

By the wise decision to rush forward construction, Canada was in a position to offer to the United States, when that country entered the War in December, 1941, the free use of an airway to Alaska.

Although Canadian airway facilities were in operation at the time of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour on Dec. 7, 1941, it soon became apparent that war traffic would necessitate substantial additions to the original program and acceleration of the long-term peacetime plans. Military steps taken against Japan on the Pacific Coast made necessary a much more comprehensive plan than the air route. These military plans called for extensive developments involving an immense amount of construction work connected with the enlarging of airports, the improvement of facilities, the provision of living accommodation, etc.

By special arrangement with the United States Government made in the early months of 1942, Canada agreed to pay for the construction of new landing strips or other permanent works of continuing value to the Airway and the United States agreed to pay for such additional facilities over and above Canadian standards and requirements that were needed solely for United States military purposes. More recently the Canadian Government, after reviewing the probable future requirements of air transport in this area, has informed the United States Government that it will not expect payment for the construction of even those improvements carried out by the Canadian Government at the request of the United States and that Canada will also reimburse the United States Government for its own expenditures on construction of a permanent nature in connection with the Northwest Staging Route.

By February, 1942, the United States, having obtained permission of the Canadian Government, decided to build the Alaska Highway to meet the requirements of a military artery capable of handling a flow of heavy vehicular traffic. This highway followed the general route of the airway (see map on p. 707). The fact that the airway was then operating greatly facilitated the construction of this highway and, similarly, the existence of the highway has greatly aided the operation of the airway. The two projects, one carried out by Canada and the other by the United States, are complementary to each other.

By July 12, 1943, the Canadian Government, having virtually completed its own program of construction at the main fields of the Northwest Staging Route, closed out its contracts and withdrew its construction forces.

As an extension to the original highway project, flight strips were constructed by United States authorities at suitable intervals adjacent to the highway. These, however, are used only for 'contact' flying where the highway can be used as a guide by the pilot. They provide facilities for the rapid movement of construction and maintenance personnel and equipment, as well as emergency landing areas along the highway.

The Northwest Staging Route is now operated by the Royal Canadian Air Force from headquarters at Edmonton. The Department of Transport provides meteorological services, operates and maintains the radio range stations, and temporarily services communications facilities. Departmental engineers for coordinating any new work with that already done by Canada are also retained at each aerodrome along the route. Control towers are staffed by the R.C.A.F., which is responsible for maintenance and repair work at all aerodromes. The R.C.A.F. is solely responsible for security.