A CENTURY OF SERVICE

Canada’s Armed Forces From the Boer War to East Timor

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The

Boer War
1899 – 1902

"(Our) company was chosen to go and I was lucky enough to get a place and so we were the first Canadians to be under fire."

Pvt. Tom Wallace, C. Company,
Royal Canadian Regiment, December 31, 1899, before the attack on Sunnyside Kopje.

Greed for gold and British Imperialism sowed the seeds of the South African War. Dutch farmers (Boers) in the Transvaal and Orange Free State bitterly resented the gold seekers who rushed into their republics in search of quick wealth. The Utlanders (foreigners) demanded rights as citizens and the British Government backed them. In October 1899, a Boer army invaded Natal and the war began.

Prime Minister Laurier strove valiantly to Canada out of the conflict. However, many Canadians found the idea of defending the empire attractive and he was forced to offer troops to Britain to fight in South Africa. The start of the 20th century thus saw the creation of Canada's first expeditionary force, setting a pattern that would be repeated many times.

The first Canadian contingent, commanded by Lt. Col. William Otter, became the 2nd (Special Service) Battalion of the Royal Canadian regiment (RCR). It's officers and men, most of them untrained, had no idea what awaited them as they disembarked from the troopship *Sardinian* at Cape Town on November 30, 1899. As Canadians advanced into Orange Free State, Pvt. Albert Perkins wrote in his diary: " We had a horrible march. The sun was awful. Men fell overcome by heat."

The Canadians distinguished themselves at the battle of Paardenberg in February 1900. The Boers held off the British for ten days. Then the RCR assaulted their positions. Two companies held their positions as other troops retired after the night attack. When dawn broke, the Canadians found they overtook the enemy lines and opened fire. Soon white flags appeared in the Boer trenches.

Realizing the futility of engaging in battle with the British, the Boers formed *kommandos.* Mounted on ponies, hard riding marksmen with Mauser Rifles carried out hit and run raids against British positions. To counter them, Canada sent the Royal Canadian Dragoons (RCD), the Canadian Mounted Rifles (CMR) and three batteries of the Royal Canadian Field Artillery (RCFA) to South Africa. Donald Smith, a backer of the

Canadian Pacific Railway, put up half a million dollars to equip Strathcona's Horse. Recruited from the North West Mounted Police and western cowboys, the Strathconas began to beat the Boers at their own game. Commanded by "Fighting Sam" Steele, a former Mountie Officer, the horsemen served as scouts and flank guards for British columns. One British commander said of them: "I have never served with a nobler, braver or more serviceable body of men." On July 5, 1900, a party of Strathconas encountered twice their number of Boers and retreated under fire. Sgt. Arthur Richardson wheeled his horse around, rescued a wounded comrade and received the first Victoria Cross awarded to a member of a Canadian unit.

In November 1900, the RCD took part in a sharp engagement at Lillfontein. Three hundred Boers charged, intent on capturing two 12 pdr guns of the RCAF. Lt. H.Z.C. Cockburn sacrificed his command to save them. Later on that day, the Boers made another bid to seize the Canadian guns. Lt. Richard Turner, although wounded, dismounted his men and shouted: "Never let it be said the Canadians had let their guns be taken." Sgt. Eddie Holland protected the left flank with a Colt machine gun. With Boers almost upon him, he wrenched the red-hot barrel off the carriage, mounted his horse and rode to safety. He received the VC for his bravery, as did Turner and Cockburn.

The Boer war slowly petered out. Early in 1902, a forth Canadian contingent sailed for South Africa. On March 31, 1902, 22 members of the CMR, serving as rearguard for a large British force, repulsed several hundred Boers at Boschbult, suffering 17 casualties. Days before the war ended in May, four more CMR battalions arrived in South Africa, too late to see action.

Canadians adapted well to conditions in South Africa, gaining a reputation as tough and skilled fighters. Two of them received unique awards. Pvt. R.R. Thompson, a medical orderly, was twice nominated for the VC for going to the aid of wounded soldiers under fire, although he never received the medal. Hearing of this, Queen Victoria knitted a woolen scarf for him and others whose bravery had not been recognized: it is the rarest gallantry decoration ever awarded to a Canadian. A dozen nurses from Canada served in South Africa with British medical units. Georgina Fane Pope, the head nurse, received the Royal Red Cross, the first Canadian to receive this distinction.

Canada sent 8,372 men to the South African War; 89 died in action, 135 from disease and 252 were wounded. A few weeks after reviewing the RCR at Windsor Castle, Queen Victoria died on January 22, 1901.

The Victorian age ended as the century that Laurier claimed for Canada began. As it dawned in an era of optimism and belief in progress, no one had any inkling of what a terrible hundred years lay ahead.

CANADA IN NATO & NORAD

THE COLD WAR AND SOME HOT ONES

" Our people in the past… only achieved their maximum effort under the stress of an actual conflict."

Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent

The Cold War dominated military thinking during the last half of the Twentieth Century. In 1950, with the outbreak of the Korean conflict, the war between the western democracies and communist states became hot. In 1948, the Russian-backed communists in Czechoslovakia took over the government and tensions accelerated. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) came into being with Canada as one of its 12 charter members on April 4, 1949. In the fall of 1951, Canadian troops moved to Europe, eventually establishing their main base as the 4th Canadian Mechanized Brigade at Lahr, the Canadian air units located nearby at Baden-Sollingen.

Canadian soldiers occupied forward positions that would have been in the front lines had the Russians attacked Western Europe. Through numerous battle exercises, they honed their skills in mobile warfare, Canada's air squadrons and its ships in NATO's navy stood on guard as the organization presented a united front against any threat from the east. Things changed radically when communism collapsed and Canada's defence priorities changed.

The 4th Canadian Mechanized Brigade Group had been ordered home just as ethnic tensions in Yugoslavia exploded in 1991. Units quickly entrained to join the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) seeking to keep warring groups apart as Yugoslavia disintegrated. The task of Canadian service people in the field was made difficult by the decisions of the politicians and planners in Ottawa. In 1968, the Canadian Forces Reorganization Act created a single integrated military body, with one uniform. In

1992, as tensions accelerated in Yugoslavia, the federal government announced that all Canadians would be withdrawn from Europe.

The Canadian Army had to move swiftly from preparing for battle to peacekeeping. As they settled in at Sirac in Croatia in April 1992, the soldiers suddenly found themselves under attack. "It sounded like thunder in the distance; then seconds later we were being bombed with mortar shells" reported Cpl. Tony Carew. One man received a splinter in the buttocks and the troops began to dig themselves in as their predecessors had so often done in the past wars.

In 1993, Canadian troops fought their biggest battle since Korea. But the public never heard about it because the action conflicted with the official image of our troops as "Peacekeepers". Canadian paratroopers had engaged in small scale firefights in Cyprus when the Turkish troops invaded the island in 1974. The UN rules of engagement specified that those trying to keep peace under its auspices could fire back if fired upon, but could not initiate an attack.

In Yugoslavia, UN peacekeepers tried desperately to separate warring parties. But ancient hatreds made this extremely difficult – and the antagonists often had larger caliber weapons than the Canadians and other peacekeepers.

On September 9, 1993, the Croatian army attacked Serbs near the town of Medak in eastern Croatia. Caught in between the two, the Princess Pat's suffered four casualties from mortar fire. The Canadian battalion and 500 French peacekeepers under Lt. Col. Jim Calvin tried to establish a buffer zone between Serbs and Croats. On September 15, Croat troops attacked dug-in Canadians. Sgt. Rod Dearing could not see the enemy, but directed fire at their positions. The French troops also blasted them, and the Canadians beat back several Croat attacks. Dearing's platoon killed or wounded about 30 of the attackers, for four men wounded.

Then the Croats delayed Calvin's men at a barricade while they went about looting, killing and destroying every building in the Medak Pocket. The peacekeepers pushed back the Croats and discovered evidence of the ethnic cleansing. A 70 year old woman had been shot four times, and two teenagers held by the Croats had been killed, then set on fire. Some of the soldiers began to suffer from combat fatigue, and those who carried images of atrocities back home with them fell prey to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Eighteen months after the Battle of the Medak Pocket, Calvin received the Meritorious Service Cross, and a Medal of Bravery went to WO Bill Johnston for rescuing a French Peacekeeper trapped in a minefield. Eight other Canadian soldiers received Mentions in Dispatches. The United Nations recognized the participation of the Princess Pat's in the encounter with a unit citation. Lt. Gen. Gordon Reay, army chief at the time of the battle, recommended that the battalion receive a Canadian battle honour, but the request was turned down by the Department of National Defense. As Reay put it: " Maybe the department was a little gun-shy. Maybe we should have blown our own horn."

Two years earlier, however, the Governor general had approved the creation of the "Gulf and Kuwait" battle honour for those who participated in that conflict. On August 11, 1990, after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait ten days earlier, the Canadian government announced that it would send two destroyers and a supply ship to support multinational efforts against Iraq in the Persian Gulf. *HMCS Athabaskan* and *Terra Nova,* the supply ship *HMCS Protecteur*, and Sea King helicopters from 423 Squadron began to patrol the Gulf on October 1. Canadians carried out a quarter of all inspections of all ships in the region. Early in October 1990, 409 tactical Fighter Squadron of the RCAF arrived in Doha, Qatar, and began to fly combat air patrols. In all, 26 Canadian fighters from this squadron and from 439 and 416, and a Boeing 707 for refueling them and other Allied aircraft, took part in what became known as " The Persian Excursion". Capt. "Dusty" Miller, commander of the Canadian Baval Task Force, took this phrase for the title of his book on the Gulf War.

After the conflict, Canadians did what they could to save lives. Lt. Cdr. James Hewitt gave a breezy account of his work in clearing mines in the *"Desert Sailor"*. One day, 100 "mines" were sighted – only three turned out to be real. In March 1991, a few days after the war ended, Hewitt discovered charts of Iraqi mine fields in the Gulf while searching through a looted enemy base.

On July 11, 1991, a live-fire training exercise by an American armoured unit in Kuwait went out of control. The overheated engine of an ammunition carrier burst into flames. Howitzer shells ignited an open-air ammunition dump as American troops panicked and fled. A nearby contingent of the 1st Canadian Engineer Regiment under Capt. Fred Kaustinen, part of a UN Force monitoring the cease-fire and clearing mines, swung into action. Two soldiers donned protective clothing and plunged into the blast zone to provide an early warning post. Other Canadians set about caring for wounded and burned American troops. Then they began to remove unexploded shells to safe places. The Americans lost more armoured vehicles in this disaster than during the entire Gulf War. The United States Army issued a letter of appreciation to the Canadian engineers.

Canadians went into battle again in 1999 when NATO bombed targets in Kosovo and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. These attacks marked the first time the Canadian Air Force had gone into combat in Europe since the end of the Second World War. It flew almost 700 sorties and dropped about 200,000 kg of high explosives. Lawyers vetted each target to determine if attacks met tests of laws on " the reasonable use of lethal force". A Canadian pilot spotted a large truck on a bridge he was about to attack. Unable to determine if it was a military or a civilian one, he radioed back to base and was ordered to return without dropping his bombs.

Rear Admiral Bruce MacLean, addressing a Parliamentary Committee on the bombing of Kosovo, had to remind its members:"…….conflict is and always will be very dirty and very ugly and there will always be accidents and there will always be miscues, but that's the nature of the business."

Looking back over the past decades of Canada's military history, Canadians can take consolation from the fact that a cool-headed former fighter pilot may well have saved the world from nuclear war. Air Marshal Roy Slemon received his wings in 1924, one of the first to do so with the newly formed RCAF. After a distinguished career, he became the first deputy commander of the North American Air Defence Command (NORAD). Set up in 1957 by the United States and Canada, this body monitors aircraft, missile and satellite movements by radar. On October 5, 1960, Air Marshal Slemon sat in the "hot seat" at NORAD headquarters at Cheyenne Mountain, Wyoming. At 3:15 p.m., Thule radar in Greenland reported 40 incoming missiles. The Canadian did not panic and order a counter strike. Three minutes later the Thule operators reported that their radar had detected the rising sun!

CITIZENS IN SERVICE

THE RESERVES

"…a weapon infinitely more powerful, and
more ready than any in the official armoury."

Farley Mowat.

In October 1939, a month after the outbreak of the Second World War, Farley Mowat, the Canadian author, tried to join the RCAF. Rejected by recruiters, he enlisted in his father's outfit, the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment – The Hasty Ps. As an officer in the Non-Permanent Active Militia, with very little equipment, Mowat "had to be very inventive." He formed a ski platoon and devised drills and manouvres not know in the regular army, as he relates in his war-memoir, *And No Birds Sang*.

The success in battle that Canadians have demonstrated stems from the way in which the Militia – part-time soldiers – have learned new ways of attack and defence while drawing on the experiences of professionals. Today the Canadian Forces have four Reserves: The Militia (The Army Reserves), the Naval reserve, the Air Reserve, and the Communication Reserve. Canadian Rangers, drawn largely from Aboriginal peoples stand guard in Canada's empty north and cadet train for life in the services.

When the CEF sailed for France in 1914, most of the Officers and men came from the voluntary reserve. Since then, members of the militia and other Reserves have played significant roles in war and peace. For many years, the Reserves welcomed women more readily than did the Regular Forces. In 1985, Mary Nangle joined 709 (Toronto) Communications Regiment, a Reserve unit, as Regular Force Advisor: "This is where I really saw men and women treated the same. The unit had radio detachments made up of all male, all female, or a mixture. It didn't matter what the mixture was, it was based on the best people for the job. It worked out very well…"

Sir Arthur Currie joined the Militia in British Columbia in 1893, while working as a teacher and real estate broker, and became one of the outstanding Allied generals of the First World War. He wrote in his diary: " Thorough preparation must lead to success. Neglect nothing." *MacLeans* magazine summed up his style: "No flashing genius but a

capable administrator, cool headed and even tempered and sound in judgment… He is the last man in the world to stick to his own plan if a better one offers… he is first among equals for such is the way his staff works.”

Currie exemplified the Militia style of operation – egalitarian, innovative and willing to try new approaches.

During the Second World War, the Royal Canadian Navy Volunteer Reserve, formed in 1923, attracted young men from Canada’s yacht clubs who enjoyed being around boats. Many served in the small, fast ships of the navy’s Coastal Forces. The “hit and run” approach of the “Champagne Navy” and the piratical life of those who served in it attracted sailors who fretted under traditional naval discipline.

Like Currie, Wilfred Curtis rose to high rank after enlisting in the Militia. After service in the infantry in the First World War, he became a fighter pilot in the Royal Navy Air Service. After the war, while running his own-insurance firm, Curtis formed a squadron on the Non-Permanent Active Air Force. During the Second World War, he served as Air Officer Commanding the RCAF in London, and pressed for more autonomy for the service. Curtis ended his military career in 1953 as Chief of the Air Staff.

The spirit that motivates the members of today’s reserves becomes apparent when you talk with them. “Comradeship, is how Lt. Colin Smith of the West Novas – his grandfather’s regiment -sums it up.” When you’re sharing a trench with someone, you talk about everything and become really close,” adds Sgt. Andrews Pendelbury of the Princess Louise Fusilliers.

Sgt. Mary Nagle comes from a military family. She’s the only member who was not a cadet or a member of the reserves before entering the regular forces. Her father was the Regimental Sergeant Major of the 51st Service Battalion in Montreal who became its honorary Lt, Col. After he retired. Two brothers and a sister joined the unit while their father served as RSM, and another brother went straight from cadets into the army. The six members of the family in the services have spent time in postings across Canada, the United States, Germany, New Zealand, Egypt, Israel, Cyprus, Namibia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, and Kosovo and have received 11 medals for peacekeeping.

In the Reserves, young men and women discover qualities in themselves and others that they never before recognized. As Smith puts it: “You develop competence in so many aspects of life, acquiring skills, determining your leadership potential.”

Reserve members on peacekeeping missions who return to civilian life, rather than to the comradeships of regiments, often have trouble adjusting to normality in Canada. Most cannot forget the horrors they have seen. Others pass on what they have learned to others. Pendelbury teaches members of his unit to dig trenches and mediate disputes: “ I’ve been in trenches and I’ve been shot at. You learn to be confident, to know when to use your mouth and when to use the radio.” And he recalls one incident that has stayed with him: “ An old woman in Croatia rose at 4:30 a.m. every morning and brought us coffee when we

finished our time in the line. When we moved out and the troops of another nation moved in, she stood there, silent, watching us leave. And she was crying.”

The

PEACEFUL USES OF CANDA'S ARMED FORCES

"The grim fact is that we prepare for war like precocious giants and for peace like retarded pygmies."

Lester B. Pearson, Acceptance Speech, Noble Peace Prize, Oslo, Norway, December 10, 1957.

The years after the Korean conflict spawned a new acronym – PUMF. It stands for "Peaceful Uses of Military Forces." While armed forces of the western democracies stood guard against communism, governments found new roles for the men and women in their armies, navies and air forces. Four years before the outbreak of the First World War, the American philosopher William James wrote about a problem that bedevils our own time. In his essay, "The Moral Equivalent of War," he describes war as "the strong life." It brings to the fore many desirable human qualities – dedication to ideals, selflessness, comradeship – as well as offering endless opportunities for the exercise of evil. James saw the central issue of his time as "one of turning the individual and collective heroism and sacrifice demanded by war into more constructive channels."

Through a wide range of activities, Canada's service men and women are showing how this can be done. They have become giants in providing aid to the civil power in times of crisis, on special missions in Canada, and especially in peacekeeping.

One of the enduring images in 1990 was a young Canadian soldier, Pvt. Patrick Cloutier, standing almost nose to nose with a "Mohawk warrior" during the Oka crisis. A dispute between First Nations people and local residents turned violent. Barricades went up, and armed, masked men confronted members of the Surete du Quebec. Police rushed the barricade and one officer died in the gunfight. On August 17, the Quebec government asked the Canadian Forces to replace the provincial police and dismantle the barricades. The soldiers did so with minimum of fuss and the crisis ended. Almost 20 years earlier, on October 15, 1971, the Quebec government requested Ottawa to send in soldiers during the FLQ crisis to "help the police protect public buildings." A small number of extremists kidnapped a British trade official and the Quebec labour minister, Pierre Laporte. Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau invoked the War Measure Act to deal with an "apprehended

insurrection" and armed soldiers guarded the houses of key politicians and other s in Ottawa.

Members of Canada's Armed Forces enjoyed a more rewarding time in Quebec when 16,000 of them took part in what was claimed to be their biggest combined operation since the Second World War – providing security at the Montreal Olympics in 1971. In April of that year several hundred Canadian soldiers entered Kingston penitentiary after prisoners seized six hostages. This incident ended peacefully.

The special missions carried out by members of the Canada's Armed Forces range from ceremonial parades to search and rescue efforts that have saved countless lives. In Canada's North, service men and women have built airfields – and recovered remnants of Cosmos 954, the nuclear-powered Russian satellite that shattered in Canadian airspace in January 1978.

Providing relief and assistance in times of emergency has proved rewarding to members of the services. They rescued stranded people during the great Winnipeg Flood in 1950 – and provided help to the people of the Netherlands in1954 when their land flooded. Canadian soldiers restored services to stricken areas in Ontario and Quebec after the Great Ice Storm of 1998 and later helped to unblock the streets of Toronto after a massive snowstorm paralyzed that city.

RCAF Hercules delivered 10 per cent of the oil needs of Zambia after independent Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) cut off supplies to the African nation in the mid-sixties. After a cyclone killed more than 200,000 people in April 1971, in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), an Air Force Boeing 707 and four Yukons flew 13 missions, delivering 200,000 kg of medicine, blankets, tents, and food. In the previous year, Air Force planes flew in supplies and evacuated survivors after an earthquake in Peru. Service personnel assisted Jamaicans to clean up the mess after a hurricane hit the island in 1988. In 1989, 12 Canadian military engineers flew to Peshawer in Pakistan to train Afghans to deal with the millions of mines strewn throughout their battered land. Capt. Karen Durnford, second-in-command of the unit, noted: "The reason I wanted to be an engineer was to go into the field." Like so many of her comrades, she relished the challenge of doing new things in a strange land.

The participation of the military in "Operation Hazen," part of Canada's contribution to the International Geophysical Year in 1957 – 58, exemplified the relaxed and cheerful way in which its members accepted unusual assignments. They tackled the problems of supporting the "boffins" (scientists) with energy and enthusiasm, while wondering why such people would chose to spend their summers on icecaps in Northern Ellesmere Island. In late April 1957, Sgt. Dave Engel of the Royal Canadian Engineers landed in the first C-119 that touched down on frozen Lake Hazen. A ski-wheel DC-3, piloted by W/C J.G. Showler had already checked out the suitability of the lake as a landing site. Engel had not volunteered for the expedition, and no one knew if the lake ice could sustain a heavily laden "Flying Boxcar." But it did, and in –30C weather, Engel bulldozed a one thousand metre long landing strip for the expedition's cargo planes and DC-3. His hard

work, mechanical knowledge and incredible cheerfulness endeared the sergeant to the scientists and he returned in the spring of 1958 to put in the landing strip, accompanied by Sgt. J.E. Robertson of the Royal Canadian Signals who ensured that the expedition's radio equipment functioned properly.

During the summer of 1958, the RCAF again brought in supplies and lent a DC-3 piloted by F/L Merv Utas to assist the scientific research by taking parties around northern Ellesmere Island. Utas and his crew set up an unofficial "Artic Air Command" at the base camp on Lake Hazen, with a rather rude motto. And they appointed Lt. Cdr. Jim Croal of the RCN, who had helped to guide US Coast Guard supply vessels into Chandler Fiord on the Eastern side of Ellesmere Island, "Swiss Admiral." Landings and take-offs by DC-3's had never been attempted on glacial ice at such high latitudes and at high elevations. Merv Utas and his crew learned to do them by doing them, developing techniques for lifting the plane off glaciers with the help of JATO (Jet Assisted Take Off) pods. Utas and his crew landed near Ward Hunt Island on the extreme northern coast of Canada, liberated cans of alcohol left there by Robert Peary, the American explorer who camped there in 1906, and created a powerful cocktail christened "Peary's Peril."

Members of Canada's Armed Forces have developed special skills in rescuing people from perilous situations on land and sea. Just after Christmas 1980, a couple and their two children faced death as the flood waters of the Cheakmus River rose around their cabin, 80 kms north of Vancouver. A Search and rescue helicopter took off from Squamish airport in darkness, high winds and driving rain. Piloted by Major Keith Gathercole, it hovered above a house showing a light in the flooded river valley. SAR (Search and Rescue) Tech Steve Gledhill, dangled perilously above the house and then crashed on to its roof. Hauled up by the chopper crew, he descended again and found people crouched in the house. "They couldn't get out and in all probability they would have died there. Thank God we saw their light – and it was only a candle", Gathercole recalled. The couple were not the family that he and his crew had set out to save. By the time they found their home, it had began to crumble and the helicopter's fuel was running low. SAR Tech Craig Seaver dropped into the raging waters behind the house, and began the rescue by taking up the mother and her baby on the first cable-hoist. Then Gledhill went down to pick up the father and the three-year-old son. Both refused to be rescued. Gledhill grabbed the child and lifted him to safety, kicking and screaming. Then he went back for the father.

I April 1983, Craig Seaver, who had been awarded the Star of Courage, took part in the rescue of three survivors of a small plane. It had crashed on Chehalis Mountain, 100 kms east of Vancouver. Descending in a large rescue net with George Makowski, another SAR Tech, Seaver jumped with him on to a snow slope. Then the two men made their way to the crash site. Soon the survivors, given emergency medical aid, were on their way safety. On the following day, at the request of the pilots wife, Seaver and Arnie Maccauley recovered the man's body. The three SAR Techs received the Medal of Bravery in 1986 for "conspicuous courage in circumstances of great peril." In November 1996, SAR Techs Keith Mitchell and Bryan Pierce won the Cross of Valour. A Danish trawler northeast of Labrador reported that Joshua Alookie, a crew member, had taken ill.

With no handy ports or landing places nearby, the decision was taken to parachute Mitchell and Pierce onto the icy waters near the trawler as the only way to save the sick man's life. The two men, recovered with great difficulty by the trawler crew treated Alookie and saw him begin to recover.

Canada's military planes and ships no longer scour the country's coasts for signs of enemy submarines. Now they carry out endless patrols, often in foul weather, searching for signs of drug smuggling, illegal fishing in Canadian waters, and ocean pollution. And, every so often, they have to rescue those in peril on the sea. On December 4, 1983, the Search and Rescue Centre in Halifax received a "Mayday" call from the bulk carrier, *Ho Ming 5.* Its cargo had shifted in heavy seas off Newfoundland's Grand Banks. HMCS Iroquois, a helicopter destroyer on fisheries patrol, sped toward the *Ho Ming 5* as Aurora from Greenwood's 415 Maritime Patrol Squadron circled the battered vessel. With seas breaking over her deck, *Iroquois* sent its Sea King helicopter aloft. In the stormy seas and darkness of night it proved impossible to lift the crew off the deck of the *Ho Ming 5*. Just before dawn, the Captain decided to abandon ship as its list worsened. Two Zodiacs and the ship's helicopter rescued the carriers 20 Korean crew members. They left the rescue ship with *Iroquois* badges pinned or sewn to their clothes and several hundred dollars donated by the Canadian sailors.

In 1998, Canadian service personnel had the grisly task of recovering human remains from the waters off Peggy's Cove after the crash of Swissair flight 111.

And in peacekeeping in troubled countries throughout the world, the men and women of Canada's Armed Forces often confront danger and uncertainty. They have learned how to cope with all kinds of threats, ranging from poisonous snakes to drunken warlords.

Peacekeeping offers the same sorts of tensions as service in wartime – long periods of monotony interspersed with times of sheer terror. The ideas of international peacekeeping arose in 1931 when the League of Nations, the predecessor of the United Nations (UN), drafted a "Convention to Improve the Means of Preventing War." But the League lacked the will and the resources to create a peacekeeping force. In theory, the concept of peacekeeping is simple. You place a neutral, armed body between warring parties to stop them fighting and let the diplomats on each side work out ways of bringing about peaceful resolutions to conflict. I practice, peacekeeping is difficult, with those in the middle coming under fire from both sides while ancient hatreds and tensions make any resolution of conflicting demands impossible. In 1954, Lt. Gen. E.L.M. Burns became the Chief of Staff of the United Nations truce Supervisory Team (UNTSO), the first of these initiatives by the world body. It assigned soldiers, including some Canadians, to patrol the troubled border between the state of Israel and its Arab neighbours. Other Canadians served with the International Control in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, beginning in 1954. But the UN failed to stop wars breaking out in the Middle East and Indo-China.

Something more innovative was needed to prevent future conflict and to separate enemies bent on annihilating each other. The opportunity for this new approach to peacekeeping came in 1956 when Britain, France, and Israel invaded Egypt after President Nasser

nationalized the Suez Canal. Canada refused to support Britain, and the United States condemned the invasion. Canada took the lead in drafting a UN resolution to create an emergency international force "to secure and supervise cessation of hostilities." Lester B. Pearson, Canada's Minister of External Affairs, played a leading role in bringing the UN force into being and easing the invaders out of Egypt. He received the Nobel peace Prize in 1957 for his efforts, and Canada became the first UN member to earmark a military unit for peacekeeping duties.

Since 1947, over 100,000 Canadian service men and women have undertaken peacekeeping duties under the UN auspices, about a third of them in Cyprus. Most Canadians support these efforts and the nation has developed an international reputation in peacekeeping. When Canadian troops arrived in the Sinai Peninsula in 1973 after the end of the Yom Kipper War, the Finnish commander of the UN Emergency Force, Lt. Gen. Ensio Siilasvuo said: "I can't express how relieved I was when I heard the Canadians were coming."

Dr. Desmond Morton, Canada's leading military historian, writes of peacekeeping: " it used to be a matter of invitation and relatively benign. That is not the case of Peacekeeping a la Somalia, Bosnia, Haiti and (to a degree) Cambodia, where nasty people on all sides want you out."

Unfortunately, media coverage of the peacekeeping too often focuses on isolated incidents of behavior by a few deviant individuals rather than showing how the majority of service personnel have adapted and endured in new kinds of "No Man's Land."

On Cyprus, Canadian soldiers patrolled the Green Line separating Greeks and Turks, in 1964. Ten years later, they had front row seats when the Turks invaded the island. Caught in the crossfire between the two armies, Canadian soldiers rescued civilians and suffered casualties while doing so. In 1960, a contingent of 280 signalers under Capt. John Pariseau arrived in war-torn Congo on a UN mission. They were taken into custody, stripped, beaten with rifles and threatened with death.

As a young officer, John Gardam served on the first Canadian mission in Egypt in 1956. As he put it: "you can't do peacekeeping without getting to know the people on the ground and earning their respect." Mutual aid marked relationships with the Bedouin. Canadians provided first aid for their children, shared their water and retrieved goats that wandered into minefields. The Bedouin warned patrols about buried mines. Gardam recalled a courageous woman who spent the night by the body of a peacekeeper killed in a minefield to ward off prowling dogs.

As in war, death can come with terrible suddenness to Canadians keeping the peace in distant lands. A special exhibit in the Canadian War Museum in Ottawa lists the names of over 100 Canadian service people who have died on UN missions. On September 27, 1957, Sgt. Ivan Stark's jeep hit a mine and he became the sixth Canadian peacekeeper to die. In May 2000, a landmine training center at Canadian Forces Base Kingston was named after Stark.

More than 28,000 Canadians have served as peacekeepers in the Middle East, and 48 have died there. Experience here, however, offered little direction to Canadian service personnel sent to Croatia and Bosnia. Many of them had a hard time coping with life in a ruined land where civil society had fallen apart and ancient hatreds led to vicious killings of innocent people. An Army chaplain outlined some of the stresses the troops faced: " It was manageable. It was hard. We came face to face relatively early in out tour with the reality that our own soldiers are paying for this peace with their lives. And that was brought home very early to us and it continued to follow us throughout our tour."

Canadian peacekeepers drove their vehicles into areas in Croatia under attack by Serbs in the hope that this would stop the shooting, continuing the tradition of boldness and discipline that marks Canada's record in war: "(This) was totally against what we were supposed to be doing, but they did it because their concern was to protect life." Peacekeepers wrote home for blankets, pens and paper for people who had lost everything, and they often had to recover the bodies of victims of ethnic cleansing. One soldier recalled finding a terrified old man wandering around town. He handed him over to two local residents. They shot him. When the Canadian said he would call the police, the two men calmly showed him their badges: "We are the police."

Canadians became skilled in this new kind of peacekeeping. In February 2000, Canadians stood with other NATO troops stopping rioters from storming a bridge in Kosovo Mitrovica. Their commander, Colonel Ian Fenton, noted: "I'm always concerned because we are in a country filled with hate, in an area where people use violence as a means to settle any dispute or to show their displeasure, but our people are well prepared. They are well trained and they are well protected. They are doing tasks they know is important."

In wartime, everyone soldiers on, hoping they won't get theirs, knowing that sooner or later, the conflict will end, In peacekeeping in places like the former Yugoslavia, the horror goes on endlessly, rooted in centuries of hatred between different peoples. Over time, this wears down even the most idealistic individual.

Seeing the divisions between people in strife-torn countries, members of the military reflect on how their experiences changed their view of Canada. As Cpt. Lee Riswold put it: " I figure we can get along with just about anybody. Service with the UN in Cambodia and Haiti sure makes you appreciate life in Canada." While helping with logistics in 1993 during a UN sponsored election in Cambodia, Riswold put up perimeter wire: "One of the team slid down a slope and landed on a mine. Fortunately it was a dud." Haiti offered other challenges. Riswold recalled the heat and the piles of garbage in the streets – and the dangerous traffic: "It's kind of tense. Friends went out to supper and were hit by a truck. Two of them had to be evacuated back to Canada.

Captain John McLearn of the Royal Canadian Regiment discovered at three o'clock one afternoon in January 1992, that he had to be ready to fly to El Salvador on the following day. The government and guerillas had finally stopped fighting and signed a peace treaty on December 16, 1991. Spanish – speaking countries had no troops to spare, so McLearn

joined 53 other Canadian officers checking and verifying the numbers and weapons of the former warring parties. McLearn stated: " As a professional soldier, I never have a reason for refusing as assignment offered to me." With a Spanish paratrooper, he became the sole authority in and around the town of Los Marias. The area had been fought over for 12 years, and the only support for McLearn and his colleague lay 21 km away: "We were everything. We didn't sleep terribly much. We had to ensure that a nearby guerilla brigade stayed in its area of concentration." The peacekeepers learned that this group was moving around, so they set out one night to intercept them. Hearing sounds, they switched on the high beams of their vehicle. McLearn shouted: "Hi guys! What are you doing?" the guerillas recognized the only Canadian voice in the region, and the two UN officers later convinced their leader to stop the patrols. McLearn identified the Canadian style of peacekeeping: "We have a fine reputation for getting things squared away without too much fuss and bother. We also keep a firm grip on our own operations, and we are always at the ready."

In 1998, the peacekeeping center at Cornwallis, in Nova Scotia, named after Lester B. Pearson, published *Eyewitness to Peace,* a collection of letters compiled by Jane Snailham. They highlight comradeship ("we lost two more of our guys… it's as if a part of every one of us over here has died"), tenacity ("but we are Canadians and we will overcome"), fatalism ("God chooses the ones he wants"), making the best of conditions ("this place is seriously screwed up"), compassion ("we wouldn't trade this mission for anything in the world. It's exactly the kind of fulfilling, personally rewarding mission we dream of,")

In peacekeeping, as in war, members of Canada's Armed Forces have few illusions about what they can achieve, even with their best efforts. From somewhere in Rwanda, a soldier wrote: "The system is not working well – we are meant to make it netter. It should be easy to make it better, as it is so bad. I do not think to will be possible to get it right."

Jim Davis served as a peacekeeper in Croatia, Bosnia and Rwanda and told of his army life in *The Sharp End*: *A Canadian Soldier's Story.* After a series of dead-end jobs, Davis became a member of the Royal Canadian Regiment in 1985 and reveled in his role: "It was a great time to be a young soldier." Before setting out on a UN assignment in the former Yugoslavia, David wrote: "For myself, I am calm. I am surrounded by twenty of the best men I ever met."

Davis and his comrades came under fire in Croatia – to their surprise: "We were Canadians." The Canadians soon discovered how inadequate their vehicles and equipment were for the assigned tasks. Like any good soldier, Davis scrounged what he could to replace the inferior official issue. He found Sarajevo "surreal." Escorting a UN official, Davis noticed an historical marker on a bridge – the spot where Gavrilo Princip shot Archduke Ferdinand in June 1914, the act that triggered the First World War.

In June 1994, Davis transferred to the Airborne Regiment and spent three months in Mareru, Rwanda, guarding a Canadian hospital. Members of the regiment undertook many acts of kindness for the local people, caring for their sick and injured, giving their

dead a decent burial. When airborne soldiers relieved a French Foreign Legion outpost in a jungle village, they discovered a large pit filled with dead and dying prisoners. The French dealt with anyone considered to be a criminal by throwing the person into the pit and leaving them to die. The Canadians separated the living from the dead and gave them medical attention.

Davis sums up his life in the military in words that resonate through all in it: “I had the opportunity to see things and be part of some of the great events of our time…Best of all, I got a chance to meet and work with the best people this country will ever produce. The bonds of friendship, the camaraderie, the absolute trust…was without equal.”

Major – General Raymond Crabbe, who served as Deputy Commander of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) in the former Yugoslavia in 1994 – 95 saw many examples of brutal and ruthless behavior: “Canadians have a terrible innocence about what happens in places like Bosnia when civil order breaks down. In such situations, it’s very hard to tell the good from the bad. We are impartial, well trained and have no bias towards any faction. We stay in the middle – in true Canadian fashion. We’re credible as a nation and as a military presence.

As in the two world wars, in South Africa and Korea, Canadians are often asked to take on the hardest tasks by UN commanders. As in wartime, they have not been found wanting. Crabbe says of the future of peacekeeping, a moral equivalent of war that William James could never have envisaged: “The whole process has become much more complex, difficult and dangerous. Future situations…will be much more fluid. No hard and fast battle lines. No more simply sitting in Ops (Observation Post). We will be working closely with civilian organizations, serving as protective extensions of humanitarian efforts.”

In March 2000, Camp Maple Leaf in Zumalia, East Timor, closed its doors. Canadians served there for six months with a UN force, keeping the peace after the new nation gained independence from Indonesia. Two platoons returned from a patrol to take part in the farewell ceremonies. They had been in the jungle, trying to flush out militia from West Timor who threatened the fragile peace on the island. The militia evaded them, but the Canadians made the region safer as local people put their lives together in a land ravaged by war.

East Timor is remote from South Africa. Flushing out dangerous men in its jungle is a far cry from chasing Boers on the veldt. However, members of the Canadian military have demonstrated their skills in both areas. In a time of rapid change, the record of Canada’s Armed Forces has shown continuity and coherence based on values such as comradeship, initiative, unit pride, discipline – and raw courage. These qualities are as valuable in building a civil society as they are in creating a strong military force. Thus a study of Canada’s military history can yield lessons for all those seeking to make this country a better and more dynamic nation.