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West African deployment a “once-in-a-lifetime” journey

By Darlene Blakeley

For the first time in many years the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) has deployed ships to West Africa, providing crew members with the rare opportunity to support joint training and foster relationships in the Gulf of Guinea region.

Her Majesty's Canadian Ships (HMCS) *Moncton* and *Summerside* left Halifax in mid-February and will return home in early May. Port visits by the two maritime coastal defence vessels during the deployment, dubbed Neptune Trident 17-01, aim to improve cooperation among participating nations in order to increase maritime safety and security in the area. They include the Canary Islands, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire.

“The officers and sailors of HMC Ships *Summerside* and *Moncton* will be exceptional ambassadors of Canada during this important work in West Africa,” says Rear-Admiral John Newton, Commander Maritime Forces Atlantic. “Neptune Trident is an extraordinary opportunity for the operational competencies of the RCN to be used in a capacity-building undertaking in an area of stated interest by the Government of Canada. Already, we have learned so much from the planning of this

deployment and through staff visits with African counterparts, and we look forward to building on the lessons learned from the deployment.”

Moncton and *Summerside* are engaging in activities ranging from defence diplomacy to force generation, as well as training exercises with allied navies and activities designed to build confidence with partner nations.

But the deployment also has a very human side to it.

For crew members, it is a unique

opportunity to not only practise their seagoing skills with allies, but to closely engage with the communities they will be visiting.

Each of the ship's commanding officers has special and deeply personal visions of what the deployment means to them.

An often forgotten relationship

Lieutenant-Commander Paul Smith, captain of HMCS *Summerside* and the first black person to command an RCN warship,



Sailors from HMCS *Summerside* take selfies with students at St. Joseph's Primary School in Freetown, Sierra Leone.

Photos: MCpl Pat Blanchard

is excited to visit local communities and build relationships by working at orphanages and hosting local government and community leaders onboard the ship.

A highlight for LCdr Smith was in Sierra Leone, where he was eager to draw attention to the often forgotten relationship between the country and Nova Scotia. Freetown, Sierra Leone's capital, was settled in 1792 by freed slaves known as the Nova Scotian settlers. Their influences, families and historical sites are still there today. He saw the "Cotton Tree", which was the first prayer location for the settlers, the Nova Scotian churches that still exist in Freetown, and the King Tom Cemetery.

"It's a Commonwealth graveyard that has three Canadian soldiers and two Canadian sailors buried there from the Second World War," says LCdr Smith. "It was an honour to present a wreath on behalf of Canada and the RCN."

Freetown was also influenced by escaped slaves from Jamaica called the Jamaican Maroons. "I'm Jamaican by birth and I live in Nova Scotia, so it was perfect," he says. "I was pleased to represent the black Canadian community and see the commonalities within the different

communities. Too often we focus on the differences."

LCdr Smith says he is "ecstatic" to be able to help represent the RCN on the deployment, not only from a personal perspective, but from a professional standpoint as well. "The RCN is a globally deployable force that works with international allies and partner navies to develop relationships, friendships and ultimately, trust," he says. "Western Africa is an area where we will

strengthen already established relationships, as well as learn what it is like to operate in its maritime environment."

A once-in-a-lifetime journey

As one of only a couple of current female commanders of an RCN vessel, LCdr Nicole Robichaud, captain of HMCS *Moncton*, is also "deeply honoured" to be leading her crew on this deployment.

"Being appointed commanding



Photo: MCpl Pat Blanchard

Lieutenant-Commander Paul Smith meets with veterans of the West-African Frontier Force at the King Tom Commonwealth Cemetery in Freetown, Sierra Leone.



Photo: Cpl Ryan Moulton

Warrant Officer Chad Couture from HMCS Summerside plays with children in Dakar.



Photo: MCpl Pat Blanchard

Leading Seaman Michael Gallant of HMCS Moncton reads a book to students at the Aberdeen Municipal School in Freetown, Sierra Leone.

officer of HMCS *Moncton* has been the highlight of my career,” she says. “Now to embark on this once-in-a-lifetime journey with an incredible crew, knowing that we are going to make a difference, is nothing but amazing.”

LCdr Robichaud is particularly interested in working with the area’s young women during the deployment.

“In Dakar, Sierra Leone and Liberia, I participated in round table discussions with local young women,” she explains. “In most locations, senior women leaders such as ambassadors and heads of women’s organizations chaired the meetings and participated in the discussions. The visit to Liberia follows Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s visit where he discussed female empowerment. To be able to meet, discuss and learn how women are overcoming adversity and promoting equal rights so that future generations of women can succeed is truly an honour. I have been fortunate throughout my career. If I can share my story and offer even a bit of inspiration to a young girl, I will be delighted.”

These discussions included organizations such as the

Adolescent Girls Network and STEM Women. The Adolescent Girls Network is a group of committed, local and international organizations that aim to develop programs that empower adolescent girls with health, social and cognitive assets, protect their human rights and elevate their status in their communities, in particular delaying age at marriage and childbearing. STEM is a platform for women in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math in Sierra Leone, seeking to increase the participation of women and improve education in these fields.

Moncton also worked extensively with CODE, Canada’s leading international development agency uniquely focused on advancing literacy and education. Crew members read to children and assisted in building and stocking a library in Freetown.

While deployed, *Summerside* and *Moncton*, along with a detachment of personnel from the Maritime Tactical Operations Group (MTOG), also participated in exercise Obangame Express 2017, an at-sea maritime training event led by U.S. Naval Forces Africa. MTOG worked with regional partners to support



Photo: MCpl Pat Blanchard

Sailors work with a member of Sierra Leone’s Joint Maritime Committee, Fisheries Inspection and Boarding Team, onboard HMCS Summerside.

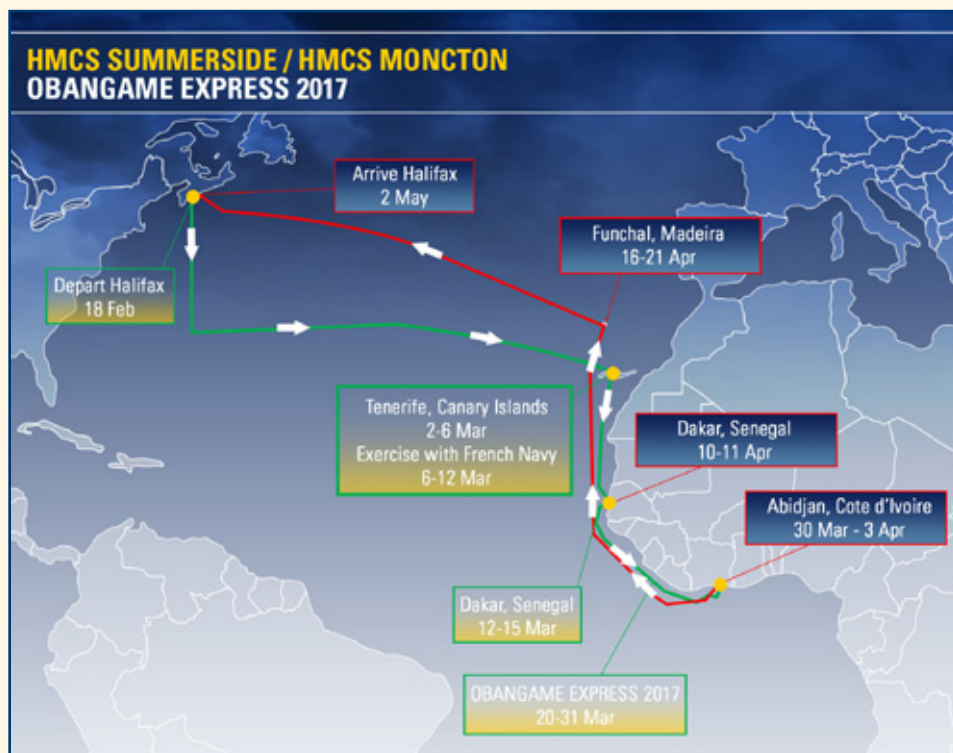
joint training for maritime interdiction which aims to delay, disrupt, or destroy criminal or enemy forces or supplies en route at sea.

Obangame, which means “togetherness”, comes from the Fang language of southern Cameroon and other parts of Central Africa.

The exercise took place in the Gulf of Guinea with signatory nations of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct and involved numerous African partners including Angola, Benin, Cameroon, Cote d’Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Congo, Cabo Verde, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Equatorial Guinea, Liberia, Morocco, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Sao Tome and Principe, and Togo.

The visit to West Africa has been a deployment like few others. Long after the business of navies working together has concluded, crew members will have lasting memories of the people: playing basketball with the children, assisting with literacy programs, empowering young women, showing visitors around the ships, hosting barbecues, planting trees and immersing themselves in a unique and all-encompassing culture.

A once-in-a-lifetime journey indeed.



New shipboard cooking technology healthier, safer – and it makes a **MEAN STEAK!**

By Darlene Blakeley

How about an oven that can flawlessly cook 64 eight-ounce New York striploin steaks, with perfect grill marks, all at once?

Two of these special, made-for-Canada combi-steam ovens will be installed in the galleys of Her Majesty's Canadian Ships (HMCS) *Calgary* and *Vancouver* by the end of this summer. Within three years, all 12 Halifax-class frigates and 12 Kingston-class maritime coastal defence vessels will have this revolutionary cooking system onboard.

In the Halifax-class vessels, both deep fat fryers, the charbroilers and a griddle are being replaced by two combi-steam ovens. In the Kingston-class ships, the deep fat fryer and grill will be replaced by one combi-steam oven and a portable dual induction cook top.

"These ovens use a combination of steam, hot air technology and an intelligent cooking system that senses, recognizes, thinks ahead and communicates with you. In turn, they deliver a higher quality product in a shorter period of time," says Lieutenant-Commander Deanna Wilson, a food services officer in charge of the project. "These changes are being made in an effort to modernize the delivery of food services onboard naval platforms and during naval operations. They will deliver food that is healthier and safer than the deep fat fryers and charbroilers. It's a very exciting project."

LCdr Wilson explains that these technologically advanced ovens have been in use since 1996 in the German Navy and are currently being used by eight navies around the world. Made by German-based



Photo: LCdr Deanna Wilson

A new combi-steam oven, similar to this one, will be installed onboard navy ships.

company Rational AG, the model purchased by the Royal Canadian Navy has been specifically designed for its ships.

"The Canadian model has additional safety features including a protective door with embedded stainless steel mesh to avoid glass shattering if struck during high seas, an adjustable door immobilizer, and a protection panel over the computer system to avoid breakage," she explains.

The combi-steam cooking method is considered more healthy as it eliminates deep fat frying and charbroiling, which is a known carcinogen, according to LCdr Wilson. "The beauty of this technology is that many food items can still be produced and made crispy through the use of heat as an energy source, and combining steam and temperature rather than submersion in high temperature fat to cook. As well, with the elimination of boiling fats, it

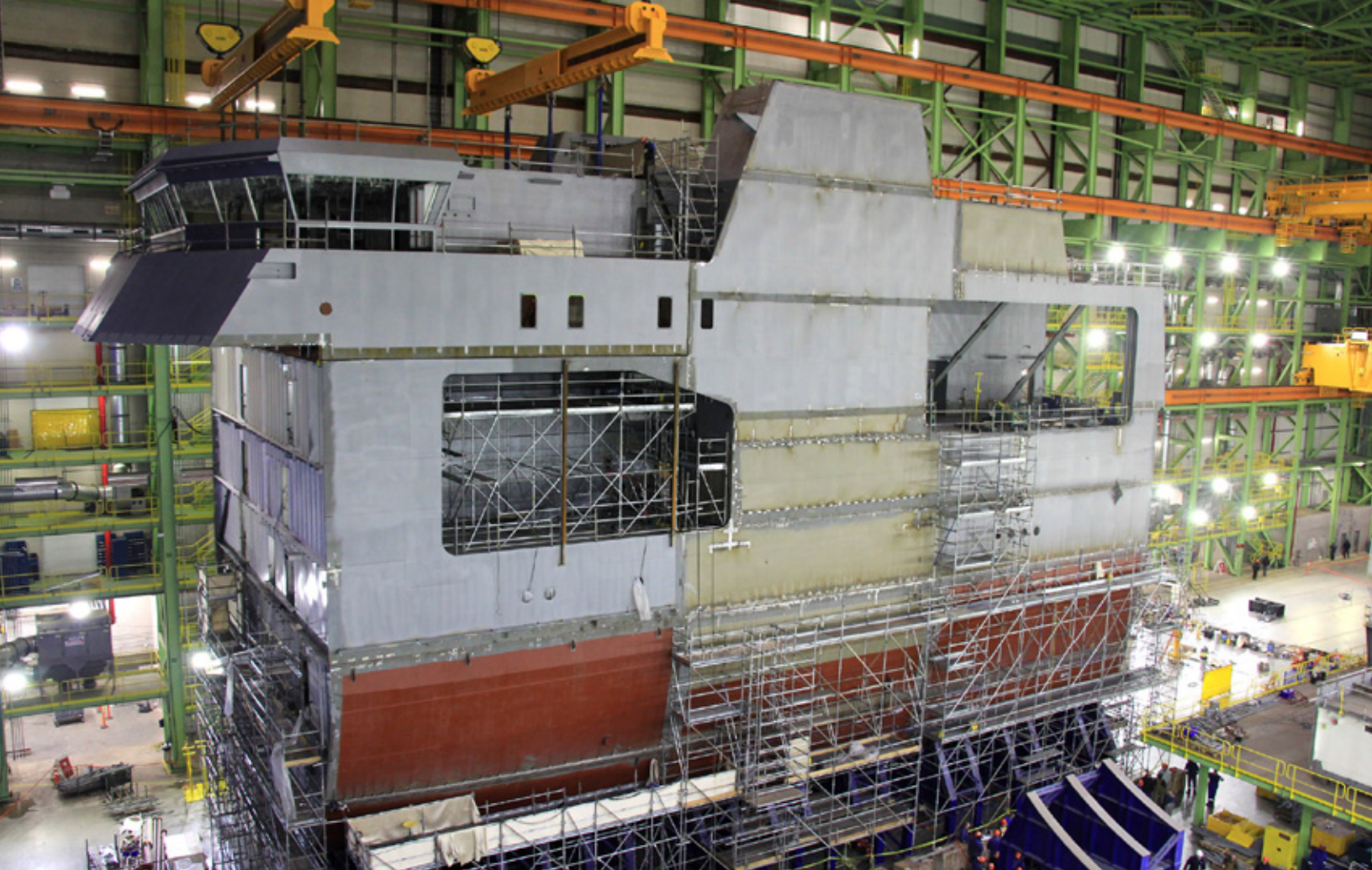
will eliminate the dangers associated with high temperature liquids and sea state during manoeuvres."

Navy cooks will be trained in how to program the ovens, and it is hoped that in the near future shore-based units and Naval Reserve Divisions will have the technology and training as well.

LCdr Wilson knows it may be a hard sell for those sailors who enjoy their deep-fried fish and chips. But she wants them to know that this state-of-the-art technology means they can get the same taste, crispiness and juiciness without the harmful fats.

"In testing, the steaks came out perfectly cooked every time, and stale croissants that were re-thermalyzed in the oven came out as fresh as they day they were made," she says.

The ovens also result in less food waste and are more energy efficient.



The centre mega-block of Harry DeWolf under construction at Halifax Shipyard. The bridge can be seen in the upper left corner.

New AOPVs progressing at shipyard

By Darlene Blakeley

Three mega-block pieces of the Royal Canadian Navy's newest ship are currently being assembled in the Halifax Shipyard.

Irving Shipbuilding is using a progressive build approach to construct the new Arctic and Offshore Patrol Vessels (AOPVs). Over the course of time, 63 smaller units become 21 larger blocks, which then become three mega-blocks.

The Arctic and Offshore Patrol Ship project will deliver six ice-capable ships, designated as the Harry DeWolf Class, after Canadian wartime naval hero Vice-Admiral Harry DeWolf.

"The Arctic and Offshore Patrol Ship program at the Halifax Shipyard is moving along very well," says Sean Lewis, Director of Communications for Irving. "We currently have the first two AOPVs, the future HMCS *Harry DeWolf* and the future HMCS *Margaret Brooke*, under construction."

Steel was first cut on *Harry DeWolf* in September 2015. Its centre mega-block is now fully erected, and the bow and stern mega-blocks are in full production. This summer, the centre and stern mega-blocks will be moved outside to land level at the Halifax Shipyard for joining and further outfitting.

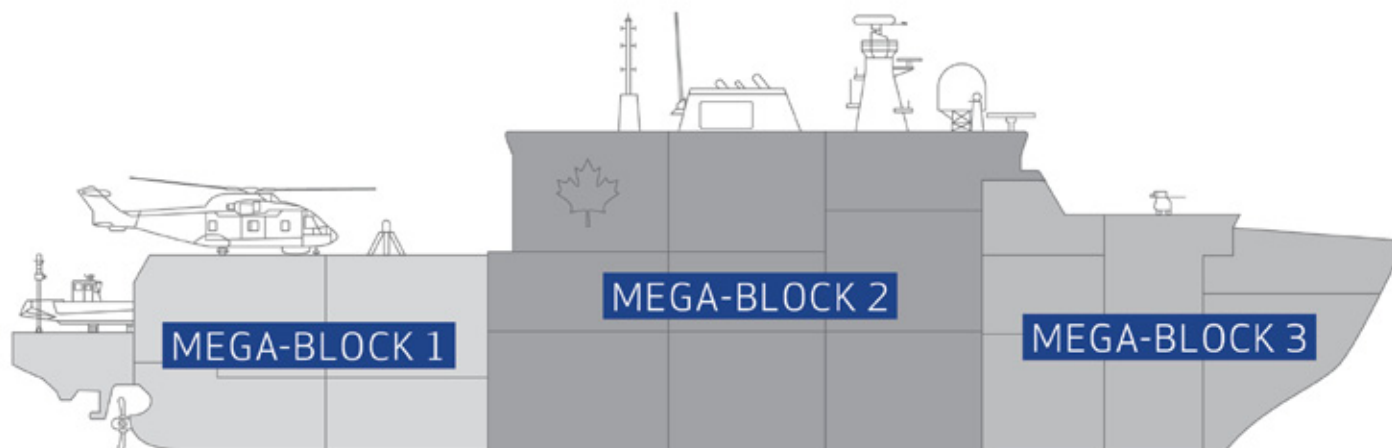
Steel was cut on *Margaret Brooke* in August 2016 and construction began shortly thereafter.

"As expected, production efficiencies are already being realized on the second AOPV compared to the first," says Mr. Lewis. "This will continue ship over ship as our workforce and suppliers become more experienced at building this class of ship."

Construction of the third AOPV, *Max Bernays*, will begin later this year.

The new AOPVs will be capable of armed sea-borne surveillance of Canada's waters, including the Arctic; providing government situational awareness of activities and events in these regions; and cooperating with partners in the Canadian Armed Forces and other government departments to assert and enforce Canadian sovereignty, when and where necessary.

Mega-block arrangement



Above: Mega-block 1 of Harry DeWolf. Right: A mega-block can be seen in the doorway of Halifax Shipyard. Below: A view of the bridge of Harry DeWolf under construction.



Photos courtesy of Irving Shipbuilding

RCN occupations restructured to better support future fleet

By Darlene Blakeley

Occupations within the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) are currently being restructured to better prepare for future ships as the navy begins the largest peacetime fleet recapitalization of its modern history.

The National Shipbuilding Strategy will see the introduction of three new classes of ship to the existing fleet of Kingston, Victoria and modernized Halifax-class platforms. In support of Commander RCN's intent and guidance, this new RCN will require modernized and flexible naval occupations. As a result, a realignment of non-commissioned member (NCM) occupations to prepare for manning future fleet platforms needed to be undertaken.

Prior to this realignment, the Combat Systems Technician Occupational Analysis (OA) study commenced in the fall of 2003 and was conducted in conjunction with a broader study looking at the implementation of career fields in the RCN. The study looked to create a new occupation that grouped five legacy occupations together: Naval Weapons Technician; Naval Electronics Technician - Acoustic; Naval Electronics Technician - Communications; Naval Electronics Technician - Tactical; and Naval Electronics Technician - Manager.

This resulted in the creation of the Weapons Engineering Technician occupation that stood up September 1, 2011.

The next OA restructured the Marine System Engineering occupations of Marine Engineer and Electrician Technician, beginning in the fall of 2014, with Marine Engineering Systems Operator joining the study in January 2015 and Hull Technician in September of that same year.

"The purpose of the OA was to develop an occupational structure that is best able to support Commander RCN's priorities of ensuring excellence in operations at sea; enabling the transition to the future fleet; evolving the 'business of our business'; and energizing the institution," explains Commander Luc Tremblay, Director Naval Personnel and Training 3.

As part of the OA, the legacy occupations were reviewed to determine the tasks they performed and evaluate commonalities.

"Based on common tasks several options for restructuring were developed and presented for decision," says Cdr Tremblay. "In the end, the option for a common occupation called Marine Technician (Mar Tech), with Electrician and Mechanical Specialist sub-occupations, was chosen."

The OA then developed the requirements for the new occupation including job descriptions, employment

A Weapons Engineering Technician works on a frigate's close-in weapons system.

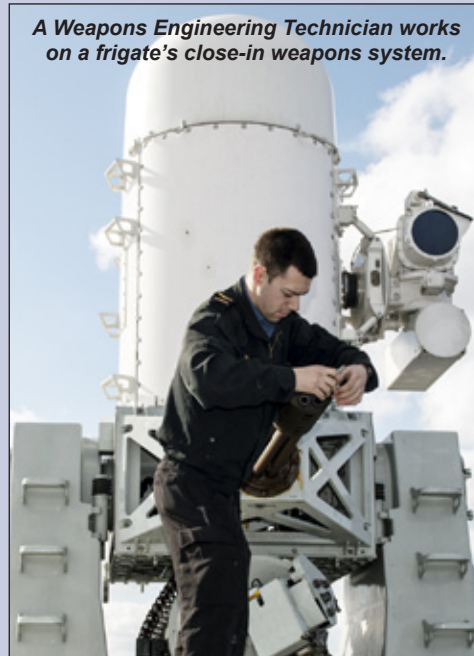


Photo: LS Olge Henry

structure and applicable establishment changes, which form the basis of the Military Employment Structure Implementation Plan.

"The new Mar Tech occupation is expected to stand up on May 1, with all occupations transferring into the new structure. The Reserve component is expected to follow in the coming months once all the Reserve positions have been determined to complete their establishment," says Cdr Tremblay. "The Directorate of Naval Personnel and Training will drive implementation to ensure that the new trade is properly managed and trained, and has competent personnel to support operations."

Naval Reserve component

The development of the Naval Reserve component had originally been delayed with the Reserve establishment review happening concurrently. When the basic framework of the Reserve component of Mar Tech was complete, the details of the final structure were developed during a week-long working group held at Naval Reserve Headquarters in July 2016.

The results were approved by Deputy Commander RCN in October 2016 as a single occupation that mirrors the Mechanical sub-occupation and supports the Naval Reserve mission, in a strategic augmentation role, of force generating trained engineers who can be employed at sea and ashore in a wide range of missions. Employment for Reserve Mar Techs will focus on



A Marine Systems Engineer works at the lathe aboard HMCS Charlottetown.

Photo: Cpl Blaine Sewell

support to Naval Security Teams, Maritime Tactical Operations Group (small boats) and Orca-class patrol vessels.

Multi-disciplined approach

Cdr Tremblay says that under the new structure, sailors will require a multi-disciplined approach in order to manage the complex technologies and leaner crewing models proposed for the future fleet. The multi-disciplined Mar Tech will support the fleet with competencies closely aligned with those of the International Maritime Organization (IMO).

“Large commercial vessels have operated for years with minimal crewing as compared to RCN ships, and the Mar Tech trade has been designed with the applicable IMO guidelines for competency in manning our current and future fleet,” explains Cdr Tremblay. “As we are a naval organization that operates in the marine environment, the Mar Tech will also require specialized training in order to support both internal and external battles, requirements that do not exist in the civilian world.”

Trades training will change from a comprehensive process, one course teaches all, to a modularized one. Naval Training Development Centre Pacific will identify and develop both Mar Tech delta training (that which has not yet been completed as part of legacy training) and steady-state training for the legacy occupations. The modularized Mar Tech training plan will prevent duplication of training and allow for the more efficient and timely training of new personnel. A methodology has been developed that will assist in identifying delta training requirements and rationalize them to ensure the safety of equipment, the vessel, or personnel are not compromised.

Occupation and career managers are working to ensure that promotions will continue in order to meet RCN needs and are conducted in the usual fair and transparent manner. Legacy career progression will continue in the individual's respective occupation for 2017/2018. The following year, Mar Tech career managers will produce a matrix to ensure no legacy occupations are at a disadvantage to one



another for career progression, and to ensure seniority is carried over in an equal and fair manner. This matrix will be maintained and adjusted as necessary to ensure fairness until all of the legacy occupations have been fully integrated into Mar Tech.

Proud legacy occupations

Cdr Tremblay admits there has been some apprehension and concerns from those affected. “The members of the proud legacy occupations made it abundantly clear in their feedback that they were worried about a loss of specialization as a result of the new occupation, and where they would fit into the new paradigm,” he says. “After numerous town halls and information sessions, these sailors are starting to see the benefits of the alignment with civilian standards, and that at a base level, they will become a more rounded maintainer with a general knowledge in electrical, mechanical and hull systems, much like that in the civilian marine industry.”

Once sailors specialize in one of the two sub-occupations, they will be able to carry out most repairs individually, without having to call on the expertise of another trade discipline, as was done in the past, making them more efficient at their jobs. For example, a Leading Seaman in the Mechanical or Electrical stream will no longer need to rely on a legacy occupation to

remove wires before removing a pump – one person will do that regardless of the sub-occupation.

“The end result will be a new occupation that retains the skills and knowledge of the legacy occupations, but aligns closer to Transport Canada and IMO competencies in order to produce those efficiencies and individual skill sets that will be required in the future fleet,” explains Cdr Tremblay.

The comprehensive examination of the RCN NCM occupations continues with the envisioned Deck Operations occupation structure that has commenced on the heels of Mar Tech, and will allow for efficiencies to be realized by aligning the Steward and Boatswain occupations, and some additional tasks from Naval Communicator.

The next OA will begin later this year, examining the feasibility of creating a new Combat Operations occupation, encompassing the current Naval Combat Operator, Naval Electronic Sensor Operator and Sonar Operator occupations, and potentially elements of Naval Communicator.

While the comprehensive examination has been focused on non-commissioned occupations, at this time no direction has been given to examine officer occupations.

With files from Chief Petty Officer 2nd Class Shaun Perry

A Victoria resident waves the national flags of Canada and China as he stands in front of Chinese missile frigate Yancheng during a goodwill visit by China's People's Liberation Army Navy.

Over the horizon: The Royal Canadian Navy looks west

Photo: Peter Mallett

By Ashley Milburn

As shoppers bustled through the streets of Victoria, B.C., last December, they would have seen the lyrics of one of the season's carols come to life: three ships come sailing in. More specifically, they would have seen two frigates and a replenishment ship from China's People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN).

To some, the image of Chinese navy ships set against the backdrop of Victoria's waterfront may have been an unusual sight. However, for navies, regardless of the season, visiting overseas ports and hosting foreign counterparts at home is part of their core business.

While navies are designed, equipped and mandated to defend against external threats, in peacetime, they also serve as a powerful instrument of foreign policy. Indeed, every time the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) engages with its international partners, it is building and strengthening cooperation, goodwill and trust – all critical elements in ensuring the security and prosperity of Canadians

at home and abroad.

This is the very essence of naval diplomacy. Unlike any other defence platform, naval ships are uniquely positioned to be able to deploy almost anywhere in the world, telegraph national resolve and serve as a platform for engagement. To that end, RCN ships cross, quite literally, every single line of longitude while also ranging from the Arctic Circle to the equator in support of Government of Canada values and objectives.

Increasingly, those objectives are linked to the Indo-Asia Pacific, a chiefly maritime theatre at the heart of the global economy.

As author Rose George highlights in her book, *Ninety Percent of Everything*, there is an "invisible industry" of 100,000 container ships that puts clothes on our backs, gas in our cars, and food on our plates. For the last three decades, Asia has been at the centre of that phenomenon and continues to set the pace: the region accounts for two-thirds of the world's gross domestic product, 40 percent of global production, and hosts nine of the top 10 busiest

ports in the world.

As Canadians look increasingly to the maritime realm for our collective prosperity, both in terms of economic well-being and sovereignty, it is the navy's modus operandi to defend the global system at sea and from the sea.

While Canada's economic and trade links to Asia are a driving force behind national interest in the region, there are signals from players in Asia that Canada needs to be a more engaged security partner. This, of course, is an important element of international relations, but not without challenges. Simply put, the Indo-Asia Pacific is a unique theatre.

Spanning from India to the small island states of Oceania, the region is home to more than 60 per cent of the global population, hundreds of different languages, a variety of political systems, and complex histories amongst the region's centuries-long civilizations and various sub-regions.

Such characteristics, paired with the sheer distance from Canadian shores to Asian cities, can

be overwhelming and even seem to justify the argument to pull back. However, where there are challenges, there are opportunities, and that is the very reason why Canada is leaning forward with its Indo-Asia Pacific partners in a real and meaningful way.

This is where the RCN, and specifically the Pacific Fleet based in Esquimalt, B.C., can, and is, playing a very real role. Building on the PLAN visit to Victoria, the Esquimalt-based frigate *Her Majesty's Canadian Ship (HMCS) Ottawa* will visit Shanghai this summer. The reciprocal goodwill visit to China is part of a larger RCN deployment to the Indo-Asia Pacific in 2017: over the course of five months, two frigates – *HMCS Ottawa* and *HMCS Winnipeg* – through separate and combined port visits, will visit eight countries including China, India, Japan, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, South Korea and Sri Lanka.

While deployed, the ships will also conduct valuable training exercises with regional partners and allies which will further the RCN's contribution to the pursuit of good order at sea and prepare Canadian sailors to be able to respond to any Government of Canada requirement that may arise.

This is the very foundation of the RCN's ability to maximize the operational and strategic use of RCN



Photo: Peter Mallett

Rear-Admiral Art McDonald, Commander Maritime Forces Pacific, greets Chinese fleet commander Rear-Admiral Huang Xinjian during a welcome ceremony in Victoria.

assets away from home. The success of this ability was demonstrated by *HMCS Vancouver's* engagement in the region in 2016, which saw it complete numerous planned diplomatic and operational engagements, as well as provide assistance to New Zealand following a 7.8 magnitude earthquake off its southern island.

This highlights and reinforces the unparalleled value of having a capable, adaptable RCN platform in a region as dynamic as the Indo-Asia Pacific. The navy's enduring role in defending the global system at sea and from the sea begins by deploying forward and strengthening

partnerships.

As the RCN's recently published strategic outlook, *Leadmark 2050*, notes, "Every warship deployment and port-of-call is laden with symbolic and diplomatic meaning. A warship alongside provides an impressive and 'up close' example of national 'hard power' competence, while the actions of the crew...provides stirring examples of 'soft power' in action. Canadian [diplomatic] missions overseas almost unfailingly report...that a warship visit has materially advanced and reinforced national policy goals through the goodwill that our sailors generate."

As Canadian citizens see their navy sail over the horizon, it is important to realize the spectrum of capability that RCN ships and sailors represent. They are warriors, peace-keepers and diplomats; and most importantly, they are Canadians. Their sustained and meaningful presence in a region as dynamic as the Indo-Asia Pacific allows the RCN to contribute to the message that Canada is an internationally engaged partner, as well as demonstrate Canada's commitment to a region that directly impacts the security and prosperity of Canadians from coast, to coast, to coast.

HMCS Ottawa departs Esquimalt, B.C., on its deployment to the Indo-Asia Pacific.



Photo: LS David Garlepy

A final note



Photo: Peter Mallett

RCN musician's career spans four decades

By Peter Mallett

After 41 years of hitting all the right notes, Maritime Forces Pacific's Naden Band musician Petty Officer 2nd Class Michael Savich has packed up his tuba and called it a career.

The band's longest serving Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) member, who has also played bassoon, euphonium, bass guitar and Sousaphone in a career spanning four decades, says he really doesn't want to go. But on February 28 he turned 60, the mandatory retirement age for

military personnel.

"It really is very difficult for me to leave the band because I have had such a tremendous career. After four decades of playing music for 'Team Canada' I don't think any other career path could have made me happier," says PO2 Savich.

His current and former band mates are also be sorry to see him go.

"Mike has committed his life to the preservation and promotion of the Music Branch, and is also the greatest archivist the branch has ever seen," says former Naden Band Commanding Officer Captain Matthew

Clark. "I always relied on him to instill a sense of calm, and his natural ability to express proper concern to the chain of command is one of legend. Simply put, when he spoke, I listened."

PO2 Savich says his career allowed him to make a living at the thing he loves most – playing music and travelling Canada and the world. Career highlights include playing at Vimy Ridge six times, an outdoor mass at the Vatican for Pope John Paul II, the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics and Paralympics, the Calgary Stampede, and multiple appearances at the Royal Nova Scotia International Tattoo music festival and on Parliament Hill in Ottawa.

"It would be unfair to pick just one event as a career topper because there are just too many," he says. "Even the local events we play every year, we may have performed at the event 10 times but there is always something different at each time that makes it interesting."

A memorable performance

But if he had to pick one memorable performance he says his participation with the CAF Vimy Band in the 60th anniversary of the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) at Canadian Forces Base (CFB) Trenton, Ont., in 1984. It was a ceremony that involved over 1,200 military members marching in unison on the tarmac of the base's runway. It held special significance for PO2 Savich because his father, Sergeant (Retired) John Savich served in the RCAF during the Second World War.

His father met his mother Betty when they both sang in Ontario Hydro's choir in the early 1950s, and although both parents encouraged all five of their children to pursue their musical interests, it was his mother who kept up supporting and promoting his musical side.

"She deserves a lot of the credit," PO2 Savich says.

He joined his high school's band and shortly afterwards began his military musical career as a member of Royal Canadian Sea Cadet Corp *Illustrious* in Toronto.

"As a teen growing up in Toronto in the 1970s, being involved in music kept me on the straight and narrow," he says. "I simply loved listening and

playing all music from a wide range of genres, from country to rock to classical. With the cadets I was exposed to marching and concert band music for the first time and knew it was my calling. It was a no brainer for me."

He joined the CAF in 1976 and did basic training at CFB Cornwallis, N.S., before being posted to Canadian Forces Music School at CFB Esquimalt, B.C., later that year. It was a career that would see lengthy spells in all three element uniforms including the CAF Vimy Band in Kingston, Ont., the CFB Cornwallis Base Band, and the RCAF's Central Band based in Ottawa, along with two separate postings in Esquimalt.

It was his first spell at this base where he met his lifelong friend Petty Officer 1st Class (Retired) Andy Reljic. PO1 Reljic, who himself enjoyed a 42-year musical career, was PO2 Savich's bassoon instructor for two years at the CAF School of Music. The two men formed a lifelong friendship with PO1 Reljic still marvelling at PO2 Savich's warm and friendly personality to this day.

"He has embraced his career with a playful, wide-eyed and unparalleled enthusiasm that is the essence of Mike," said PO 1 Reljic. "Generous to a fault, he is the kind of person that will always be there for you, and whatever job you give him to do he will take it on with pride."

But it wasn't just his musical skill that had PO1 Reljic and other band mates marvelling, it was his attention to detail and hard work ethic in the business side of the band that was also remarkable. PO1 Reljic credits

PO2 Savich with being the "de-facto historian" of the Naden Band, tirelessly documenting its history for both its 60th anniversary in 2000 and its 70th anniversary celebration.

"When we were putting together our 70th anniversary, we had piles of boxes of photos with no captions, information or dates," PO 1 Reljic recalls. "Mike just looked at me with this big Cheshire grin and said 'I love doing this stuff'. He has been such a big part of the band celebrating its history."

PO1 Reljic was among 90 former band mates who attended a special retirement dinner for PO2 Savich at the Chiefs' and Petty Officers' Mess in January. As testament to how well the guest of honour is liked, Capt Clark, now Commanding Officer of the RCAF Band, travelled from Winnipeg to celebrate the occasion.

The accolades for PO2 Savich also reverberated higher up the chain of command as two days later the Commander of Maritime Forces Pacific, Rear-Admiral Art McDonald, made a surprise visit to the band's headquarters. He dropped in on a practice session to show his appreciation to PO2 Savich for his long and distinguished service to the CAF by presenting him a Bravo Zulu Certificate and Commander's Coin.

A unique experience

RAdm McDonald also asked PO2 Savich if there was anything "unique" he would like to do as a member of the CAF before retiring.

"It immediately struck me: what could be a more unique navy experience than to visit a submarine, figuring it would be a tour," PO2 Savich

explains. "RAdm McDonald replied that he would see what he could do, and you can imagine my surprise when a month later I was told to prepare for a three-night sail in HMCS *Chicoutimi*."

He explains that when he was younger, he found the Apollo missions fascinating, and figured that by now people would be travelling into space on a regular basis. "Since that hasn't happened," he says, "the closest thing to space would be to travel under the sea, and somehow I got that opportunity. It was fantastic. To witness the crew in action and see them carry out their duties made me appreciate both their skill and their incredible teamwork. It reminded me in a way, of performing in an ensemble, listening to the other instruments and playing in harmony. As thrilling as the sail was however, I still wouldn't trade four decades of playing music with some of Canada's finest musicians for anything."

As he leaves the CAF behind, PO2 Savich says he is looking forward to spending "more quality time" with his wife Virginia and his four children Kendra, Grant, Mallory and Dean.

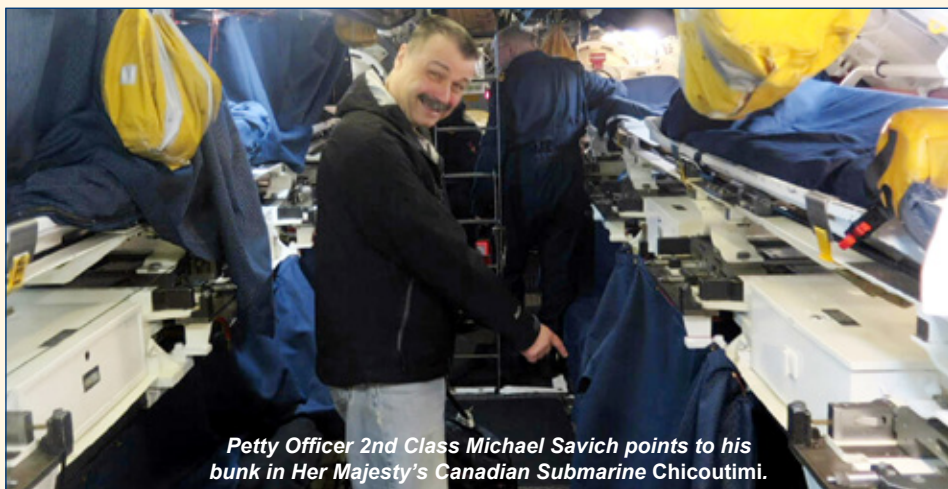
His retirement won't end his lifelong love affair with music though; he is now exploring possible roles with local cadet and community bands.

"I would like to become involved with the cadet program locally, as I was given such a terrific 41-year career in the CAF directly due to my initial beginning with Sea Cadets," he says.

He has also been assisting his son Dean as groundskeepers at the Veteran's Cemetery, God's Acre, in Esquimalt, where he performed in many Candlelight Ceremonies as a musician with the Naden Band.

"I've also been invited to play with some ensembles in Victoria and will have some maintenance to do in our recently purchased 1967 home in nearby Colwood, B.C. My wife and I will celebrate our 35th anniversary in September and we are fortunate to have all four of our children nearby. I am now a retired member of the Naden Band and am looking forward to its annual heritage days and 80th reunion in 2020."

With files from Darlene Blakeley



Petty Officer 2nd Class Michael Savich points to his bunk in Her Majesty's Canadian Submarine Chicoutimi.

Get rolling at the first ever Navy Bike Ride!

By Kylee Mackay

Cycling enthusiasts in the National Capital Region have a brand-new event to add to their calendar. The first annual Navy Bike Ride brings together Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) members, veterans, family and friends on Saturday, May 20 for a full day of activities as part of Canada's 150th birthday celebrations.

This fun family event is open to cyclists of all skill levels and all ages, with both a 10 km route and a 30 km route to choose from. It's a non-competitive ride that will take cyclists through Gatineau and downtown Ottawa, and right by Parliament Hill. The 30 km route offers a longer ride through the beauty of Gatineau Park. Bike trailers, child seats and trailer cycles are welcome so even the littlest members of the family can join in.

The Navy Bike Ride is organized in partnership with the Grand Prix Cycliste Gatineau, an annual event

that welcomes cyclists from around Canada for a series of competitive races throughout the weekend. A "Vélo-Village" featuring displays, games and activities for participants and families will also be located at the start/finish line. Bike rentals will be available onsite, but reservations must be made online in advance.

For more of a challenge, currently serving Canadian Armed Forces members can register for the Admiral's Cup, a new military-only category in the Grand Prix Cycliste Gatineau's Medio Fondo event on Sunday, May 21. This 69.3 kilometre race offers prizes to the top three male and top three female competitors in the military category, including two WestJet vouchers for first place, a \$500 Via Rail voucher for second, and sunglasses from Zizu Optics for third.

Proceeds from the event will go to two organizations dedicated to the well-being of the RCN's current and



former sailors and their families – the Royal Canadian Naval Benevolent Fund and Support our Troops.

Registration is \$40 for adults and youth aged 13 and over, and \$20 for children aged 12 and under who are riding their own bicycles. The event is free for kids in bike trailers, child seats or trailer cycles. Each adult registration receives a free custom cycling jersey, with bandanas for registered kids. Sign up before May 8 and automatically be entered into a draw for more exciting prizes.

If you're not in Canada's capital, other cycling events will be organized in tandem with the Navy Bike Ride by RCN personnel in naval bases and Naval Reserve Divisions across the country, as well as in ships at sea around the world.

Celebrate Canada's 150th birthday, promote physical fitness and raise awareness of the RCN, all while giving back to naval families in need.

**Register today
at navybikeride.ca.**



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For the online version of this publication and for more information about the Royal Canadian Navy, visit www.navy-marine.forces.gc.ca.

Cover page: Lieutenant-Commander Paul Smith hands out gifts to students in Freetown, Sierra Leone. Photo: MCpl Pat Blanchard

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