



WHAT DOES THE RCN DO?

Canada is a maritime country with diverse economic and security interests tied to the sea. (See Briefing Notes #1 and #2 which discuss how Canada is a maritime country.) The country's maritime requirements are complex and extend beyond traditional defence. The Royal Canadian Navy (RCN), therefore, takes on many different tasks. (Briefing Note #3 discusses the classic roles of a navy – constabulary, diplomatic and warfighting.) In defence of Canada's national interests, the RCN monitors and guards Canada's coastline and its vast exclusive economic zone while also deploying around the world to ensure secure global sea lanes and protect Canada's interests abroad. This Briefing Note offers a snapshot of some of the RCN's major exercises and operations to illustrate both the kinds of missions that the Canadian Navy undertakes and the demanding deployment schedule of the fleet.

Domestic Support

The RCN's versatile platforms make it a critical partner for many of Canada's civilian agencies, and in partnership with other government departments it has undertaken mandates such as pollution prevention and hydrographic research. Canadian warships have also carried out fisheries patrols in support of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, and will undoubtedly continue to do so now that the "Agreement to Prevent Unregulated High Seas Fisheries in the Central Arctic Ocean" entered into force in June 2021. As well, aerial surveillance conducted using CP-140 Aurora aircraft helps to build a recognized maritime picture and facilitate the enforcement of Canadian jurisdiction. The RCN also accepted its first and second Arctic and Offshore Patrol Vessels – HMCS *Harry DeWolf* and the future HMCS *Margaret Brooke* – which were purpose built to support civilian agencies in the North and the offshore environment.

A comprehensive approach to Canadian security is important and whole-of-government operations regularly link the navy and other assets of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) with civilian teams to generate a more robust response to a wide array of threats. The country's premier whole-of-government exercise is *Operation Nanook*, which focuses on multiple areas in the Canadian Arctic and incorporates several government departments and agencies. It involves training together to respond to everything from pollution events to natural disaster to a national security incident while familiarizing personnel with northern conditions. In 2021, the exercise included civilian agency personnel, army and air force personnel, Canadian Rangers, HMCS *Goose Bay* and *Harry DeWolf*, plus ships from the Canadian Coast Guard and US Coast Guard.

Global Security and Working with Allies

The most important mission of the RCN is the protection of Canada and Canadian interests abroad, a task 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 participates in and conducts joint exercises with its partners to enhance cooperation and improve communication and interoperability. Regular overseas deployments with allies familiarize crews with other

countries' procedures and provide a chance to practice working together. These exercises are valuable training opportunities 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 2021, Canada participated in several major multinational operations around the world. An example is *Operation Reassurance*, one of the RCN's recurring deployments. This operation, which takes place in Central and Eastern Europe as well as the Atlantic and Mediterranean, is an element of NATO's program of deterrence, established after Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014. The operation aims to reinforce NATO's collective defence, show allied solidarity and deter aggression. In January 2021, HMCS *Halifax* began a six-month deployment on *Operation Reassurance*. (Of note in January 2021, RCN Commodore Bradley Peats took command of the Standing NATO Maritime Group One, which Canada will lead until January 2022.) HMCS *Fredericton* replaced HMCS *Halifax* in July and continues deployment in the North Atlantic on *Operation Reassurance* as flagship of SNMG1

RCN ships have also participated in *Operation Projection West Africa* fostering relationships with partner navies and working to enhance maritime security and stability in the Gulf of Guinea and West Africa regions. Their deployments have included engagements to build partner capacity, promote maritime security and foster relationships in the region. In 2021 RCN ships participated with 31 other states in Exercise Obangame Express off the coast of West Africa. This exercise, organized by US Naval Forces Africa, is designed to improve regional naval coordination, maritime domain awareness, interdiction operations, and in general enhance collective capabilities of regional states to counter threats at sea.

In the Pacific, HMCS *Regina* and HMCS *Winnipeg* participated in the Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) exercise in 2020. Hosted by the US Navy every two years in and around the Hawaiian Islands and Southern California, RIMPAC is the world's largest international maritime exercise. The event strengthens military-to-military partnerships and enhances the ability of allies to communicate and operate together. As part of RIMPAC, HMCS *Winnipeg* and *Regina* fired their Harpoon missiles in an exercise to sink a decommissioned hulk. Also in the Pacific, the RCN participates in *Operation Projection Asia-Pacific*, an ongoing effort to strengthen relationships and promote maritime security in the region. HMCS *Calgary* spent six months in Asia in 2021, continuing Canada's contribution to a coordinated multinational effort to support the implementation of United Nations Security Council sanctions imposed against North Korea.

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/and Eastern Pacific off Central America, 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 February 2021, HMC Ships *Brandon* and *Saskatoon* deployed to the Eastern Pacific for a four-month deployment to support the US Coast Guard, and HMCS *Shawinigan* deployed to the Caribbean Sea on counter-narcotics patrols, returning to Halifax in August 2021. HMCS *Harry DeWolf* will join *Operation Caribe* in late 2021 after transiting through the Northwest Passage as it circumnavigates North America.

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.