron has participated in numerous overseas operations such as Norway, Egypt, the Sinai Peninsula (Operation CALUMET), as well as a United Nations peacekeeping mission in Central America (Operation SULTAN). In 1992, 427 Squadron switched to a uniform fleet of CH-135 Twin Hueys. Soon after, in March 1993, a flight of Lions deployed to Somalia in support of Operation DELIVERANCE where they distinguished themselves in day and night operations. Maintaining its versatility in deployed operations, 427 supported United Nations support missions in Haiti from 1995 to the present on Operations PIVOT and STABLE.

427 Squadron retired the Twin Huey in July 1997, while receiving the last of the newly purchased BELL CH-146 Griffon Fleet. The Lions have used the Griffon in a number of operations to date, including Operation RECUPERATION (1998 Ice Storm), Operation CENTRAL (Honduras 1998), Operation HURRICANE (Arctic 1999), Operation PALLADIUM Roto 5 (1999-2000), Roto 7 (2000-2001), and was the driving force behind Roto 11/12, Bosnia 2002-2003, Afghanistan from 2003 to 2012 and most recently in Iraq.

On February 1, 2006, the unit was renamed 427 Special Operations Aviation Squadron and became a part of Canadian Special Operations Forces Command (CANSOFCOM). As part of this newly formed command, 427 SOAS provides an aviation capability to the Canadian Special Operations Regiment (CSOR), The Canadian Joint Incident Response Unit, Joint Task Force 2 and the Canadian Special Operations Training Centre.

Battle Honours:

- English Channel and North Sea 1943–1945
- Baltic 1944–1945
- Fortress Europe 1943–1944
- France and Germany 1944–1945
- Biscay 1944
- Biscay Ports 1943–1944
- Ruhr 1943–1945
- Berlin 1943–1944
- German Ports 1943–1945
- Normandy 1944
- Rhine
- Afghanistan

(Source: 427 [Association Website](#))

427 Squadron Cenotaph Project

427 SOAS will celebrate its 75th anniversary in the fall of 2017. A central feature will be the unveiling of a cenotaph at Veteran's Memorial Park located in Cobden, ON along the Trans-Canada Highway. 427 Squadron does not have a memorial in Canada honoring its fallen heroes.

The specifications include: a 20' diameter black dyed concrete base; two crossed wall, approximately 7' in height and 7' wide, with a picture of all the aircraft flown in the Squadron and the names of the respective fallen; on top of this will stand an 7' diameter, 8" thick polished granite surface, crowned by a 7' life sized bronze lion, which is the 427 Squadron crest. Around the base of the cenotaph will be two plaques with the squadron's history inscribed.



Immortalize your name on a plaque in the vicinity of the Cenotaph by donating:

Diamond - \$10,000

Platinum - \$1,000

Gold - \$500

Silver - \$200

How to donate

By mail: Cheques or money orders may be made out to the "RCAF Association Trust". Please write 427 Association Cenotaph Fund in the memo portion of the cheque. Mail to:

Office Manager
RCAF Association Trust Fund
222 Somerset Street West, Suite 405.
Ottawa, ON, K2P 2G3.

In person: We encourage anyone who would like to make a public presentation for publicity purposes e.g. Garrison Newspaper. To do so, contact Honorary Colonel Del Lippert (613) 646-7904 or email at lippertdel@aol.com or Delbert.Lippert@forces.gc.ca. He will be pleased to arrange a meeting complete with oversized cheque and photographer.

Online: Go to www.canadahelps.org/en/

- Go to *Get Started Find a Charity*
- Search by Keywords *Royal Canadian Airforce Association*
- Select *Royal Canadian Air Force Association Trust*
- Scroll down to *Donate to this Charity Now*
- Complete *Donation Amount*
- Select from dropdown menu: *427 Lion Squadron Association Memorial Cenotaph Cause*
- Include a message if desired. Tax receipts will be sent by the RCAF Association Trust.

Due to privacy legislation, the RCAF Association is not permitted to inform 427 Squadron of your name without receiving first your permission. If you have donated or in the process of, please email Wenjun Song (accounts@airforce.ca) at the RCAF Association and indicate that you agree to having your name forwarded to the Squadron and that you would like your name to be inscribed on the plaque of donors.