



WHAT DOES THE RCN DO?

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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, search and rescue, 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 since 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 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. *Operation Nanook-Nanakput 2022* will take place in August 2022.

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 2022 thus far, Canada has 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, and enhanced after Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. The operation aims to reinforce NATO's collective defence, show allied solidarity and deter aggression. In January 2022, HMCS *Montreal* deployed for six-months to *Operation Reassurance* and in March 2022 HMCS *Halifax* also began a six-month deployment.

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 2022, HMCS *Moncton* and *Goose Bay* both visited Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Ghana and Senegal. While off the coast of West Africa, the ships participated with 31 other states in Exercise Obangame Express 2022. 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 *Vancouver* and HMCS *Winnipeg* are participating in the Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) exercise in summer 2022. 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. 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 countering smugglers, pirates and terrorists, as well as stopping 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 Sea and eastern Pacific Ocean off Central America, where drugs from South America are smuggled to the United States and Canada. The RCN regularly deploys on *Operation Caribbe* and has been doing so in partnership with the US Coast Guard and American law enforcement agencies since 2006. In February 2022, HMCS *Saskatoon* and HMCS *Yellowknife* left to participate in *Operation Caribbe* on the Pacific coast of Central America. The first Arctic and Offshore Patrol Ship, HMCS *Harry DeWolf*, left Canada to participate in *Op Caribbe* in April 2022 and to participate in Exercise Tradewinds 2022, a ground, air, sea and cyber exercise focused on strengthening safety and security in the Caribbean region, with a focus on humanitarian aid and disaster relief.

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.