

THE ROYAL CANADIAN NAVY & THE CANADIAN COAST GUARD



In defence of its maritime safety and security, as well as the broader national interest, Canada maintains two sea-going services – the Canadian Coast Guard (CCG) and the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN). These two services operate very different fleets and, while their tasks sometimes overlap, they are fundamentally different organizations with unique responsibilities, capabilities and mandates.

The Canadian Coast Guard is a civilian service which is under the jurisdiction of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO). Formed in 1962, it provides a diverse set of maritime services in Canadian waters. From environmental protection, maritime search and rescue, icebreaking, navigational assistance, fisheries patrols and support to law enforcement, the CCG not only has a broad mandate to fulfill but also the responsibility to support other federal departments in fulfilling their own.

In the Arctic the coast guard is the country's most visible presence, with two heavy and five medium icebreakers capable of operating across the Northwest Passage during the navigable season. In Canada's valuable fishing grounds, the CCG supports fisheries research in partnership with DFO while monitoring fishing activity to prevent illegal fishing. Unlike many other coast guards around the world, the CCG is not a military or law enforcement service, meaning that it does not have the mandate to enforce Canadian law. It does, however, support the agencies that do. In protecting Canadian fisheries, preventing trespassing and enforcing law and regulations in Canadian waters, it works with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and Canadian Fisheries Officers, and sometimes Canadian Border Services Agents, by providing platforms for these agencies to do their jobs.

The CCG also takes a lead role in monitoring Canada's maritime space. It manages vessel traffic and tracks ship movements, looking out for potential security threats. It provides vessel screening and feeds its intelligence into the Marine Security Operations Centres (MSOCs), which give the government's maritime and security services a holistic understanding of vessel movements and activity in Canadian waters. (See Briefing Note #19 about the MSOCs.)

The CCG is also responsible for safe navigation in Canada's waterways and maritime approaches. To this end, it sets and maintains aids to navigation – including buoys and lighthouses – that facilitate safe shipping operations along Canada's coasts and in its internal waters. It also works with the Canadian Hydrographic Service (which is also part of DFO) to map Canada's shipping lanes. In recent years, this task has taken added importance in the Arctic and the CCG has played a large role in charting waterways which remain largely unmapped.

In the event of a pollution incident in Canadian waters, the CCG is the lead agency to respond. It maintains teams of environmental response personnel and provides on-scene commanders to coordinate response (or a monitoring officer if the polluter is able to respond).¹

As we can see, the CCG is a civilian agency, operating unarmed vessels, tasked with internal safety and security missions. It assists shipping and supports other Canadian agencies in their maritime roles. In contrast, the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) is a military service, operating often heavily armed warships, tasked with local defence and overseas power projection.

Founded in 1910 as the Naval Service of Canada and given royal sanction on 29 August 1911, the RCN has been responsible for conducting military operations at sea during wartime, both in defence of the homeland and to project power abroad. In peacetime, the navy continues to train to fight wars, including many exercises with allies that enhance Canada's ability to work with other navies (what is referred to as interoperability). In peacetime the navy also conducts a myriad of duties unrelated to warfighting. For example, it provides humanitarian assistance, conducts port calls and provides support to Canada's civilian agencies, to name only a few such regular taskings.

Like the CCG, the navy has a mandate for domestic maritime security and, like the CCG, it undertakes that role by supporting those agencies responsible for law enforcement and regulatory compliance. An RCN vessel can carry fisheries and pollution prevention officers, RCMP, or even local law enforcement (and in some cases the RCN has worked with American law enforcement agents). Canadian warships also work alongside the CCG on sovereignty patrols and to rehearse a whole-of-government response to pollution, trespassing and a host of other such scenarios. The RCN and the CCG also cooperate in building the government's maritime situational awareness, sending information to the MSOC centres for analysis and dissemination back to CCG and RCN vessels.

Despite this overlap, the RCN's principal task and *raison d'être* remains defence and security, not safety. (The navy's purposes and missions are outlined in Briefing Notes #3 and #4.) Briefly, the primary mission of the RCN is to secure the maritime approaches to Canada and, in partnership with the United States, to North America as well.² The military nature of the service allows the navy to provide a level of defence and deterrence that the CCG cannot, and the navy tends to focus on state-based opponents, rather than criminals and trespassers.

Unlike the CCG, the RCN also has a global role. Because Canada faces no immediate defence threats in North America (with the possible exception of ballistic-missile submarines and other undersea state-based predators), and because it relies on a global alliance system for its security, the Canadian navy often deploys abroad. Regardless of where it goes, as noted above, it trains with allies and partners and provides a visible symbol of Canada's commitment to its allies and global security. A good example is the RCN's regular participation in *Operation Resolve* – a European deployment designed to demonstrate Canada's NATO commitment in the face of Russian aggression.

The RCN's overseas deployments are also intended to contribute to what RCN strategic doctrine describes as “maritime peace and good order.”³ Because Canada is a trading state, reliant on safe

and easy access to global sea lanes (see Briefing Note #1), the navy plays a role in ensuring the safety of those global commons. For example, the RCN participates in anti-piracy operations off Somalia and West Africa. Along these lines, the navy also trains with partner states to increase their capacity to respond more effectively to those local threats which might affect global trade and international shipping.

In recent years there have been several occasions when the application of military force was required to restore order to the global system. During the 2011 conflict in Libya, for instance, HMCS *Charlottetown* and *Vancouver* patrolled the Libyan coast during the 2011 NATO-led mission in Libya. During this deployment, *Charlottetown* even came under fire from Libyan shore artillery and fast attack boats.

The types of ships deployed by the CCG and the RCN are well adapted to their roles and responsibilities. The RCN fleet is comprised of combat ships – such as frigates and submarines – and patrol craft for domestic operations. The Coast Guard fleet is made up of icebreakers, science vessels, buoy tenders, survey ships and multi-tasked vessels well suited to the CCG's broad mandate. Both these services will be receiving new ships through the National Shipbuilding Strategy (NSS). Over the next decade, the CCG will receive three Offshore Fisheries Science Vessels, one Offshore Oceanographic Science Vessel, one polar icebreaker, and two Arctic Offshore Patrol Ships. The RCN will receive six Arctic Offshore Patrols Ships, two Joint Support Ships and up to 15 Canadian Surface Combatants. As well, in July 2019 the government announced that new icebreakers would be constructed for the CCG. These new ships will enhance the capabilities of both services.

Canada's two sea services have some obvious overlap in their mandate for domestic safety and security. They also cooperate on a regular basis towards common national security objectives. However, the two fleets were designed very differently for unique missions.

Notes

1. On this see Department of Fisheries and Oceans, "Canadian Coast Guard Environmental Response Marine Spills Contingency Plan," April 2011.
2. Royal Canadian Navy, *Leadmark: The Navy's Strategy for 2020* (Ottawa: Directorate of Maritime Strategy, 2001), p. iv.
3. *Ibid.*