

Exercise Northern Sapper

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Once again, 5 Wing Goose Bay and the province of Newfoundland and Labrador opened their arms and welcomed 4 Engineer Support Regiment (4 ESR) to the Northern regions of Canada for its annual exercise NORTHERN SAPPER.



The last week of January saw 4 ESR deploy an advance party, road move of stores and two main body flights. They all arrived safe and sound, but not without weather issues. It would seem that Advanced Winter Warfare training had started early!

Luckily the Regiment had Joint Meteorological Center (JMC) accompany us, taking their readings and measurements and talking to the weather Gods helping us all out. The weather co-operated throughout much of the exercise, making the cold a little more bearable but adding much value to our training.

48 Combat Service Support (CSS) Squadron, Log Troop under the leadership of Capt Simon Bowser, scurried around in the background making sure everyone had the necessities for survival and training in an arctic climate. Sent forward to the community of Nain were MCpl Blaine Mahar and Cpl Andrew Arsenault, who made all the logistics work in Nain. As cold as it was in Goose Bay, it was assuredly colder in Nain. They actually got to meet a polar bear. Not alive, mind you, but it had been, recently.



The exercise ran as a mock Immediate Response Unit (IRU) deployment IOT to recover components of a fake Tomahawk missile that local residents had notionally reported seeing. Once the Regiment arrived in Nain, they linked up with members of 5 Canadian Ranger Patrol Group (CRPG) to finalize a plan on how best to recover the parts. Just over 30 members of 42 Field Sqn, mostly composed of members from 1 Tp, along with 5 CRPG personnel, set out the next day on foot with the plan finalized. After four days

of patrolling and searching, the group had found two missile components and rendered them safe with the help of members from 43 Counter Improvised Explosive Device (C-IED) Sqn.

In total, they marched over 40 km with toboggan groups and endured temperatures as low as -52 degrees Celsius. The troop's time in Nain came to an end with a community day where they observed and participated in traditional Innu games and meals. The Rangers shared experiences and assisted with tasks ranging from snowmobile use to ice fishing, and were an integral part of the patrol's success.



Attached to 43 CIED for the duration of the exercise was a section of Polish engineers with an Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) background and a section of Rangers from 5 CRPG. The Rangers were an integral asset for their vast knowledge of the area and advanced winter survival skills. Throughout the exercise, the Rangers as well as the Polish soldiers got the opportunity to participate in various Engineer and EOD tasks.

Following the dismounted patrol, 43 CIED Sqn moved to the Practice Training Area (PTA) to conduct EOD, demolition and small arms training while 2 Tp of 42 Fd Sqn executed a three-day mounted patrol on Light Over-Snow Vehicles (LOSVs or "snowmobiles"). On the second day of the patrol, the troop conducted a dismounted search and recovered another component of the downed missile.

In Goose Bay, troops had the opportunity to occupy a defensive position and construct snow defenses that were used as targets to demonstrate the effects of demolitions and small arms fire. The troops also constructed improvised shelters that were put to the test when wind gust reached 110km/h.



The final portion of the exercise involved the learning of survival skills at the German Camp in Goose Bay. Members of 5 CRPG taught the Sqn how to snare and ice fish, as well as how to prepare their "catch of the day". At the German Camp the Sqn also constructed an ice road with each section being cycled through the building process in order to gain experience on its set up, construction, and improvement.

48 CSS Maint Troop had their own issues to contend with. Of the 68 LOSVs, 4 ESR never broke as many as past years, but being isolated made it difficult to locate and purchase available parts. As per normal, Maint Tp came through and kept the Regiment moving in fine fashion.

Work hard, play hard. CHIMO!