

THE ADMIRAL'S VIEW



Operation *Caribbe*

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Operation *Caribbe* is the Canadian Armed Forces' (CAF's) contribution to a joint interagency and multinational effort among Western Hemisphere and European nations to counter illicit drug trafficking in the Caribbean Basin. Some of the other countries that participate or support this operation include: Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, France, Guatemala, Honduras, the Netherlands, Panama, the United Kingdom and the United States. Every year, Canada, in consort with these partner nations, intercepts and seizes millions of dollars of illegal drugs. In addition to the seizures, the presence of the international forces in the area creates a significant barrier to narcotics traffickers, further deterring the movement of illegal drugs, and thus plays a major role in reducing these criminal activities.

Canada has participated in this operation since 2006, assigning RCN ships and RCAF aircraft to patrol international waters and airspace in both the Caribbean Basin and the Pacific Ocean approaches to Central America. The RCN's commitment to this effort has resulted in frequent deployments of naval ships on Operation *Caribbe*. For example, in 2012 six HMC Ships, KINGSTON, GOOSE BAY, ST JOHN'S, IROQUOIS, PRESERVER and OTTAWA, all deployed on counter-drug operations in either the Caribbean Basin or on the Pacific coast of Central America. The magnitude of Canada's commitment to this mission will be similar during 2013 and HMC Ships KINGSTON and SUMMERSIDE are currently deployed on Operation *Caribbe*. This counter-drug mission is unique because it is the only operation which has been supported with deploying units from every class of ship currently in service in the RCN. This includes the PROTECTEUR, IROQUOIS and KINGSTON Class ships as well as the VICTORIA Class Submarines.

When deployed in support of Operation *Caribbe*, Canadian ships and aircraft work in consort with the partner nations and in particular with the United States Coast Guard (USCG). RCN ships have no law enforcement mandate and thus no authority to arrest drug traffickers or seize illicit cargo. The USCG does have this authority and thus surveillance provided by Canadian ships and aircraft supports the USCG in enforcing their mandate. In addition to this, Canadian ships have begun embarking United States Coast Guard Law Enforcement Detachments (USCG LED) under a memorandum of understanding between the American and Canadian governments. In this role, Canadian ships provide the transportation for the USCG LEDs to board and inspect suspect vessels.



The partnership between the USCG and the CAF has resulted in some spectacular narcotics seizures like the one conducted in November 2012 where more than 1000 kilograms of cocaine were recovered by USCG LED embarked in HMCS OTTAWA; and in 2011 when HMCS St JOHN'S supported the US Coast Guard Cutter Cypress as it recovered 6,750 kilograms of cocaine from a scuttled semi-submersible vessel. Canadian ships and aircraft have been involved in numerous other seizures, clearly demonstrating the effectiveness of our effort, but the success represented by these large seizures only provides part of the picture. The persistent presence of RCN ships and RCAF aircraft in this region has also resulted in significant disruption of the flow of narcotics and ultimately, deterrence to drug traffickers.

Operation *Caribbe* is only one aspect of Canada's engagement with other nations in the Americas. The RCN also participates in training exercises with some of our partner nations. These exercises are a fundamental tool in building working relationships with nations throughout the region that share our interest in the security and stability of the Caribbean Basin. The expertise that Canadians bring to these events greatly enhances the development of better capability for maritime security operations amongst the partner nations. Furthermore, the relationships and experience that we develop during these exercises makes us much more effective when called upon to provide aid such as during the aftermath of the devastating earthquake which struck Haiti in 2010.

Operation *Caribbe* is a highly visible demonstration of Canada's commitment to peace and stability in Caribbean Basin. This coalition of partner nations, which has been forged by the desire to bring law and order to the high seas of this region, stems the flow of narcotics through the Caribbean Basin to Europe and North America. The presence of our CAF personnel in this region not only strengthens our ties with our partner nations but ultimately, reduces the flow of illegal drugs into Canada, making our country a safer place to live.