



WHAT DOES THE RCN DO?

If you have read Briefing Notes #1 and #2, you will know that Canada is a maritime country. And if you have Briefing Note #3, you will see how the work that the Royal Canadian Navy has done over the past year, as discussed here, illustrates the classic roles of a navy – undertaking constabulary, diplomatic and warfighting roles, the three elements of Booth’s Triangle.

In defence of Canada’s national interests, the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) deploys around the world on a diverse mission set across the spectrum, from defence and security to diplomacy and humanitarian assistance. This briefing note offers a categorized snapshot of some of the RCN’s major exercises and operations in 2018 to provide a glimpse at the kinds of missions the Canadian navy undertakes and the demanding deployment schedule the fleet manages on a regular basis.

Domestic Support

In August 2018, the RCN participated in *Operation Nanook*, a whole-of-government exercise designed to familiarize Canadian officers and sailors with northern conditions, improve cooperation between the armed forces and other government departments, and prepare for safety and security events in the rapidly changing Arctic.

During *Nanook*, HMCS *Charlottetown* and *Kingston* worked with the army, air force, coast guard and RCMP, as well as several other government departments and the northern territories to rehearse a government response to a major air disaster, visited a number of Arctic communities, transported Canadian Rangers to their patrol locations, and practiced gunnery with the Danish frigate HDMS *Vaederren* in the Labrador Sea.

Operation Nanook is an example of the important support that the RCN is ready to provide for other government departments and agencies, which rely on these ships to fulfill a wide variety of civilian safety and security mandates in areas like the far North.

Global Security

The most important mission of the RCN is the protection of Canada and the defence of its allies. To achieve this the RCN maintains combat vessels on both coasts ready to deploy on short notice. Regular overseas deployments serve to project Canadian sea power in support of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and to enhance regional stability.

Operation Reassurance is one of those recurring deployments, and the RCN has provided a frigate to the operation since 2014. This operation takes place in Central and Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean as part of NATO's program of deterrence, which was established after Russia's invasion/annexation of Ukraine in 2014. These measures aim to reinforce NATO's collective defence, show allied solidarity and deter aggression.

In July 2018, HMCS *Ville de Québec* sailed for the Mediterranean to relieve HMCS *St. John's*, which had been away from Canada for six months. While in the region, *Ville de Québec* exercised with Japanese and European warships, familiarizing crews with the others procedures and practicing interoperability. These exercises were valuable training but undertaken with an operational purpose, demonstrating capacity and presence in strategically important areas close to Russia and the Middle East. While deployed, the Canadian frigate also trialed the new Cyclone helicopter during that aircraft's first overseas deployment.

HMCS *Charlottetown* took part in *Operation Reassurance* from August to September 2017, with operations in the Baltic Sea, northern Atlantic and Mediterranean. While deployed, *Charlottetown* worked closely with 13 navies and visited 11 ports in seven countries, conducting an exercise in crisis response, monitoring traffic in the region, and keeping track of Russian naval forces off the coast of Syria.

Exercises with Allies

The defence of Canada is indelibly linked to the strength and unity of NATO and Canada's partnerships around the world. For that reason, the RCN regularly conducts joint exercises with its partners to enhance interoperability and improve communication. In 2018, Canada participated in a number of major multinational exercises around the world.

From April to May, HMCS *St. John's*, as part of Standing NATO Maritime Group One (SNMG1), participated in Exercise Joint Warrior 18 off the northwest coast of Scotland. In this exercise, HMCS *St. John's* joined over 40 other warships from Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, Turkey, the United States and the United Kingdom.

Exercise Joint Warrior 18 ran through a range of scenarios, including crisis and conflict situations that could be realistically encountered in operations – including disputed territory, terrorist activity, piracy, and more. The participation of *St. John's* in this exercise demonstrated Canada's solidarity with its allies in protecting the seaways and in promoting global peace and security.

The biennial Rim of the Pacific Exercise (RIMPAC) was held in the summer of 2018. Her Majesty's Canadian Ships *Vancouver*, *Ottawa*, *Yellowknife* and *Whitehorse* from the Pacific fleet, participated. This exercise, of which Canada is a founding member, is the biggest maritime exercise in the world, bringing together ships from allies and partner states from across the Pacific. Making its debut at RIMPAC this year was the RCN's newly leased supply ship Motor Vessel (MV) *Asterix*.

One of the main goals of RIMPAC is to foster and sustain those cooperative relationships which play a role in helping to ensure the safety and security of sea lanes and the world's interconnected oceans. The training program is vast: sailors, soldiers and aviators from all participating states hone their gunnery, missile, anti-submarine and air defence skills, as well as their abilities in amphibious, counter-piracy, mine clearance, explosive ordnance disposal, diving and salvage operations.

On the other side of the world, the RCN worked with partner navies from across Africa in a series of exercises. RCN observers and assessors cooperated with North African and other allied navies in Exercise Phoenix Express 2018, an exercise designed to develop standard procedures for maritime domain awareness, information sharing, and combined and joint maritime interdiction operations.

In January 2018, the RCN sent advisors to East Africa to participate in Exercise Cutlass Express. Its contribution included strategic engagements in Mozambique and Tanzania to promote maritime security capacity building at the Tanzania and Mozambique Maritime Operations Centres. In March, HMCS *Kingston* and *Summerside*, were in West Africa participating in Obangame Express 2018. This exercise is focused on improving cooperation among participating West African states and strengthening maritime interdiction operations to increase maritime safety and security in the Gulf of Guinea – an area in which increased illegal maritime activity has been occurring lately, garnering international attention. It was the RCN's first visit to Nigeria in half a century.

Part of these exercises includes the projection and promotion of Canadian values abroad. While in West Africa, the crews of HMCS *Kingston* and *Summerside* participated in seven events aimed at promoting gender inclusiveness and discussions on women working in non-traditional roles – a concept that's still uncommon in everyday life for the majority of West African women. From meeting with female influencers in Senegal or Cote d'Ivoire, to holding discussions with high school age girls in Liberia and Nigeria about their aspirations and dreams, male and female RCN members talked openly about their personal experiences of working with women and for women or being a woman in a non-traditional role.

Support for Law Enforcement

Assisting law enforcement in interdicting smugglers, terrorists and dangerous substances on the seas is an important navy role in support of broader national security objectives. One of the most important regions for interdiction is the Caribbean, where drugs from South America are smuggled into the United States and Canada.

In May 2018, HMCS *Edmonton* and *Whitehorse* returned to Esquimalt, British Columbia, having completed a successful deployment on *Operation Caribe*. In partnership with the US Coast Guard and American law enforcement agencies, these Canadian patrol ships seized and disrupted approximately 2,856 kg of cocaine. *Whitehorse* had one of the biggest busts of 2018, seizing approximately 1,520 kg in one haul on April 5.

The Canadian Armed Forces have been participating in *Operation Caribbe* since 2006 and, in that time, have contributed to the seizure of more than 83 tonnes of cocaine – roughly the weight of 41 African elephants.

A Versatile Force

This snapshot offers a quick look at some of the major deployments and tasks undertaken by the Royal Canadian Navy during a typical year. While far from a comprehensive account, the diverse set of missions and operational locales provide some insight into the flexibility and pace of Canadian naval operations.