



NAVAL TRAINING AND EXERCISES

If you've read Briefing Note #3 (Why Canada Needs a Navy), you will know that there are three general roles for navies – warfighting (eg., defend Canada and allies against external aggression), constabulary (eg., monitor fisheries or undertake counter-narcotics operations) and diplomacy (eg., provide humanitarian assistance, or engage with foreign naval communities). Briefing Note #4 (What Does the RCN Do?) discusses the tasks that the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) conducts for the government, and the exercises in which the RCN participates in order to practice the skills to conduct these tasks.

In the absence of war, what do navies (and armies and air forces) do? They train. And train. And train. The RCN stresses both individual training and collective/team training. A lot of individual and some team training occurs ashore in Fleet Schools, whereas most team training is done at sea to insert realism into the training. The goal is to ensure personnel and equipment have the required level of readiness. This enables the RCN to execute the missions assigned by the government and respond to threats quickly and effectively. This Briefing Note examines some of the training that RCN personnel receive. Thankfully Canada is not at war, but the reason you maintain military forces in peacetime is so that they can be ready in the event of war. In addition, navies often participate in missions below the threshold of war that nonetheless require capability, presence and (possibly) the threat of coercion. For example, preventing piracy from disrupting trade, or countering the smuggling of narcotics are not defined as warfare but they do involve deterrence, presence and (at times) coercion that naval forces can provide.

Like people in any profession, RCN personnel strive to achieve excellence in their occupation or trade – eg., navigation, communications, weapons – in addition to the training discussed here. Officers in particular also receive training to enhance leadership skills and their ability to manage personnel.

Naval personnel train regularly for events that can threaten a warship and the ship's company. The idea behind extensive training is to make the reaction routine, so if a dangerous event occurs, you respond quickly and calmly because you have trained over and over again on how to respond. Training programs are designed around the basic concept underlying what is expected of a naval ship – Float, Move, Fight. Exercises and training can be categorized using this concept. Thus, damage control (fire and flood) exercises emphasize the aspects of Float; marine engineering exercises focus on Move; and combat and weapons systems training exercises focuses on the Fight aspect. Perhaps the most regular training for the navy, both alongside and at sea, is related to fire, flood, man overboard, force protection, engineering emergencies, as well as safe navigation and weapon drills.

Fires onboard a ship are extremely dangerous. So RCN sailors regularly practice the routine of extinguishing them. Everyone is trained on what to do and how to do it. As well as drills onboard ships, there are facilities on land – for example, damage control facilities on both the East and West Coasts – where personnel can train in realistic, but controlled, circumstances. You hope that this training will never be needed, but you train to prepare.

Another serious concern on ships is the possibility of flooding. Flooding can be caused by external events, such as enemy fire, collision or running aground, or by internal incidents, such as a failed seal or ruptured water pipe within a compartment. If you've read BN #40 about naval

architecture, you'll know that ensuring that chambers can be sealed off is a major part of the design of a warship. A warship must be able to take a hit and still be able to operate, and this means ensuring that the ship does not flood and then sink. Despite watertight compartments, there is still a need to train how to deal with a flood – for example, the crew must still be trained how to patch holes in the hull or rig pumps to manage ingress of water.

Another regular element of training is man overboard exercises. It is a rare occurrence but if someone falls overboard, this is a serious incident. The ship's company must react quickly. Anyone falling into the North Atlantic, for example, will not survive in the cold water for long. Personnel must train on how to track a person who has gone overboard, launch the boats to retrieve the person, and do this very quickly, day or night and in any weather.

Since the attack by Al Qaeda on USS *Cole* in harbour in Yemen in 2000, force protection has become a focus of warships. This involves training. Personnel are assigned to watch for possible threats to the ship while it is in harbour – whether a small boat approaching at speed, or a drone flying overhead – and to react if certain thresholds are crossed.

In Canada, the RCN has a special group of trainers, assembled from experienced sailors, who test a warship's readiness. These Sea Trainers will arrive without notice while a ship is in a Canadian port and simulate an emergency situation to which the ship's company must respond. Sea Training staff also go to sea to oversee team training. They assess personnel on the efficacy of their response, and provide a thorough debrief on how to improve the readiness of the crew.

Other elements of training are, of course, related to warfare – how you fight a war. Training to undertake tactical manoeuvres and navigation is crucial. Safe ship navigation is an essential skill for the Bridge team, and the ability to execute tactical manoeuvres to maximize the advantages of a ship's weapons and sensors is critical in a naval battle.

Training related to warfare includes such things as weapon handling – i.e., how to fire a weapon accurately, maintain weapons and store ammunition safely. This training is mainly focused on a warship's primary offensive and defensive weaponry, such as guns, missiles and torpedos. Do the weapon systems work? This has to be tested. Although missiles are very expensive, and thus live fire testing is done advisedly, personnel need to be trained on how to operate and calibrate the ship's weapons, and how to maintain them if necessary. What about a ship's ability to react to an enemy attack? RCN personnel train in such things as anti-aircraft warfare (AAW), anti-surface ship warfare (AsuW) and anti-submarine warfare (ASW), torpedo countermeasures, mine avoidance and electronic warfare.

As technology evolves, some training can occur in realistic but simulated environments – virtual exercises and virtual trainers. For example you can hone your navigational skills on the virtual bridge of an RCN frigate. Other virtual trainers include simulations of helicopter landings on a ship, or simulations of navigating through a narrow passage or canal. As real as simulator situations can be, however, these skills need to be practiced in the real world as well.

To test out their training, RCN personnel participate in exercises which test preparedness in war-like conditions, without war. (See BN #4 for examples of the exercises in which the RCN has recently participated.) Exercises are designed carefully to test the combat team, for example, in a certain scenario such as anti-submarine warfare. In this case, the exercise tests the ability of personnel to track a submarine – often an actual submarine is used and a ship must locate it. The submarine does what it can to hide, and a surface ship (with its helicopters) does what it can to find the submarine. Or, alternatively, warships participate in exercises designed to train Bridge teams in ship-handling skills. This might take place with other ships to practice sailing in formation. Other scenarios might involve replenishment at sea (eg., receiving fuel from a tanker

while underway), search and rescue, ship-to-shore personnel transfer via helicopter (eg., medical evacuation), ship's dive team training, cyber defence, etc. These are all skills that need to be developed through training and practiced in exercises.

If you have read BN #36 Naval Interoperability, you will know that a goal of the RCN (and NATO navies) is to be able to operate seamlessly with each other and other navies. In war, working with allies is key, particularly for a relatively small navy like the RCN. In peace, you train with your allies so that you can operate with them if a war occurs. We hope that there will not be a war, but armed forces are kept in case there is. It takes time to establish a military – you can't easily conjure one out of thin air if a war starts. So even in peacetime states invest in their armed forces, and often use them for tasks that are below the threshold of all-out war but are nonetheless important foreign policy elements. If you have the fundamentals of a well-trained military and a war breaks out, you can build from that base. There is a saying – train as you fight, fight as you train.