

# Crow'snest

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National  
Défense  
Défense  
nationale

Canada



# FLEXIBILITY

is the key for  
HMCS *Charlottetown*



Photo: Cpl Chris Ringius

By Lieutenant (Navy) Michael McWhinnie

**T**he locals refer to them as *siroccos*: the southerly winds that lift fine particles of sand as they cross the Sahara Desert and convey them into the Mediterranean Sea. In the coastal waters of Libya, the effect is like smog. A thin layer of beige powder covers HMCS *Charlottetown*'s upper decks and everyone from pilots to lookouts struggle against reduced visibility and other influences on the mission at hand.

The regional meteorological peculiarity is just one of many factors *Charlottetown*'s crew must consider as they adapt to the varying demands of Operation Unified Protector. "The mission comprises three main elements: enforcing a no-fly zone (NFZ), implementing an arms

embargo, and actions to protect civilians," says Commander Craig Skjerpen, *Charlottetown*'s commanding officer. "The embargo is our primary role, but we are also supporting the NFZ and finding ways to protect civilians both at sea and ashore."

NATO is conducting reconnaissance, surveillance and information-gathering operations to identify those forces which present a threat to civilians and civilian-populated areas. Under authority of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973, this information can then be used by NATO air and maritime assets to engage targets on the ground or in the air. *Charlottetown*'s sustained presence off the coast allows it to employ sensors and intelligence gathering resources to augment NATO's surveillance and command and control capabilities.



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Front page: Able Seaman Eric Bowman raises the Ensign aboard HMCS *Charlottetown*, currently operating in the Mediterranean Sea. Photo: Cpl Chris Ringius  
All articles written by Darlene Blakeley, except where otherwise noted.



"Nobody could predict how the crisis in Libya would evolve. The need for flexibility and the ability to adjust to operational demands has come to define our deployment," says Lieutenant-Commander Matthew Coates, *Charlottetown's* executive officer. "Training conditions people to respond in prescribed ways to predictable situations. As we confront unanticipated challenges it is the ability to analyze, think critically and seek creative solutions that is becoming increasingly valuable."

Since the official launch of the arms embargo on March 23, *Charlottetown* has been cast in diverse roles, some familiar, others less so. "We took the opportunity during the transatlantic crossing to train in anticipation

of the mission. The emphasis was on maritime interdiction operations, including boarding party training. That has been very useful but we are also facing a spectrum of other operational demands," explains LCdr Coates.

NATO and coalition ships have conducted naval gunfire support missions, defended against small boat attacks, and de-mined Misrata harbour approaches. "Our deployment is very different from recent Canadian opera-

tions in the region," he adds. "As we seek to develop tactics to influence the situation on land, we must also incorporate strategies to defend against shore-based threats including missiles and artillery. We even had to



*Corporal Jason Boulanger, a supply technician in HMCS Charlottetown, communicates with another part of the ship while patrolling in the Mediterranean Sea.*



*Leading Seaman Justin Taylor, a naval communicator in HMCS Charlottetown, hails a vessel of interest in the Mediterranean Sea.*



*Commander Craig Skjerpen, commanding officer of HMCS Charlottetown, looks on as navigation officer Lieutenant (Navy) Nadia Shields takes a bearing.*

consider the chemical weapon threat at one point when regime forces were reported to be distributing gas masks amongst their troops in Misrata."

The unique combination of multi-purpose frigate with shipborne helicopter and boarding party capabilities has made *Charlottetown* one of the more operationally flexible and responsive units in the task group. There are currently 21 ships and submarines from 12 allied countries including Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, France, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Romania, Spain, Turkey, United Kingdom and the United States that are enforcing the arms embargo. *Charlottetown* is among a subset also contributing to the NFZ and taking actions to protect civilians.

"*Charlottetown's* ability to perform the types of duties you have been assigned is an invaluable resource to the operation," said the Task Group Commander, Italian Rear-Admiral Gualtiero Mattesi, during a recent visit to the Canadian warship. "While each day is different, the work you have done has been crucial to making a difference especially to reducing the military threat against the population of Misrata and allowing the flow of humanitarian assistance to continue to flow through that port."

# HMCS *Charlottetown* assists drifting migrant vessel

Photo: Lt(N) Michael McWhinnie

*The crew of Charlottetown saw the human face of regional instability recently while investigating a migrant vessel in the waters off Libya.*

By Lieutenant (Navy) Michael McWhinnie

Shortly before noon on March 25, an order from the commander of Combined Task Group 455.01 directed HMCS *Charlottetown* to investigate a vessel off the coast of North Africa that had been reported as “adrift” to authorities ashore. The frigate scrambled her Sea King helicopter, which became the first NATO aircraft to reach the vessel.

“We located the vessel, tracked it by radar, and confirmed visually it was making good headway,” said pilot Captain Gerritt Siebring. “As soon as *Charlottetown* came into visual distance, however, the vessel stopped dead in the water.”

When contacted by radio, the crew of the migrant vessel claimed that they were adrift because their engine was seized and they were out of fuel. A boarding party set off from the frigate to investigate. Once aboard the migrant vessel, the boarding party members saw that the actual situation was rather different.

“I was surprised to see the engine was running,” said engineer Petty Officer 2nd Class Serge Grondin. “I checked the sump and the oil was pure black; there was no water contamination as they said. When I checked their fuel, there was easily 400 litres in their tanks.” The boat also had an efficient bilge pump, powered by the main engine.

After a minor adjustment to the rudimentary steering system, the migrant vessel was deemed seaworthy. Meanwhile, *Charlottetown* provided food, water and blankets for the passengers, and a member of the warship’s medical team checked their general health. The final determination was that, although crowded, everyone aboard was in good health and in no immediate danger.

“Once we provided aid and met our obligations by assuring their health, ability to navigate and safely operate their vessel, our options became limited,” said Commander Craig Skjerpen, commanding officer of *Charlottetown*. “We opened our distance and resumed our patrol, but stayed close enough to monitor the situation and respond if required.”

The warship monitored the migrant vessel all night as the NATO Combined Task Group began managing the situation in coordination with Italian national authorities. The Italian Coast Guard took charge of the vessel and its occupants the following day.

“I am told these boats are a common and ongoing challenge in this region; nonetheless, it was an encounter that marked our Canadians sensibilities,” said Cdr Skjerpen. “The safety margin becomes low when a master loads his vessel with this many people. Even a seaworthy craft presents an elevated risk should the sea state deteriorate.”



# A shot in the dark

By Lieutenant (Navy) Michael McWhinnie

A voice penetrates the darkness on the bridge of HMCS *Charlottetown*. “Incoming fire bearing green one-five-zero!” The starboard lookout raises the alarm loudly and quickly, with no hint of panic. The report marks the first time the Canadian Navy has come under direct hostile fire since the Korean War and it immediately draws the ship’s commanding officer, Commander Craig Skjerpen, and the weapons direction officer onto the bridge wing.

Out of the impenetrable darkness, brilliant evenly-spaced points of lights snake their way towards the ship. The salvos are punctuated by large bursts of flame that flash then disappear. “Engage!” barks Cdr Skjerpen, ordering warning shots from the heavy machine gun crew directed at the target. Close by, a 50-calibre gun thunders in response.

A short while earlier the ship had been quiet. Half the crew slept as the operation’s team worked through the early morning of Thursday, May 12. “Around 2 a.m. we became aware of several small craft hugging the coast-line and heading towards Misrata,” said the on-watch Operations Room officer, Lieutenant (Navy) Adrian Armitage. “We analyzed a number of factors, assessed that the boats posed a threat to the port, and recommended that the ship come to action stations.”



Photo: Cpl Chris Ringius

*Executive officer Lieutenant-Commander Matthew Coates, left, coxswain Chief Petty Officer 1st Class Alistair Skinner, right, and meteorologist technician Master Corporal Melany Pilon at action stations.*

The Canadian frigate sounded the alarm and brought its crew the highest degree of readiness. It manoeuvred in concert with the destroyer HMS *Liverpool* and a French warship to block the advance of the small boats. Prevented from attaining their objective, and with the French firing warning shots, the small boats abandoned their attack and retreated.

“We were able to detect support vehicles that paralleled the boats along the road following the shore,” said Lt(N) Armitage. “As they stopped to extract their teams, they were provided covering fire from artillery and anti-aircraft canon.”

On *Charlottetown*’s starboard wing a handful of crew examined the flight of the incoming tracers as they slowly drew right and passed astern of their ship. A sweeping motion of fire betrayed the lack of precise aiming by regime forces.

“Cease fire!” yelled Cdr Skjerpen, after achieving his desired response.

“The ships repositioned to re-establish a barrier in the direction to the port at a suitable standoff distance from shore,” said Lt(N) Armitage. “Having successfully deterred the attack, we resumed our patrols.”

The warships sustained neither damage nor injury to their crews. “*Charlottetown* is a modern technologically-advanced ship and the crew have trained well and hard to be prepared for the type of challenges we faced tonight,” said Cdr Skjerpen. “I am reassured by their calm and professional performance. It is obvious to me that morale is high and everyone appreciates the connection between their efforts and achieving the operation’s goals of protecting the civilian population in Libya.”



Photo: Cpl Chris Ringius

*Lieutenant (Navy) Adrian Armitage oversees the ship’s combat personnel during his watch as Operations Room officer.*



## *Flood relief*



*Naval reservists and soldiers reinforce a dike to help stop the flooding during Operation Lustre in Manitoba.*

Photo: MCpl Holly Cowan

# Helping Canadians at home

## Sailors join the fight to protect residents from floods

Most people associate the navy with ships at sea. So it was with some surprise that residents in Québec and Manitoba discovered that many of the men and women filling sandbags to protect their properties from flooding rivers or providing support for dike repairs were members of the Canadian Navy.

### Operation Lotus

Two humanitarian relief missions were carried out by hundreds of Canadian Forces personnel, including sailors from across the country, in May. The first got under way May 6 in areas near Montérégie, Que., after a formal request for assistance was received from the Government of Québec. Called Operation Lotus, the relief efforts were led by Canada Command and conducted through Joint Task Force East. Some of the worst flooding in 50 years forced the evacuation of nearly 1,800 people, and 45 members of the navy, most of them from Naval Reserve Divisions in Eastern Canada, joined other CF personnel in assisting the local population.

According to Lieutenant-Commander Alain Bouchard, remote maritime component element commander and training officer at HMCS *Donnacona* in Montréal, the naval reservists carried out two main tasks: water reconnaissance and diving support to the army's combat engineers. Water reconnaissance involved 24-hour support to the provincial police, firefighters and paramedics, overseeing dams and the needs of the local population when they could not be reached by roads. For this work the naval reservists used 10-man zodiacs. Two navy port inspection divers also assisted in repairing two permanent dikes which had been used for low-level flooding in the past, but which were breached in this year's flooding.

The naval reservists were welcomed "with open arms" by local civilian authorities. "We were a real asset to them and they really appreciated having our help," LCdr Boucher said.

LCdr Boucher, who lives in St-Jean-Sur-Richelieu, Que., says the Naval Reserve is always happy to pitch in when the communities near their Divisions are in need of assistance. "We want the people to know that the navy is all across the country, not just on our coasts, and that we support our communities," he said.

### Operation Lustre

The second relief mission began May 9 when the Government of Manitoba asked for federal assistance to help people affected by flooding along the Assiniboine River between Brandon and Winnipeg. Called Operation Lustre, the relief efforts were led by Canada Command and conducted through Joint Task Force West.

Navy participation in Op Lustre included 122 reservists from Naval Reserve Divisions across the country, and 12 members of the Regular Force. Captain (Navy) Paul Dempsey, Deputy Commander Canadian Fleet Pacific, was appointed maritime component commander for the operation.

Overall assistance during the operation included planning and coordination assistance; providing support to preserve essential infrastructure; reinforcing existing dikes; observing and monitoring sandbag dikes; providing essential logistical and material support; and providing assistance through the voluntary evacuation of civilians where flooding posed a threat to their lives.

Maritime forces were mainly employed in the reinforcement of the Assiniboine dike system during the operation, according to Capt(N) Dempsey. "This operation was about Canadians helping Canadians in need of immediate assistance," he said. "The ability of the Naval Reserve to establish the Regional Maritime Coordination Element and to mobilize personnel and equipment from across country was impressive, and a shining example of their strategic value to the navy and Canada. For the officers and sailors involved in Op Lustre, they came away enriched professionally and with a strong sense of accomplishment."

Leading Seaman Jamie Tobin from the Naval Reserve Division HMCS *Scotian* in Halifax wholeheartedly agreed. "We've trained for years for situations like this and we're finally awarded with an opportunity to use our skills to help those in need," he said. "It feels great to be able to help my fellow Canadians."

*With files from A/SLt Blake Patterson*



## Flood relief

# On the JOB



Photo: Cpl Louis Brunet

*Op Lotus: An army checks residences*

Photo: MCpl Holly Cowan

*Op Lustre: Commodore David Craig, left, Commander of the Naval Reserve, passes sandbags along a chain of sailors who are reinforcing a dike.*



*Op Lustre: The Portage Diversion diverts water from the Assiniboine River into Lake Manitoba.*

Photo: MCpl Holly Cowan



*Op Lotus: Engineers and navy divers assisted in repairing dikes near Montérégie, Que.*



Photo: MCpl France Morin



*engineer, using a zodiac provided by the navy, along the Richilieu River.*

*Op Lustre: Naval reservists position a tarp on a dike outside Portage la Prairie, Man.*



Photo: MCpl Holly Cowan





## Flood relief “I’m proud of you Mom!”

**H**ow does a mother of four from Kingston, Ont., find herself filling sand bags at night in flood-ravaged Manitoba?

This is what being a member of the Naval Reserve is all about. Often called “citizen sailors”, naval reservists are from all walks of life and most have full-time jobs in other occupations. When they are called upon for a mission, they leave their “normal” lives behind, put on their uniforms, and head off to make a difference.

Such is the case with Ordinary Seaman Mary-Elizabeth Irwin, who owns her own cleaning business and plays the piano for the base chapel in Kingston, where her husband is a military chaplain. She has four daughters between the ages of nine and 17 who demand a lot of her time as well.

When she heard about the mission to deliver humanitarian relief to those affected by the floods in Manitoba, she quickly volunteered. “With four girls I needed a vacation!” she joked.

However, it was anything but a vacation as she joined other naval reservists working long hours in order to protect the local population from the surging flood waters of the Assiniboine River.

Her first time away from home, it was a “learning experience” for the whole family. While in Manitoba she received a text message from her oldest daughter which caused her to choke up. “I’m proud of you Mom!” it read.



*Ordinary Seaman Mary-Elizabeth Irwin, foreground, carries sand bags during Op Lustre.*

Photo: A/SLt David Lewis

OS Irwin has been very impressed by the teamwork involved during the mission. She said that it was great working with members of the army on the dikes. “I am amazed at how quickly you can forge friendships with others when you are sharing a situation and experience such as this,” she says. “It was a great atmosphere. I loved being part of the team making a difference.”

*With files from A/SLt David Lewis*



Photo: A/SLt David Lewis

*Members of the Canadian Forces, including sailors, gather on mounds of sand bags they filled during Operation Lustre in Manitoba.*



# Sand bags and chocolate chip cookies

## Flood relief

By Acting Sub-Lieutenant David Lewis

One at a time each sandbag is placed alongside the dike at a weak spot in the bend of the Assiniboine River near Poplar Point, Man. Naval reservists from across Canada have volunteered to do this backbreaking and monotonous work. The kilometre-long pathway heading from the small community back to the river has become a muddy mire. The dump trucks, which usually transport thousands of sandbags back to the work area, now have to dump their load at the end of the small residential lane. At this point each 40-45-pound sandbag has to be picked up and tossed on the back of a small tracked vehicle. About the time the massive pile diminishes, another loaded truck shows up.

A hard 10-hour day awaits each naval reservist, with nothing but the smell of wet sand and...chocolate chip cookies? The scent wafts through the air and grabs everyone's attention. Heads all turn to see a white-haired lady in pink slacks holding a plate of warm cookies. It is the beginning of what these young sailors affectionately call "the bake sale".

Bernice Delbridge passes out cookies while her husband Frank carries the patio table across the yard. "I baked these kids some cookies and Frank put up a table with coffee and water on it," she says. "Then I made a few phone calls and before long we needed a bigger table!"

As the day progresses, more and more items show up on the table. A second table is added and eventually a third. Throughout the day local residents walk down the lane and add their warm brownies or date squares to the table.

The soldiers working alongside the sailors also love the bake sale. "These people are so nice," says Ordinary Seaman Katie Champion of Charlottetown. "We have an ongoing rivalry with the army as to who gets to adopt these people when this is all over."

Every day the people of this tiny community continue to show their appreciation. Coffee, tea

and juice are always available. A barbeque is brought out from the back yard and 10-year-old Noah Parson cooks hot dogs for his new friends. "We've really come to know these kids," says Mr. Delbridge. "We're going to miss seeing them every day."

This isn't an isolated incident. Just four kilometres up the road another group of soldiers and sailors are sandbagging a dike that borders the Ross home. This family opens their home and offers their bathroom facilities to the 40 people working there. When they go into town, they leave their home unlocked. They return a short while later with a massive amount of donuts and coffees. The sailors had moved down the dike to another weak spot inaccessible to vehicles. Undeterred, the three ladies load everything into a wheelbarrow and together they push it down the dike to the amazement and appreciation of its recipients.

Over 120 naval reservists from 21 Naval Reserve Divisions came to build walls with sandbags, but they also built bridges with the local community. These bridges will last forever. Standing on the front lawn, Mr. Delbridge shakes his head and says, "They're all so young and they work so hard. They have no idea what this means to us. We could have lost everything."

**"They're all so young and they work so hard. They have no idea what this means to us. We could have lost everything."**



*Frank and Bernice Delbridge (second and third from left) created "the bake sale" on the front lawn of their Poplar Point, Man., home.*



## Rear-Admiral Paul Maddison named Chief of the Maritime Staff

**R**ear-Admiral Paul Maddison has been named as the new Chief of the Maritime Staff, replacing Vice-Admiral Dean McFadden, who will be retiring.

RAdm Maddison, who will be promoted to vice-admiral, is expected to step into his new position this summer. He is currently Assistant Chief of the Maritime Staff. Prior to that, he was commander of Joint Task Force Atlantic and Maritime Forces Atlantic.

RAdm Maddison enrolled in 1975, graduated from Collège Militaire Royal de St-Jean in 1980, and proceeded to sea. His extensive sea-time has been equally divided between Canada's Atlantic and Pacific fleets. He earned his bridge watch-keeping certificate on the west coast in HMCS *Terra Nova* (1982) and specialized in above-water warfare before broadening his experience as Combat Officer onboard HMCS *Skeena* in Halifax (1988). Subsequent sea-going appointments included Staff Anti-Submarine Warfare Officer to NATO's Commander Standing Naval Forces Atlantic (1990); Staff Weapons Officer to Commander Canadian Task Group 302.3 deployed to the Persian Gulf in 1991; Combat Officer Sea Training Atlantic (1992); Executive Officer HMCS *Winnipeg* (1994); and Executive Officer Sea Training Pacific (1996).

RAdm Maddison's sea-going commands include the Pacific Fleet's HMCS *Calgary* 1997-1999, and the Atlantic Fleet's HMCS *Iroquois* 2002-2004. His time in *Iroquois* was marked by a deployment in 2003 as flagship to Commander Task Force 151, charged with prosecuting the international campaign against terrorism in the Arabian Sea and Persian Gulf. In 2006, he led the experimental Standing Contingency Force to sea, and conducted a joint and integrated tactical effects exercise aimed at exploring potential new littoral manoeuvre capabilities for the Canadian Forces.



RAdm Maddison's appointments ashore include aide-de-camp to the Governor General (1985); command of a joint and combined Space Control Centre crew in Colorado Springs, Colo. (2000); Director General Maritime Force Development (2005); and Assistant Chief Military Personnel (2007). RAdm Maddison was appointed Commander Joint Task Force Atlantic and Commander Maritime Forces Atlantic in May 2008.

A graduate of the Canadian Forces Command and Staff Course (1993), and the Advanced Military Studies Course (2004), RAdm Maddison assumed his current appointment as Deputy Commander Maritime Command/Assistant Chief of the Maritime Staff in August 2010.

### Check it out on-line!

Archived issues of the navy's  
original *Crowsnest* magazine, published from 1948-1965:  
<http://cold-war.muninn-project.org/crowsnest/>



## Baptism by fire for sailor working in Afghanistan

It was baptism by fire for a young naval communicator working at a forward operating base (FOB) in Afghanistan.

On May 12, 2009, after just one month in-theatre, Leading Seaman Kimberly MacLean (née Peterson) found herself in a situation she could never have anticipated when she joined the navy just a few years earlier. Nevertheless, her decisive and selfless actions that day, a long way from her usual sea-based duties, led to the Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS) Commendation announced recently.

LS MacLean served in Afghanistan from April to November 2009, working with a Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC) team as an information management clerk. Her broad spectrum of duties involved everything from data entry, to meeting with Afghans and gathering information about them. On that day in May, an incident occurred which would test the basic tactical combat casualty care skills she had learned on a two-week course prior to deploying.

LS MacLean was at work in an FOB when word came that a civilian bus loaded with Afghan civilians had run the gauntlet of an ambush nearby and rolled over. Other Afghans, witnessing the scene, began pulling people from the bus, loading them into vehicles and taking them to the FOB, where they knew there was a small hospital with expert medical care available. Afghan police contacted the base, and LS MacLean and two others had five minutes' notice before carloads of casualties began to arrive.

"We had to pull casualties from out of the cars and triage them," LS MacLean says. "It was very intense. We put the dead aside, and some of the Afghan army acted as stretcher bearers as we tried to get the injured into the hospital, which is enclosed inside the FOB."

Working with interpreters, LS MacLean immediately took charge of the situation, triaging over 20 casualties and staying with them until they received medical care. Many of them were seriously wounded. "You don't think about it, you just do it," she says. "If I thought about it, it would be overwhelming. So you just keep going."

The triage process was completed in about 20 minutes, but it was over three hours before the casualties were treated and then medevaced by three U.S. Blackhawk helicopters to either Afghan hospitals or Kandahar Air Field. By the time it was over LS MacLean was "exhausted", having endured temperatures up to 45C and hours covered in blood during the emotionally draining experience. "When it was over I could not get the blood from my arms in the small field sink," she remembers. "I had to get one of the guys to pour bottles of water over my arms to get them clean."

Overall, LS MacLean said everything went smoothly and that she was impressed by the calm attitude of everyone involved. "They just got on with it," she recalls. And while it was a bit difficult to put it all behind her, she says the ability to speak to her then-fiancée (they married in May 2010), deployed to Afghanistan at the same time, via secure phone as her "saving grace".

In March she received a phone call from the commander of Maritime Forces Atlantic, Rear-Admiral David Gardam, telling her she would be receiving a CDS Commendation for her efforts. "My first thought was 'why is the admiral calling me, did he have a wrong number?'," she laughs. "I was shocked and overwhelmed. It's nice to have recognition for the things you've done."

RAdm Gardam is quick to point out that LS MacLean is a fine example of the outstanding people serving in today's navy. "It's great to see that she has been acknowledged in this way for her actions in the high-stress environment of the Afghanistan mission," he says.

LS MacLean, currently an instructor at the Canadian Forces Naval Operations School in Halifax, will be promoted and posted to a ship this summer.



Photo: Cpl Mike Leslie



## Canadians pay tribute on Battle of the Atlantic Sunday



*Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia Mayann E. Francis takes the salute in front of the Sailor's Memorial in Point Pleasant Park, Halifax, during Battle of the Atlantic ceremonies May 1.*

Photo: MCpl Peter Reed



Photo: MCpl Serge Tremblay

*A group of Navy League cadets march past the National War Memorial in Ottawa on Battle of the Atlantic Sunday.*



*Veteran U.S. submariners lead CF members, the Naden Band and Royal Canadian Sea Cadets as they parade through the streets of downtown Victoria to commemorate the Battle of the Atlantic.*

Photo: Cpl Charles A. Stephen

Canadians attended ceremonies across the country Sunday, May 1 to mark the sacrifices made by those who fought on their behalf in the epic Battle of the Atlantic during the Second World War.

The Battle of the Atlantic, the fight for supremacy of the North Atlantic, was waged from 1939 until 1945 and pitted Allied naval and air forces against German U-boats, whose primary targets were the convoys of merchant ships carrying vital life-sustaining cargo from North America to Europe.

Much of the burden of fighting the Battle of the Atlantic fell to the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN). At the outbreak of war, the RCN was comprised of only six destroyers and a handful of smaller vessels. By the end of the war, the RCN was one of the largest navies in the world. The Battle of the Atlantic ended with V-E Day on May 8, 1945.



# HMCS *Sackville* on-station for Battle of the Atlantic ceremony

By Acting Sub-Lieutenant Blake Patterson

**H**MCS *Sackville*, Canada's Naval Memorial, continued its time-honoured service May 1 as part of this year's Battle of the Atlantic commemoration ceremony, held at the Sailors' Memorial in Point Pleasant Park, Halifax.

The last of 269 corvettes built and sailed by the Allies during the war, *Sackville* was cold moved to a position off shore from the Memorial to be ready for the start of the ceremony at six bells in the forenoon.

Commander (Retired) Wendall Brown, commanding officer of *Sackville*, said having the corvette positioned off shore is "a very, very significant" part of helping honour and remember those who died at sea during the Battle of the Atlantic.

War dead from battles on land often have graves and cemeteries to mark their final resting places – not so for those who died at sea in the cold waters of the North Atlantic.

"The Naval Memorial is the only grave marker for the 2,000 deceased personnel buried beneath the waves," said Cdr Brown. "The only sign of those lost at sea is the Naval Memorial, HMCS *Sackville*."

Commissioned in Saint John, N.B., in 1941, *Sackville* served in a number of roles before ending active service in the early 1980s. Her most memorable wartime engagement occurred in August 1942 in the North Atlantic when she engaged and damaged three U-boats in a 36-hour period.

Today, restored to her 1944 configuration thanks to the efforts of the volunteer Canadian Naval Memorial Trust, *Sackville* is an enduring symbol of Canada's key role in winning the Battle of the Atlantic and of the service and sacrifice of our sailors in times of peace, national catastrophe, international tension and war. In 1985, the Government of Canada designated *Sackville* as Canada's Naval Memorial.

About 200 people were taken onboard *Sackville* for the Battle of the Atlantic ceremony.



Photo: MCpl Peter Reed

*HMCS Sackville, far right, on-station for the Battle of the Atlantic ceremony at the Sailors' Memorial in Halifax May 1, was joined by a CH-124 Sea King from 12 Wing Shearwater, N.S., and a CP-140 Aurora long-range patrol aircraft from 14 Wing Greenwood, N.S.*

Cdr Brown said preparations for the annual cold move to Point Pleasant Park included embarking an additional 200 life jackets, ensuring tugs had sufficient life rafts, and having medics onboard. He added they also made sure to have sufficient hot drinks, biscuits and bowls of corn chowder ready to help warm guests coming in from the cold upper decks.

While the ceremony was conducted ashore at the Sailors' Memorial, the same ceremony, including the laying of wreaths, took place on board the ship.

After the ceremony, *Sackville* was taken further out to sea to conduct a committal service of the ashes of veterans who wished to have their ashes buried at sea. Each year, about 20 to 25 urns are committed as part of the ceremony. The ashes are not scattered, but are committed in their urns.

Cdr Brown said people come from all over the world to take part in the annual committal service, some from as far away as British Columbia, California and Australia.

**“The Naval Memorial is the only grave marker for the 2,000 deceased personnel buried beneath the waves. The only sign of those lost at sea is the Naval Memorial, HMCS *Sackville*.”**



# New submarine commander survives gruelling course

By Ben Green and Kyla Pawlyshyn

**P**erched on the corner of Lieutenant-Commander Paul Sutherland's desk in the submarine shore office in Esquimalt, B.C., is a plaque embossed with the phrase: "O God, thy sea is so great and my boat is so small."

That sentiment is fitting for the Canadian Navy's newest submarine captain. Recently, he took command of HMCS *Corner Brook* from LCdr Alex Kooiman, becoming the 53rd submarine commanding officer in Canada's naval history. He earned that post after recently completing the Norwegian Navy's gruelling Perisher Course, or Submarine Command Course.

"I'm chomping at the bit to sail by myself," he says. "I just want to go out and be a CO [commanding officer] and drive a submarine."

Three decades of service have led him to *Corner Brook's* bridge. Having joined the Regular Force from the Naval Reserves in 1991, he trained as an above-water sensor weapons officer before making the dive to submariner in 1999.

For the next decade he worked in submarines on either coast, eventually progressing to executive officer. To achieve the ultimate posting as commanding officer, the only command-qualified position on submarines, he had to complete the Perisher course, an emotionally and physically intensive course designed to bend, and at times break, prospective submarine captains.

"It's called Perisher for a reason. Guys go to Perisher and perish all the time," says LCdr Sutherland.

The failure rate of the Norwegian Perisher is 60 per cent; last year no one passed.

On Jan. 1, LCdr Sutherland was in Bergen, Norway, with four Norwegians and one other Canadian, all facing 14 weeks of intensive training and testing. The course has two sections, a safety phase and a tactical phase. Students spent the first five weeks in dry land trainers before departing for two weeks at sea in an Ula-class submarine provided by the Norwegians. LCdr Sutherland describes them as much smaller than Canada's Victoria-class, built for the small coastal fjords surrounding the Scandinavian nation.

The submarine maintained periscope depth as the students worked on attacking and evading manoeuvres. At the end of two weeks, they were back in the classroom, followed by another two weeks of inshore operations. This time they worked with special forces,



Photo: Ben Green

*Lieutenant-Commander Paul Sutherland*

gathered information/intelligence, and practised pick up and drop offs, all the while trying to evade detection from the Norwegian Coast Guard and navy.

Stress and sleepless nights were common to all the students. "If you're going to fail the course it's because you're unsafe at something," he says. "You don't have to be a tactical guru, but if you're unsafe you're finished."

In the final three weeks, students joined Joint Warrior, a tactical exercise off the coast of Scotland, where they implemented their knowledge.

On April 17, three-and-a-half months after they started, four of the six students were captains – the other two had been released along the way. The graduates were treated to a tradition in the submariner community, a Perisher breakfast with submarine senior staff from around the world.

"I had this grin on my face; it was pretty much there all weekend," recalls LCdr Sutherland. "They said 'you're by yourself now, you've earned that right, be safe and look after yourself'."

The relationships forged over the gruelling months in Norway will be lasting he adds.

"I have some really good friends in the Norwegian Navy now. I can pick up the phone and call anytime," he says. "They're friends I'm going to have for the rest of my life."



## Strengthening coordination between coalition forces

Maritime Forces Pacific hosted U.S. Navy and Coast Guard ships for Exercise Trident Fury 11, a large-scale military exercise held off the coast of Victoria May 2-13.

CF assets included HMC Ships *Nanaimo*, *Saskatoon*, *Winnipeg*, *Vancouver*, *Ottawa*, *Algonquin*, *Protecteur*, *Brandon*, *Whitehorse* and *Corner Brook*, along with Sea King helicopters and CF-18 fighter jets. The U.S. provided the guided-missile cruiser USS *Lake Erie*, mine countermeasures ship USS *Warrior*, U.S. Coast Guard Cutter *Orcas* and MH-53 Sea Dragon minesweeping helicopters.

Trident Fury included such activities as boarding exercises, ship-to-ship and ship-to-air firing exercises, counter-submarine exercises, hailing exercises, mine countermeasures and more.

The exercise is aimed at advancing Canada's ability to respond to offshore threats and unlawful acts from within a coalition environment. While the exercise strengthens the communication and coordination of coalition forces, it also helps Canadian sailors maintain the skills required to work in a task group environment during international operations.



*Top left: Commodore Peter Ellis, Commander Canadian Fleet Pacific, stands with Rear-Admiral Doug Asbjornsen, U.S. Navy Reserve Deputy Commander Naval Mine and Anti-Submarine Warfare Command. Bottom left: Commander Dowker, Commanding Officer of HMCS Winnipeg, gives a briefing on rules of engagement. Top right: Corporal Joanne David, boarding party team member, waits for orders. Background: Crew from HMCS Ottawa set off during a mock first aid exercise. Photos: MCpl Chris Ward*



# So you want to be a bosun?

By Shelley Lipke

**N**avy life is tough – long hours, sleepless nights and an ever-developing work environment. But there's one trade in particular that leads the blue-collar attitude of our serving men and women. Whether it's battling the violent ocean spray on deck or catapulting through it during a man-overboard, boatswains [also known as "bosuns"] have perhaps the most physically demanding and broadest ranging job of all. So the question is – do you have what it takes?

Training for these non-commissioned sailors starts right after basic training at Canadian Forces Fleet School. Petty Officer 2nd Class Ian Biller, a bosun trade instructor, reflects on his evolving career choice 11 years ago and the day that changed his life. "I was driven to the small boats, small arms and all the demolitions," he says.

Back in 2000, a day sail with his sonar operator brother-in-law set him up with a viewing platform unlike any other he'd witnessed. As a civilian guest aboard the frigate HMCS *Vancouver*, he watched with wide-eyed amusement as the bosuns worked on deck through a variety of evolutions.

"It was different, disorienting, and like being in a maze on board the ship," he says. "It was during a maritime security patrol. I was surprised most by how different life was on a ship, from the sea watches, to how people worked, to the ship going through rescues, launching boats, fire exercises, and general shipboard life. It was weird but very interesting at the same time. I got a feel for the sea watches and the job that the bosuns were doing."

Hooked, PO2 Biller visited the Victoria-based recruiting centre and signed up for bosun life. After basic training, his three-month trade training was hands on. "There were 12 of us on my course and we had a lot of fun, especially the demolitions phase. Handling the C4 and seeing the end result of something going boom and how loud and how powerful it is was so exciting."

While some of the training consisted of indoor lectures, the majority of it encouraged hard work and elbow grease. "If you like physical outdoor work and working with your hands, then become a bosun," he says.

His first posting was to the West Coast replenishment vessel HMCS *Protecteur*, something that caught him



Photo: Shelley Lipke

*Ordinary Seaman Anthony Berardi learns the ropes of tying a bowline knot from instructor Petty Officer 2nd Class Ian Biller during a training session for bosuns.*

slightly off guard. "The training we learned in school was all oriented to Canadian patrol frigates, and on board *Protecteur* it was very different," he says. "The layout was different. Everything was bigger and in the case of a RAS (replenishment-at-sea) we were supplying and not receiving. It really did change everything and took me between six months and a year to really get my bearings."

After sea trials and work-ups the ship sailed in 2002 to the Persian Gulf for Operation Apollo. Being a bosun and replenishing ships at sea involved battling 60C temperatures and being away from home for six months.

Following his tour in the Gulf, his next posting took him aboard HMCS *Vancouver*, a ship he was familiar with. PO2 Biller's favourite duties included operating the rigid-hulled inflatable boats, which he navigated through the small inlets and channels around the province while chaperoning photographers.

Interested in becoming a bosun? Visit [www.forces.ca](http://www.forces.ca)



"It was stunning scenery, especially in the Queen Charlotte's [now the Haida Gwaii Islands]," he says. "It was some of the nicest, but busiest sailing I've ever done."

Now, over a decade on, his career has come full circle as an instructor of his trade. Bringing with him a wealth of experience and industry understanding, PO2 Biller is giving his new recruits invaluable knowledge.

"Being a bosun is hard work," he says. "I think it's one of the most challenging trades. It revolves around being outdoors and working in rain or shine, sea state 10, dangerous evolutions such as RASs and rescues, and dropping the anchor. We see the really good stuff out there."

Like most careers, he explains that his line of work is not for the faint of heart. "It can be stressful too," he says. "During a RAS safety is paramount as the wires and lines are under an insane amount of tension. If the sea state is rough, hoses and lines swing all over the

place and you have to safely hook up different pieces of equipment such as the span wire. Our trade is so vast. We are seamanship experts and handle anything from coming alongside the jetty, to a RAS, to a towing operation and rescues at sea. Nearly everything we do is linked in some way to the other departments on the ship who help to make these things happen."

Weighing out the pros and cons, PO2 Biller wouldn't have it any other way – one day sail turned into a passion that will last for the rest of his life.

"I had never been around boats too much, and it still is one of my favourite things to do," he concludes. "I really enjoy the trade and think it's an exciting career. One of the best parts is being outside. You get to see the storms, inside passages, and the scenery as you enter ports. Plus, there is less chance to be seasick! As fun as it is, it's a tough trade, it's dangerous, the equipment is heavy and the hours are long. I find it a lot of fun."

## Centennial bell links the navy to Nova Scotia

By Virginia Beaton

**A**n engraved bell commemorating the Canadian Naval Centennial (CNC) now hangs in the lobby of Province House in Halifax.

Cast by the Lunenburg Foundry, and with a bell rope made by Chief Petty Officer 2nd Class Richard Meredith, the bell symbolizes the longstanding connection between the navy and the province of Nova Scotia, according to Premier Darrell Dexter.

"Last year, I was pleased to present the navy with a commemorative bell on behalf of Nova Scotians to recognize the commitment and dedication of 100 years of service and excellence," said Premier Dexter.

He made the presentation to Rear-Admiral Paul Maddison, at that time Commander Maritime Forces Atlantic, during Family Appreciation Day and the International Fleet Review in June 2010.

"I was proud to be part of that presentation," Premier Dexter, a former naval officer, said. "As the navy begins its second century of service, I am proud to unveil this bell in Province House as a way to mark the sacrifice of the men and women who have served and continue to serve in the Canadian Navy."

Premier Dexter was joined by Speaker of the Nova Scotia Legislative Assembly Gordie Gosse; Commodore Laurence Hickey, Commander Canadian Fleet Atlantic; Captain (Navy) Craig Walkington, former Maritime Forces Atlantic CNC coordinator;

Kevin Allen and David Allen, representing the Lunenburg Foundry; and members of the Legislative Assembly at an unveiling ceremony May 4.

"This is the last of the Canadian Naval Centennial events," said Cmdre Hickey. He added that many entities had been a part of making the naval centennial year a success, and that the Province of Nova Scotia had been one of them.

When the Legislature resumed its sitting that afternoon, Premier Dexter introduced Resolution #1065, which concluded: "Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House once again congratulate the Canadian Navy on its centennial, thank all of the sailors for their dedication and sacrifice over the past 100 years, and wish them well as we go forward into the next 100 years."

Premier Dexter requested waiver of notice and passage without debate, resulting in the unanimous passing of the motion.



Speaker of the Nova Scotia Legislative Assembly Gordie Gosse, left, and Premier of Nova Scotia Darrell Dexter, unveil the bell.

Photo: Pte Martin Roy

## Sailor takes the

# PLUNGE

**M**ost sailors don't take the plunge from 1,800 metres, yet that's just what Petty Officer 1st Class Tony Specht does nearly every day.

One of only a handful of navy personnel to ever perform with the SkyHawks, PO1 Specht, a marine engineering artificer by trade, is on loan from HMCS *Calgary* to the SkyHawks for the duration of the 2011 season.

A 20-year veteran of the CF, PO1 Specht started skydiving 17 years ago in college, but it wasn't until 2000 that he discovered the SkyHawks would accept applications from the navy. "There used to be a requirement for the applicant to have the army's basic parachutist qualification; however, that was changed to include civilian qualifications, which I have," he says. "My home unit was more than happy to let me come here and have the navy be represented on the team."

PO1 Specht will perform in about 30 shows over the course of the SkyHawks 40th anniversary season. He had to undergo training in three phases. Phase one was completed in Trenton at the CF Land Advanced Warfare Centre. This was two weeks of administration, parachute packing training, aircraft emergency training, physical fitness training and an introduction to public affairs. Phase two was the initial jump training, which is also two weeks in duration. "We fly to Perris Valley, Calif., where the CF has been sending the team for over 20 years," he explains. "Due to the timeline for training and the uncooperative Canadian weather we are unable to train at home. Our instructors are world-class and have been involved with training the team for over 20 years."

During phase two the basic facets of the parachuting skills performed during the SkyHawks' shows, called canopy relative work, are learned. "Most people see skydiving and parachuting as jumping out of a plane and falling for a while, then opening the parachute to land," he says. "Our shows are done from [1,800 metres] and we open our chutes immediately upon exiting the plane. We then join up in groups of two or three and make formations."

Once the initial phases are complete the team members are placed into the formations where their skill and size most complement each formation. "Phase three is where we learn the dazzling and daring moves we per-

form in our shows and perfect them over the next three weeks," says PO1 Specht. His formation is called "the drag". "We place ourselves in a stack of three, taking grips on the other's parachute lines. I'm on the bottom and when ready, I will deploy smoke and turn upside down. The jumper on top, the pilot, will drag the other two into position and drop us over the crowd. We then go into a down plane, where we are both facing the ground and falling at a much faster rate. At approximately [90-150 metres] we disengage and land in front of the audience who then go wild with excitement at the spectacle before them," he laughs.

PO1 Specht is thrilled to be part of the SkyHawks and is enjoying the change from life at sea. "Being in the navy and being a marine engineer the military has pretty much one thing in mind for your career: sailing," he says. "This was my opportunity to do something else, to change things up a bit. A lot of people I know have gone to Afghanistan, spent some time in foreign country on exchanges, or worked with some of the special forces of the CF. The SkyHawks are what I wanted to do."

PO1 Specht is looking forward to the SkyHawks 40th anniversary season and the chance to perform and meet the people who come to watch the shows. He will return to his ship when the season is over, but does have the option of applying for the SkyHawks again next year.

"That's another story," he says with a grin.

