



VIMM Newsletter

Summer 2019

Vancouver Island Military Museum

Gulf War Veteran Remembers

By Stephen Sharp, VIMM volunteer

*A new display at the VIMM highlights the Gulf War of 1990-91.
One of our volunteers is a veteran of that war.*

As a Master Corporal IET with six and a half years of Sea King experience, but most importantly a previous sea tour already completed on HMCS Huron from 1981 to 1983, I was selected as part of the Air Department on HMCS Protecteur.

Our Air Detachment Commander was Captain Bouchard. He was one of the best officers I ever served under during my entire career. When he gave his initial briefing on our upcoming deployment, I felt taken back in time to Admiral Nelson's fleet as they all sailed to immortality at Trafalgar. Captain Bouchard stated that we too were expected to do our duty for Queen and country.

As we departed for the gulf on August 24, 1990, my wife and two young sons were there on the Halifax jetty to wave me off.

The training along the route to the Gulf was extensive, and the port visits new and exciting. Rumours abounded from one day to the next and there were so many briefings that our Air Dept Newsletter was entitled Brace for Brief, from the warning, "Brace for Shock," a nautical term for torpedoes or missiles inbound.

Once in theatre, the rotation of ships in and out of ports was very liberal. There was always one of our task group ships enjoying R & R in some port. There were a lot of ex-pats in Dubai from western nations. "Adopt a Sailor" became an informal program amongst them. I, and a running buddy, routinely visited some of the Canadian ex-pats. Two of them were former CF 104 pilots who were flying for Emirates Air.

The overall work load for us was no more than I'd experienced on my previous sea tour. Certainly, it was taxing at times, but what could one expect when we had to be prepared for armed conflict at any given moment?

Support for all of us abroad from Canadian citizens at home was immense. We received bags and bags of mail and responded to all we could, with grateful thanks for their support.

A great memory for us all was our Sea King being tasked to carry (... *continued*)



*Steve Sharpe fueling a Sea King
aboard HMCS Protecteur
during the Gulf War*



*Steve
Sharpe on leave
in the desert.*



Steve Sharp leaving the flight deck

(... *continued*) "The Great Pumpkin" around the Gulf on Halloween. A year later I was able to visit Howard Dill, with my family, in Nova Scotia and thank him for donating his prized pumpkin to the fleet.

We on *Protecteur* found out early on that our entire ship's company was going to be replaced by a new crew in early January 1991. By New Year's Eve, we'd moved into the Dubai Hilton while the new crew arrived to take over our billets on *Protecteur*. We flew home to Canada on Jan 10/91 to a joyous homecoming at Halifax Airport. I, like millions of others around the world, watched live on Jan 17th as Operation Friction, which had turned into support for Operation Desert Shield, became in the words of US President Bush Senior..."Operation Desert Storm."

From the President



Here we are in the second quarter of 2019 and museum attendance is up 51 visitors from this time last year. We are looking forward to our first cruise ship of the year (*The Silver Muse*) on June 16. The *Azamara Quest* and the *Silver Explorer* cruise ships will be in on July 11.

We are working on some new exhibits about the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan, RCAF Airwomen and the Gulf War. We are still anticipating the upgrade of the Korean War exhibit. We upgrade all of our exhibits as new information and items come available.

The museum has sponsored many off-hour tours to cadets and like organizations this year. We participated in the spring Annual Cadet Review for three cadet organizations and also for the Navy League Cadets.

We have had some vandalism where an unstable individual kicked in a window outside the workshop. This was all caught on camera and the authorities were notified. The window has since been repaired by the city with no cost to the museum. This was the fourth window smashed over the past few years.

Sadly, our long-time volunteer Pat Patterson has stepped down as a Board Member and volunteer due to circumstances beyond his control. Pat will be missed. He had been a volunteer and a Board Member since 1994. We are pleased to have Stan Mackay back as a volunteer after some years away. The museum is operating very nicely thanks to the dedication and strong effort by the board members and all the volunteers. *Bravo Zulu*

Roger Bird

Medal Mounting

The VIMM will gladly mount your medals in court mounting or in a frame. Contact us for further information and prices.

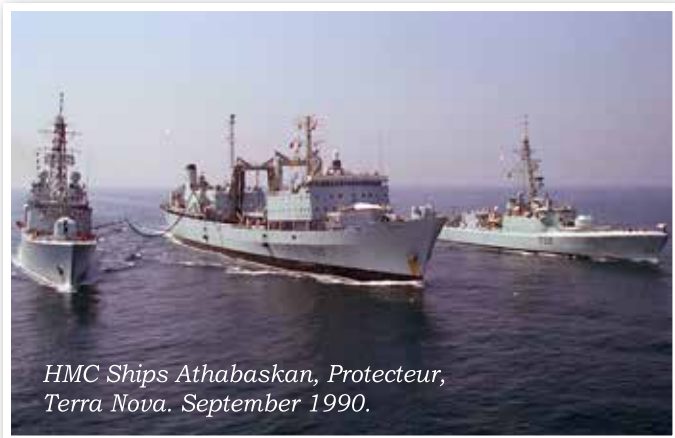


New Displays The Gulf War and BCATP

By Brian McFadden, VIMM Vice President

In 1991 Canada participated in the Gulf War, as part of a military coalition of some 20 countries, led by the United States, to liberate Kuwait from an invasion by neighbouring Iraq. This incursion, which was condemned by the United Nations, was orchestrated by the Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein, who claimed Kuwait was illegally extracting oil from the rich Rumaila oil field which straddled the border between the countries. More than four thousand Canadian Armed Forces personnel served in the Persian Gulf during the war and, in the aftermath of the conflict, continued to serve in peacekeeping and embargo-enforcement efforts in the region. Creating a display illustrating Canada's involvement in the war posed a number of challenges, not the least of which was the lack of photographs and graphics from official Canadian sources. We relied on publications such as "The Desert Cats" and reference material from our coalition partners, plus photographs and patches from veterans who had served in the region in 1991. The helicopter patch shown in the display was supplied by museum volunteer Steve Sharp who served on *HMCS Protecteur* during the Gulf War.

We are also in the process of assembling material and models for a display on the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP) which was certainly one of Canada's major contributions to winning the air war during WWII. In 1942, this scheme to train aircrew from several nations earned it the title *The Aerodrome of Democracy* from U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt. Look for the display in the fall newsletter.



HMC Ships Athabaskan, Protecteur, Terra Nova. September 1990.

PERSIAN GULF WAR 1990-1991

The Persian Gulf War of the 1990's was a struggle to liberate Kuwait from a brutal invasion and occupation by the armed forces of Saddam Hussein, the ruler and dictator of neighbouring Iraq. More than 4,000 Canadian Armed Forces personnel served in this tense region as part of an international military coalition of countries led by the United States.

Relations between these two Arab neighbours had never been smooth! Iraq had long felt that Kuwait was really part of its territory and that Kuwait's oil rigs were illegally tapping into Iraq's oil fields. Hussein had fought a costly eight-year war with Iran which had nearly bankrupted his country making Kuwait's twenty-two billion oil revenues a very tempting target. In August 1990 the situation came to a head when Hussein claimed Kuwait as Iraq's 19th Province, formally annexing the country.

A majority of Arab countries in the region condemned this blatant act of aggression causing Kuwait's allied government to turn to the United States and a coalition of twenty nations for support. On November 29th, 1990 after repeated requests to the Iraqi dictator to withdraw his forces, the UN Security Council authorized the use of "all necessary means of force", against Iraq.

When the Iraqi government still refused to comply with the UN resolution to withdraw, Hussein informed an already tense situation by declaring a holy war or jihad, in an attempt to further widen the targets in Israel and Saudi Arabia.

Thousands of Canadians line Halifax Harbour to bid Bon Voyage to Canada's Naval Task Group leaving for the Persian Gulf on August 24th, 1990.

Operation Friction

During the Gulf War, Canada contributed a Naval Task Group, Two Squadrons of CF-18 Fighters, a Field Hospital, the Canadian Army Infantry Battalion, and the Royal 22nd Regiment. The Royal Canadian Air Force also established a Joint Force Headquarters in Manama, Bahrain to coordinate all Canadian military operations in the region.

Canadian Army

Two Canadian infantry regiments were assigned as force protection for all Canadian military personnel serving in the Gulf. The Royal Canadian Regiment (RCR) and the Royal 22nd Regiment (R22) were established as a base of operations at Dhahran, Qatar. These troops would also be responsible for security of the Joint Force Headquarters in Manama, Bahrain.

Medical No. 1 Canadian Field Hospital

The Canadian Field Hospital which operated close to the main combat areas, was fully operational and looked to provide medical services to coalition and Iraqi wounded.

Royal Canadian Air Force

The Canadian Air Command Group flew air combat patrols with CF-18 fighter jets nicknamed "The Desert Cats" in the north and south of the Gulf from their base at Dhahran, Qatar. These patrols worked with U.S. and coalition air forces to protect naval and ground forces from attack by Iraqi fighter jets. As the war continued the Canadian Air Command Group took on other combat operations with Canadian fighter jets carrying out over 1,100 sorties and bombing missions against Iraqi targets. The Air Transport Group using a fleet of C-130 Hercules, and a Boeing 707 tanker aircraft, conducted air-to-air refueling for coalition aircraft.

The Battle to liberate Kuwait

In late 1990 the Land, Sea, and Air forces of the U.S. led coalition moved into the region and prepared to attack Iraq forces occupying Kuwait.

Kuwait - Chaos, Destruction & Revenge

During the retreat from Kuwait the shattered Iraqi Army left behind more than 300 Kuwaiti oil wells filling the air with clouds of dense, acidic, black smoke causing an environmental disaster.

The end of the war left Iraq defeated but the country's leader, Saddam Hussein, still retained power. He would remain in control of Iraq for Gulf War in 2003 finally being removed from power. Canada was not a participant in the military coalition during this conflict.

The attack began with a devastating air campaign on January 17, 1991 followed by a massive armored and infantry offensive that completely overwhelmed the Iraqi forces. With Hussein's armed forces defeated, a ceasefire was announced on February 28th, 1991.

In the aftermath of the war Canadians continued to serve in UN peacekeeping operations, conducting embargo enforcement, conducting air-to-air refueling, cease-fire violations, and other land mines. On the water, Canadian forces which enforced UN sanctions against the arming of Iraq, conducting mine sweeping operations, and suspicious shipping traffic in the region.

Canada's DESERT CATS in the Gulf War

By Greg Devenish, VIMM volunteer

The American response was quick following the invasion of Kuwait by Iraqi forces in 1990. By mid – September, nearly 800 U.S. aircraft were deployed to the Arabian Peninsula. This build up was augmented from coalition partners such as Britain and France. Canada responded on September 14, when Canadian Prime Minister, Brian Mulroney, announced “Operation Scimitar”. This operation involved CF-18s providing top cover for Canadian ships and coalition partners operating in the Persian Gulf.

The initial RCAF commitment was for 28 pilots, 235 ground crew and 18 CF-18 Hornets. Squadron 409 “Night-hawk” was selected to join the air coalition. CF-18 Hornets left Baden-Soellingen, Germany for Doha, Qatar. All personal had undergone training in nuclear, biological and chemical warfare as well as desert survival. By October 9, combat air patrols were under way. During this first phase, Operation Desert Shield, (Oct- December) an operating base was established, and 1110 sorties were flown without incident. The flight line was busy as described by Sgt. H. Nickel, maintenance supervisor;

“...the day starts as others... We start work on the flight line. It is dark...the flight line is a beehive of activity as the guys get the jets ready... We get everything done in about 15 minutes before three pilots arrive. Three sets of lights appear signaling power on... the pilot indicates he is ready, and the nose chock is removed...A thunderous roar's heard as the two CF-18s throttle up and back in their afterburners...a smile crosses my face...on the first launch”.

Canada had purchased 138 CF-18 Hornets in the mid- eighties. “The Hornet has been described as 56 feet of sleek, grey lethality” It has nine external stations armed with AIM -9 Sidewinders missiles, a 20 mm Vulcan cannon, and can also carry air-to-ground weapons. This is a fighter pilot's dream. Canadian pilots and their maintenance crews had full confidence in their new charges.

In November, a new RCAF squadron, equipped with 26 Hornets, was formed, combining 416 “Lynx” and 439 “Tiger” squadrons. This new squadron adopted a new name, “Desert Cats”. On December 19 the unit was operational. This was augmented by a 707 air tanker from 437 “Husky” squadron. In just 13 days the 707 flew 200 hours and transferred 2 000 000 pounds of fuel to coalition partners.

On Jan.16 Operation Desert Storm began with massive air strikes. The CF-18s flew combat air patrols (CAP) over the Gulf and were placed between allied shipping and anticipated threats. While the primary mission was CAP, the Canadian fighters were tasked to identify ships, provide search and rescue, and to protect downed coalition pilots.

On January 19, two CF-18s strafed an Iraqi patrol boat and even fired on it with an AIM air to air missile - without success. When American A-6s were able to sink the patrol boat, the CF-18s were awarded an assist. On January 24, the “Desert Cats” began flying offensive combat missions (MIGSWEEPS) into Iraq and Kuwait. These operations involved sweeps to clear hostile aircraft and provide fighter escort. Each operation was composed of 4 Hornets and involved mid – air refueling. CF-18s served along-side American F-16s, and British Tornado and Buccaneer fighters.



The CF -18 Hornet is a multi- role fighter. With two General Electric F404-GE-400 low bypass turbofans it can produce 16000 lbs. of thrust and is capable of Mach 1.8. Notice the AIM-9M Sidewinder and AIM-7M Sparrow missiles.

On February 24, authorization was given for the Desert Cats to commence air to ground operations against enemy targets. This new role would focus on bombing ground targets such as artillery pieces or troop convoys. Capt. Gerry ‘Smak’ Mackinnon wrote:

“The target we were tasked to bomb was an ...artillery position ...Each of our four Hornets carried eight MK.82, 500Lb bombs... We received our intelligence briefing... as I approached my CF -18 ... she was ready for what I would ask of her ... that would be everything she was capable of giving ... a forward Air Controller gave us a target... All the while checking for possible SAMS since we were in deep enemy territory... I’ve never felt so focused in my life... The aircraft shook violently as the heavy load fell away... and saw all eight bombs ... like a school of piranhas searching for their prey...That evening I sat outside ... I felt content our contribution would be appreciated ... and my aircraft had performed so well.

The Desert Cats accomplished all tasks without loss. They played an important role within the air coalition and, more importantly, demonstrated the critical role of air power. While the sharp end of air operations were the Hornets and the pilots, their success was backed by a highly trained team of maintenance crews, suppliers, technicians, servicing crews, intelligence staff, and armourers.



CF-18s in formation. Notice the false canopy painted underneath the aircraft.



Meanwhile, In Italy...

The D-Day Dodgers

On May 11, 1944, the First Canadian Infantry Division and the Fifth Canadian Armoured Division of the First Canadian Corps, attacked and broke through the German defences in Italy, called the “Hitler Line.” Canadian casualties were high, 800 killed and 2500 wounded, but the victory was important. However, this tremendous battle is often overshadowed by the liberation of Rome and Operation Overlord. In August, the First Canadian Corps again broke through the German defences in Italy, this time cracking the “Gothic Line.” Historian Tim Cook calls this second Italian victory, “...one of the most audacious and skilful operations carried out by the Canadian Army in all its military history.”



Canadian official war artist Charles Comfort painted the breaking of the Hitler Line in May 1944.

Controversial British politician Lady Nancy Astor referred, ignorantly, to the soldiers fighting in Italy as having an easy time and being “D-Day Dodgers”. The 8th Army (including Canadian First Corps) responded with an ironic song, set to the tune of *Lili Marlene*.

**We landed at Pachino, a holiday with pay
Jerry brought a band out, to cheer us on our way
Showed us the sights, and gave us tea
We all sang songs, the beer was free
We kissed all the girls in Napoli.
For we are the D-Day Dodgers, over here in Italy.
The Moro and Ortona were taken in our stride
We didn't have to fight there. We just went for the ride.
Anzio and Sangro were all forlorn.
We did not do a thing from dusk to dawn.
For we are the D-Day Dodgers, over here in Italy.**

RCAF Emergency Rations

On Display at the VIMM

Thousands of items, large and small, are on display and more come in weekly. VIMM volunteer Richard McGladrey recently added this can of RCAF emergency rations to our small display of Army and Navy emergency rations. Although it looks like a can of Spam,



these cans usually contained soup mix, coffee, candies and other high energy dried foods. On YouTube some brave souls open old cans and sample them!

The instruction on the can states:

Food Packet Survival RCAF AAFP-3 457

- 1. Eat no food on the first day of survival.**
- 2. Make the food in this can last three days.**



Major General Bert Hoffmeister of Vancouver commanded the 5th Canadian Armoured Division in Italy. After the war he returned to Vancouver and became President of MacMillan Bloedel and founding chairman of the Nature Trust of BC.



Local Air Cadets and Parents Visit France for 75th Anniversary of D-Day

Thirteen air cadets from Nanaimo and Parksville, two officers, and quite a few parents, set out in May to visit Juno Beach and tour First and Second World War battle and commemorative sites. Lt. David Ruel of 205 Squadron Air Cadets, and Capt. Kevin Hills, prepared an extensive itinerary, and in preparation made use of the information and expertise at the VIMM. Capt. Hills explained how they made use of the Museum:



VIMM VP Brian McFadden conducts private tour for France bound Cadets.

“We used the Nanaimo cenotaph and the Vancouver Island Military Museum to better prepare for the trip. I wanted to task each Cadet with researching one or more names from the Cenotaph with the hope of visiting that soldier’s grave or memorial. This is where the VIMM has been an incredible resource. I was able to use Mr. Angus Scully’s data base and binder in the Museum to find my soldiers. Another huge gesture of support was an invitation to visit the Museum after hours for a private tour for the Cadets and their families, conducted by Mr. Brian McFadden, Museum VP. VIMM volunteer Capt. (retd) Gavin Cooper lent us some of his wealth of knowledge and experience from conducting tours in France and Belgium. I would be remiss if I didn’t mention another volunteer from the Museum, Mr. Greg Devenish, who has given me support and some sage travel advice from his experiences taking young people on tour to battle sites.”



Capt. (retd) Gavin Cooper, VIMM volunteer, Capt. Hills and Lt. David Ruel.

The Museum thanks Capt. Hills for his help in completing the data base of information about names on the Nanaimo Cenotaph from the Great War. When originally compiled, the data base was incomplete due to a lack of full files. Capt. Hills devotedly tracked down the remaining names and shared them with us.

DISPATCHES

from VIMM



Sold Out!

When Pat Murphy entered the auditorium at *Berwick On the Lake Retirement Community* in Nanaimo, he didn't know many people would turn out to hear his illustrated talk on the history of the Spitfire fighter. It was standing room only. Word of Pat's success spread, and he has been inundated with invitations to speak all over Vancouver Island. Well done Pat!



Pat Murphy, VIMM volunteer and VIMM armourer, before a full house.

RCN Visits

On July 1, to celebrate Canada Day, the Maritime Coastal Defence Vessels HMCS Nanaimo and HMCS Edmonton will be visiting the city. Both vessels will be berthed at the visiting ships' pier and will be open to the public from 10:00am until 4:00pm Saturday June 29 and Sunday June 30. On Monday July 1st, the ships' crews will attend the Ceremony of the Flags at Swyalana Lagoon Park.

Welcome New Member

We are pleased that John Newton has joined our volunteers.

Tourism Initiatives

VIMM will be participating in two initiatives through Tourism Nanaimo and The Nanaimo Port Authority to welcome visitors to our city during the summer months. Both schemes involve visitors receiving special entry passes when visiting the Nanaimo Conference Centre, and boaters who berth at the Port Authority Marina. This will allow for reduced entry fees for a number of downtown businesses and major tourist attractions. The passes will also be available at the Tourist Bureau.



Ads like this one appear in the Nanaimo and Voyager Magazine.

Cadet Awards

During the month of June VIMM will be honouring one cadet from each of the four cadet units in the City of Nanaimo. Members from the Military Museum volunteer staff attend the annual ceremonial inspections to present a trophy to a cadet selected by the Commanding Officer of each unit.

Volunteer Barbecue!
Wednesday August 28th – time and place to come

VIMM Travelling Display

A VIMM display will be at Legion 256 Branch as part of their D-Day 75th Anniversary celebration.

Museum Directors and Staff

Roger Bird, President

Brian McFadden, Vice President

Phil Harris, Secretary

Pat Murphy, Armoury

Jack Ziebart, Computer

Bruce Davison, Volunteer Coordinator

Bill Brayshaw, Acquisitions

Angus Scully, Newsletter Editor