

35 CER BUILDS ICE BRIDGE ON LAKE HAYES

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Some sixty engineers from 35 Combat Engineer Regiment took part in Exercise DÉMINEUR POLAIRE at Lake Hayes on CFB Valcartier from 16 to 31 January 2016.

The exercise involved building two ice bridges on Lake Hayes to provide a crossing for vehicles with a tare weight of approximately 15 tonnes. In all ice bridging operations, planning is key. Starting on 16 January, 10 Sqn sappers began clearing snow and flooding the ice to make it thick enough for the safe passage of an MSVS on the lake. Their efforts were successful, for the ice gained about 10 inches in thickness despite the warmer weather that appeared in the last days and greatly limited the bridge flooding capability.

Last year, 35 CER conducted a similar exercise on Lac Rond over a two-day period. This year, the Regiment wanted to make things more difficult by building lanes that were wider, longer and thicker. For the first time, 35 CER sappers used Big Ice pumps that are commonly used in the North on ice roads and are currently being tested by the Canadian Military Engineers. The pumps' simplicity of use is impressive and their immense 120,000 L/h output makes them very popular with the sappers.

In addition to building the ice bridges, the sappers had to show ingenuity by making a ramp to get the vehicles through and reinforcing the swampy approaches to the bridge with logs placed to form what is affectionately known as a corduroy road. The road could be used after generous flooding when the frozen surface had become compact and sturdy enough.

Exercise DÉMINEUR POLAIRE was also intended to serve as a confirmation exercise to complete the winter warfare course held over a period of three weekends. The winter warfare course entailed familiarizing candidates with basic knowledge and techniques for surviving and fighting in Arctic weather conditions. After classroom and practical learning phases, the course ended with the building of improvised shelters.

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Cpl David Houde builds a lean-to during the winter warfare course conducted at Lake Hayes.

Photo: Lt Isabelle Provost



Engineers perform a helicopter insertion on Lake Hayes during Exercise DÉMINEUR POLAIRE.
Photo: Lt Isabelle Provost



An MSVS crosses the ice bridge built on Lake Hayes during Exercise DÉMINEUR POLAIRE.
Photo: Lt Isabelle Provost



Spr Maxime Thibault floods the ice to increase the load-bearing capacity of the bridge and allow vehicles to cross.
Photo: Lt Isabelle Provost



Aerial view of the ice bridge created by 35 CER engineers.

Photo: Maj Simon Germain