



ARMÉE DE L'AIR



THE END OF A JOURNEY

Written by: LTT Antonia Buroni, May 3, 2017

That's it, we come to the end of our American adventure. After our return to the East Coast of the United States, with the evolutions at Langley and Stewart, we landed at the naval base of Norfolk, Virginia. Subsequently, we performed a demo and two passages for the NATO Tattoo Festival.

The NATO Allied Command (NATO), which is responsible for overseeing the transformation of the military capabilities of NATO countries, is located at Norfolk Naval Base. It is headed by General Denis Mercier, former Chief of Staff of the Air Force, who is now Supreme Allied Commander Transformation since September 2015.

On the day of our arrival on April 26, 2017, we presented our demo to several civilian and military officials, including General Mercier and Norfolk Mayor Kenneth Cooper Alexander.

We made a first pass, on April 28, over Scope Plaza in Norfolk. We dropped the tricolor flag in the sky of the city as the Flag Raising ceremony took place. A soldier from each of the 28 NATO countries presented his flag while part of the anthem was being played. That same evening we had the honor of attending the Virginia International Tattoo, a great show where a number of military musical ensembles from around the world, including the Air Music, performed.

The next day, when the Parade of Nations, a big parade in the streets of Norfolk where each country of the organization showed its culture and heritage was held, we flew over the city again.

April 30 was our last day of presence in the United States. We left for Canadian neighbors that day for the Gatineau air show "Aero150".

This meeting celebrated two great events in the history of the country.

First of all, Canada celebrates its 150th anniversary this year. The country was born on July 1, 1867, with the 4 provinces of Quebec, Ontario, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, thanks to the Confederation of Canada.

Another event was also honored at this meeting, the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge. This battle took place during the Great War, in this French commune located between Lens and Arras, and was won by the Allies. In April 1917, after four days of fighting, the Canadians managed to take Vimy Ridge, but at the cost of more than 10,600 soldiers wounded and killed. This battle is very important for Canada because for the first time since the beginning of the First World War, the four divisions of the Canadian Corps fought side by side.

The weather was not with us on April 30, for the meeting, with a cloudy sky and a lot of rain. We therefore presented our demo bad weather. We have had the opportunity to meet with our Canadian counterparts, the Snowbirds, who are the Canadian Armed Forces' freestyle patrol. We were able to admire the evolutions of their 9 aircraft, the CT-114 Tutor, a training and ground attack aircraft designed by Canadair.

On May 1, the demo that we had to perform in Montreal was canceled, the sky being too low for us to be able to move safely.

During our transit on April 2, we were able to fly with the Snowbirds on certain parts of the route. At their side, we flew over Parliament in Ottawa, but also Montreal. These passages were rich in symbols of the strong ties between Canada and France.

We begin the return ferry, with stages planned in northern Canada, Greenland, Iceland and Scotland. The landing on our Salon-de-Provence base is scheduled for the weekend.

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