



WHAT DOES THE RCN DO?¹

If you have read Briefing Notes #1 and #2, you will know that Canada is a maritime country. And if you have read Briefing Note #3, you will see how the work that the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) 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 RCN deploys around the world on a diverse mission set. This briefing note offers a snapshot of some of the RCN’s major exercises and operations in 2019 to provide a glimpse at the kinds of missions the Canadian navy undertakes and the demanding deployment schedule of the fleet.

Domestic Support

In 2019, the RCN participated in *Operation Nanook*, a whole-of-government series of exercises designed to familiarize Canadian Armed Forces personnel with northern conditions, improve cooperation between the armed forces and other government departments, and prepare for safety and security events in the Arctic. The operation has been redesigned and now consists of a series of operations, some of which involve the navy.

Unlike earlier years, in 2019 *Operation Nanook* was conducted in four parts:

- *Operation Nanook-Nunaliivut*: Northwest Territories, March 17-April 01, with a focus on winter operations in the North;
- *Operation Nanook-Tatigiit*: Yukon, May 27-June 07, with a main focus on wildfire evacuation training;
- *Operation Nanook-Nunakput*: Nunavut, August 11-30, with a focus on the Canadian presence in, and monitoring of the Northwest Passage; and
- *Operation Nanook-Tuugaalik*: Northwest Passage, August 9-September 13, with a focus by HMCS *Kingston* on the naval presence in and monitoring of the Northwest Passage.

Operation Nanook is an example of government and civilian agencies cooperating to prepare for emergencies that might happen in the North, and the support that the CAF/RCN is ready to provide to fulfill a wide variety of civilian safety and security mandates in areas like the far North.

¹ Sources for this Briefing Note are the Royal Canadian Navy website and its regular “Your Navy Today” newsletter.

Global Security and Working with Allies

The most important mission of the RCN is the protection of Canada. The defence of Canada is linked to the strength and unity of the North American Aerospace Defence (NORAD) Command, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and Canada's partnerships around the world. For that reason, the RCN regularly conducts joint exercises with its partners to enhance cooperation and improve communication. Regular overseas deployments with allies familiarize crews with other countries' procedures and provide an opportunity to practice working together and communicating smoothly – referred to as interoperability. These exercises are valuable training but are also undertaken to demonstrate capacity and presence in strategically important areas, project Canadian sea power in support of NATO and enhance regional stability.

In 2019, Canada participated in a number of major multinational exercises around the world. We'll just give a few examples here.

An example is *Operation Reassurance* one of the RCN's recurring deployments. Canada has provided a frigate since 2014. This operation takes place in Central and Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean as an element of NATO's program of deterrence established after Russia's annexation of Crimea from Ukraine in 2014. These measures aim to reinforce NATO's collective defence, show allied solidarity and deter aggression.

While embedded with Standing NATO Maritime Group 2 (SNMG 2), HMCS *Toronto* undertook a number of readiness activities. In March 2019, *Toronto* participated in Dynamic Manta 2019, an at-sea maritime engagement as part of the ship's deployment on *Operation Reassurance*. During Dynamic Manta, *Toronto* and allies from nine other states operated off the Sicilian coast to enhance interoperability and hone their anti-submarine skills in all three dimensions (air, surface and sub-surface). In April 2019 *Toronto* participated in Sea Shield 2019, an at-sea engagement in the Black Sea to enhance interoperability with allies and partners from the task group. Over 20 ships from Romania, Bulgaria, Canada, Greece, the Netherlands and Turkey worked with maritime patrol aircraft from the United States and Turkey to conduct scenarios designed to enhance readiness, and practice joint warfare techniques used against underwater, surface and airborne threats.

In the final months of 2019, HMCS *Halifax* served as the RCN ship in *Operation Reassurance*. In December, *Halifax* and crew conducted maritime security awareness patrols in support of *Operation Sea Guardian*. It should be noted that in June 2019, Commodore Josée Kurtz became the first woman to command a Standing NATO Maritime Group in NATO history. In December she completed her historic rotation as Commander of Standing NATO Maritime Group Two (SNMG2) and transferred command to Rear Admiral Paolo Fantoni of the Italian Marina Militare.

A second example comes from the West Coast of Canada. On 6 February 2019, HMCS *Regina*, accompanied by Naval Replenishment Unit (NRU) *Asterix*, departed from Esquimalt, BC, for a deployment to the Asia-Pacific and Middle East regions. The ships worked with partner navies to enhance military cooperation and partnerships particularly in the Asia-Pacific region.

In August 2019, HMCS *Ottawa* left for a four-month mission to the Asia-Pacific region, supporting *Operation Projection Asia-Pacific*. *Ottawa* conducted 89 days of operation patrols in support of *Operation Projection*, visited four countries and participated in three multinational cooperative deployments with partners and allies. HMCS *Ottawa* also participated in *Operation Neon* which is Canada's contribution to a multinational effort to support the implementation of United Nations Security Council sanctions imposed against North Korea.

In another example, HMCS *Regina* and NRU *Asterix*, plus a CP-140 Aurora aircraft, joined the Canadian-led Combined Task Force 150 (CTF 150) in March 2019. They conducted patrols in the waters of the Persian Gulf and off the east coast of Africa. On 6 April 2019, *Regina* seized 2,596 kilograms of hashish while deployed in the Indian Ocean. On 15 April *Regina* conducted a second interdiction, seizing more than 150 bags containing 3,019 kg of hashish off the coast of Oman. On 18 April, the ship and crew conducted their third successful interdiction of the month, seizing 1,502 kg of hashish and 10.5 kg of heroin.

Our next example is the RCN participation in Exercise Joint Warrior 19, off the coast of the United Kingdom starting 30 March 2019. This exercise involved warships, submarines, aircraft and helicopters from 13 countries. The Joint Warrior exercises run through a range of scenarios, including crisis and conflict situations that could be realistically encountered in operations – including disputed territory, terrorist activity, piracy.

Our final example is the deployment of HMC Ships *Kingston* and *Shawinigan* as part of another element of *Operation Projection*. The ships departed from Halifax for West Africa on 22 January 2019, as part of a three-month deployment. The ships operated both at sea and ashore fostering relationships with partner navies and working to enhance maritime security and stability in the Gulf of Guinea and North Africa regions. Their deployment included engagements to build partner capacity, promote maritime security and foster relationships in the region. The ships provided support to regional capacity-building events Obangame Express 19 and Phoenix Express 19, aimed at assisting West and North African states to develop domestic maritime security capabilities. Port visits included Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire; Contonou, Benin; Lome, Togo; Takoradi, Ghana; and Dakar, Senegal. The crews of *Shawinigan* and *Kingston* also spoke at the Lycée Moderne de Jeunes Filles in Côte d'Ivoire, visited the Sekondi School for deaf children in Ghana, and were the first RCN ships to visit Togo. Both ships arrived back in Halifax on 26 April 2019.

Support for Law Enforcement

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

The Canadian navy regularly deploys on *Operation Caribe* and has been doing so in partnership with the US Coast Guard and American law enforcement agencies since 2006. In mid-March 2019 HMC Ships *Whitehorse* and *Yellowknife* deployed to the eastern Pacific Ocean off Central America on *Operation Caribe*. In addition to trying stop the flow of illicit drugs into North

America, RCN ships have also conducted cooperative deployments with the United States – and rescued endangered sea turtles. *Whitehorse* and *Yellowknife* returned to Esquimalt, British Columbia, on 16 May 2019 having participated in the interception of 2,657 kg of cocaine and 25 kg of illicit marijuana.

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.