

National Peacekeeper's Day



History On National Peacekeepers' Day, we remember the peacekeepers who have sacrificed so much, even their lives, so others can know peace. We take the time to remember these heroes on August 9 because it was on that date in 1974 that the greatest single loss of Canadian lives on a peacekeeping mission occurred. Nine Canadians lost their lives while serving with the United Nations Emergency Force in Egypt and Israel.

Canadian peacekeepers help foster sustainable peace and security in countries devastated by conflict. Canada's Armed Forces, Canadian diplomats, the RCMP, provincial and municipal police forces and civilians all take part. Peacekeepers deliver humanitarian aid, supervise elections, repatriate refugees, train local police forces, disarm warring factions, clear mines and improve education and democratic systems.

Canada and Peacekeeping

During the first half of this century, some 1.5 million Canadians were called upon to defend peace and freedom around the world during the First World War, the Second World War and the Korean War. More than 110,000 Canadians lost their lives. Following these terrible conflicts, Canada began looking for ways to prevent wars. Contemporary peacekeeping is a natural extension of Canada's longstanding commitment to the principles of peace and freedom.

Following the Second World War, Canada was involved in military observer missions in the late 1940s, particularly during the Arab-Israeli and the India-Pakistan conflicts. From 1950 to 1953, Canada joined other UN nations to resist aggression during the Korean War. However, it wasn't until 1956 that the term peacekeeping entered the popular vocabulary, thanks to a Canadian.

During the Suez Crisis of 1956, Secretary of State for External Affairs Lester B. Pearson - later Canada's 14th Prime Minister - proposed that a multinational UN peacekeeping force be sent to the Suez to separate the warring parties. For his visionary idea, Mr. Pearson was awarded the 1957 Nobel Peace Prize.

Peacekeepers are traditionally placed between hostile forces to supervise cease-fires and the withdrawal of opposing forces. In recent years the roll of peacekeepers has expanded to include the delivery of humanitarian aid, the supervision of elections, the repatriation of refugees, the disarming of warring factions and the reclamation of shattered landscapes through the clearing of mines, etc. Another increasingly important aspect of peacekeeping is support for stable government and human rights, including the organization of electoral systems, and the training of police forces and the judiciary. These new peacekeeping activities now involve many Canadian civilians, in addition to the **Canadian Armed Forces**.

Canada is one of a handful of nations to which the United Nations can regularly turn to obtain peacekeeping advice and expert peacekeepers. Canada has participated in the overwhelming majority of peacekeeping operations mandated by the United Nations Security Council. Tens of thousands of Canadians have served in more than 40 separate peacekeeping missions. But Canada's contribution to peacekeeping is not without risk: more than 100 Canadians have died in peacekeeping operations and hundreds more have been wounded.

In 1988, the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded collectively to UN peacekeepers in recognition of their historic efforts to limit violence and promote peace. A Canadian invented peacekeeping and Canada has always been one of the world's most committed peacekeeping nations. In a small way, every Canadian can share in the honour the Nobel Prize confers on the peacekeepers of the world, including Canada's peacekeepers

In the Service of peace 1947 - Present

The Faces of Peace: Veterans of the Canadian Forces

The mission of Canadian Forces members is to defend our country, its interests and its values, while contributing to international peace and security. They serve in many capacities at home and throughout the world carrying on Canada's proud military tradition. Over the years, many Canadian Forces Veterans have served overseas in a variety of United Nations (UN), North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and other multinational task forces.

International peace missions often have positive effects but the strife, conflict and death that can surround these efforts is not always easy to handle. Being separated from friends and family for months at a time, the possibility of witnessing extreme violence and cruelty, of having to use force or have force used against you, and the realization that you could be killed or wounded while carrying out your duties are some of the experiences that many Canadian Forces Veterans know well.

International Efforts

During the first half of the 20th century, some 1.5 million Canadians were called upon to defend peace and freedom around the world during the First World War, the Second World War and the Korean War. Following these terrible conflicts, in which more than 110,000 Canadians died, Canada and other countries felt that it was better to try to prevent wars when possible than fight them. Our country played a leading role in the peacekeeping movement from the outset. In fact, a Canadian, Lester B. Pearson, won the 1957 Nobel Peace Prize for his pioneering vision in helping establish a UN force to prevent the Suez Crisis of the 1950s from escalating into a global confrontation.

Since then, Canada's commitment to international peace efforts and other overseas military actions has continued. Some of the places Canadians have served include Egypt, Cyprus, Syria, the Persian Gulf, the former Yugoslavia, Somalia, Haiti, Rwanda, Ethiopia and Eritrea, East Timor, and Afghanistan.

Peace Mission Challenges

Peacekeeping is based on the idea that having a force of impartial troops present in a regional conflict can help reduce tensions and improve the chance of peaceful settlement to a violent conflict. But filling this role is demanding work. Put yourself in the boots of a person leaving on an international peace mission. You could be called upon to monitor cease-fires, patrol buffer zones, act as an intermediary between clashing groups, clear landmines, investigate war crimes, protect refugees and provide humanitarian assistance.

The role of the Canadian Forces now involves all aspects of peace support, including peace-making and peace-building. The skills and training needed for peace support includes combat skills as well as contact skills. Their lives and the lives of others often depend on their skill in both areas and their ability to use both at the right time.

Each situation encountered by the Canadian Forces when they enter into a new peace mission is unique. Canadian Forces members returning from peace missions often remark that "there was very little peace to keep," a reference to the fact that our military is often asked to intervene in situations of full-fledged war where the environment is not at all peaceful.

Facts and Figures

The number of Canadians who have served has varied greatly over the years, according to the needs of our country and the world. Over one million Canadians served during the Second World War. Our present-day military numbers are approximately 60,000 regular force members and 20,000 reservists.

More than 125,000 Canadian Forces members have served in dozens of international peace missions to more than 35 countries over the past six decades. Approximately 125 Canadians have died in these efforts and many more have suffered physical and mental injury.

The Canadian Forces perform many other important functions. Search-and-rescue operations, patrolling our air space and territorial waters, supporting anti-drug operations and helping out in the aftermath of natural disasters, such as the Manitoba Flood of 1997 or the Great Ice Storm of 1998, are just a sample of some of these vital duties.

Heroes and Bravery

In 1988, the prestigious Nobel Peace Prize was collectively awarded to the world's peacekeepers, including thousands of Canadians, who served in UN missions during that year. This honour inspired Canada to create the Canadian Peacekeeping Service Medal. Tens of thousands of serving Canadian Forces members and Veterans proudly wear this medal.

International peace missions have a large element of reaching out. While there is always a political element to peace missions, the on-the-ground efforts are often characterized by human emotion and compassion. For example, during the UN peace efforts in Somalia in the early 1990s, Naval Lieutenant Heather MacKinnon operated a medical clinic, worked in hospitals and orphanages and provided humanitarian assistance to the victims of war and famine in the embattled city of Mogadishu. It was a tense and dangerous time, and the risks of working there were very real. Lt. MacKinnon helped many people in this time of great upheaval and laid the groundwork for further relief efforts in the battered country.

Sacrifice

Many Canadians have served on several international missions in the course of their careers, repeatedly fulfilling their duties against the constant background of danger. One example of this special effort comes from Master Corporal Mark Isfeld. He was a combat engineer who served in three peace missions before losing his life in a landmine explosion in Croatia in 1994. This Canadian soldier was known for giving children in war-torn regions handmade dolls that his mother and others in Canada had made. He passed out these dolls to try to bring a little happiness and hope to the children. After his tragic death, the story began to spread of how he touched children's lives with those handmade dolls from Canada. Thousands of these dolls then began to flood in from people all across Canada who decided to make dolls for other Canadian soldiers to give away overseas and keep MCpl. Isfeld's tradition alive. The dolls have since become known as Izzy dolls.

Canadian Forces Veterans have made many personal and global achievements, and have made personal sacrifices to defend Canada's interests and its values, while contributing to international peace and security. These men and women take their honoured place in our country's military history beside their fellow Veterans and fallen comrades of Canada's earlier war efforts. Their commitment has earned Canada a worldwide reputation as a country that supports and protects peace.

Canadian Forces in Egypt

When most Canadians think of Egypt, the beauty of the Nile River and the great pyramids might be some of the first things that come to mind. However, for thousands of Canadian Forces members who served there over the last 50 years, a different image could come to mind – one of conflict between two clashing countries with nothing separating them except the peace efforts of Canada and other concerned countries.

Canadian Forces members took part in the United Nations (UN) peace missions in the Gaza strip and the Sinai Peninsula of Egypt between 1956 and 1967, and again from 1973 to 1979. Since 1986, Canadians have also participated in the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) peace mission in Egypt.

These missions have touched the lives of many Canadian families and communities as tens of thousands of Canadians have left for Egypt over the years to return with a new sense of military conflict and strife and a deeper appreciation for how complicated the concept of peace can be.

Egypt

Egypt is a desert nation in the Middle East, strategically located to form the only link between the two huge continents of Africa and Asia. Egypt is home to the Suez Canal, a very important waterway which allows ship traffic between the Mediterranean Sea and the Red Sea.

While Egypt gained full independence in the years following the Second World War, the Suez Canal remained under the control of British and French interests. In 1956, after years of increasing tensions between Egypt and these European powers, Egypt seized control of the waterway. France, the United Kingdom and Israel were dismayed by this act and decided to act together to forcibly change the situation. Later that year, Israel invaded Egypt and pushed on toward the Suez Canal. The British and French then landed troops of their own along the Canal Zone to secure it.

Canada and the World Responds

Due to this complicated situation and intense unrest, the United Nations immediately met to try to resolve the issue and called for a cease-fire and withdrawal of foreign forces from Egypt. In discussions, Canada's then-Minister of External Affairs, Lester B. Pearson, called for the creation of a multinational armed force to go into Egypt to help restore peace and prevent a major international confrontation. The UN members agreed to this plan, which would be monitored and enforced by a UN force under the command of another Canadian, Lieutenant-General E.L.M. "Tommy" Burns. The countries involved in the conflict accepted these terms and the modern era of international peacekeeping was born. It is a source of Canadian pride that Lester B. Pearson (who would go on to become Prime Minister of Canada), was awarded the 1957 Nobel Peace Prize for his work toward establishing this first major UN peacekeeping mission.

Canada participated in this early UN peacekeeping deployment. As dozens of missions followed over the years, the concept of peacekeeping evolved to a peace support force that manages military conflict and civil unrest in a sophisticated, complex, and often dangerous process.

In this first effort, some practical issues had to be resolved for the Canadians' efforts to be effective. They needed a way to distinguish themselves from the British who had been involved in the fighting, and whose uniforms and weapons looked very similar to those used by Canada. It was decided that the UN troops would wear blue headgear to be easily identifiable as being there for a peaceful purpose and not as combatants. The blue berets and helmets worn by UN peacekeepers have become one of the most well known symbols of today's international peace support movement.

The UN initiative was initially a success, with Britain and France withdrawing their troops by the end of the year and Israel withdrawing by March 1957. UN observers remained in the border area between Israel and Egypt to monitor the situation until tensions heightened again in 1967 in the lead-up to the Six-Day War and demands by Egypt for a departure of the peace forces stationed on their soil.

Following the Yom Kippur War of 1973, where Egypt and Syria attacked Israeli forces, the UN was again called in to maintain peace in the region which they did until the Camp David Accords. This created the framework for a lasting peace agreement between Egypt and Israel, and the UN mission came to an end in 1979.

In 1986, the Canadian Forces would return to Egypt as part of the non-UN-administered MFO peace presence that had been put in place in 1982 to support the terms of this peace treaty.

Facts and Figures

In all its missions to Egypt, Canada's main contribution was logistical in nature, providing services like transportation, communication, supply and health support for the UN forces.

At times, the total size of the UN peace forces in Egypt was upward of 7,000 troops drawn from 20 countries. More than 150 UN troops died in their peace efforts for Egypt, including more than 50 Canadians. This was the largest loss of life in any single Canadian peace effort.

Heroes and Bravery

For our Canadian Forces members, there is more to peace efforts than the traditional skills of the military. For example, once active fighting in Egypt came to an end, the peacekeepers came in and the Israelis and Egyptians had to co-exist under terms of the cease-fire. Much of the job of the local commanders of the UN mission (which included Canadian officers like Bill Porter and Ken Nette) following the end of the Yom Kippur War in 1973 was diplomatic in nature. They had to broker countless small but delicate negotiations involving matters like prisoner exchanges and recovery of war dead.

Heroes who showed bravery and skill during missions like these can be found in almost every community across Canada. But when they return to their home communities, their experiences are often not well understood. That's because many members of the Canadian Forces find it hard to talk about the military and civil conflict and strife they have lived through, or reveal how hard it is to leave behind loved ones for months at a time.

But peace efforts can have positive impacts on those who participate in them. For example, Canadians on many of these missions are exposed to many different cultures, including the one that exists in the place they are stationed and that of their fellow troops from all over the world. Canadians in the MFO mission take the opportunity to learn about the cultural identity and history of the Middle East, a knowledge that can only help them better understand our own culturally-diverse country of Canada.

Sacrifice

On the edge of the town of Gaza lies a well-tended cemetery filled with the graves of Allied troops who died while serving in the Middle East during the First World War. One small corner of this cemetery, reached through gates adorned with gilded maple leaves, is home to the graves of 22 Canadians who died in the course of the peace efforts to Egypt in the 1950s and '60s.

The Canadians who are buried there died as a result of perils like ambush, landmine explosions and vehicle accidents. These represent only some of the dangers that must be faced during peace efforts. Even today, the grim legacy of war lives on in Egypt, where the peril of landmines is an ongoing danger for its citizens and for the troops maintaining the peace.

The Canadian Forces members who lay buried next to those who served their countries and the world in the First World War, their sacrifices equal in death, are remembered by Canadians around the world.

Canadian Forces in Cyprus

Imagine being far away from home, spending a tense six months or a year in the midst of hostile groups of people and knowing that the constant tension in the country where you are serving could flare into violence at almost any moment. This was the situation that Canadian Forces members serving on the United Nations (UN) peace mission to Cyprus often faced from 1964 to 1993.

The Canadian mission to Cyprus lasted 29 years, making it one of the longest overseas commitments in which Canada has ever participated. In total, more than 25,000 Canadian Forces members served in Cyprus over the decades. Many of them served in Cyprus more than once, participating in several rotations. In 1993, Canada withdrew most of its troops from the UN peace efforts in Cyprus but a small Canadian presence remains as UN efforts to bring about a permanent peace continue.

The length of the mission and the large number of Canadians who have served in Cyprus over the years makes it a well-known effort to many of us. Like Veterans of the First and Second World Wars and the Korean War, the men and women who willingly left their homes and travelled halfway around the world to serve in a tense and violent place like Cyprus are Canadians who achieved and sacrificed much to protect peace and freedom.

Cyprus

Cyprus is a small Mediterranean island of just over 9,000 square kilometres, making it a little smaller than Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia. It has a population of almost 800,000 people. Cyprus has a very tumultuous history, including the period leading up to and after 1960, when the island gained independence. Much of the unrest is rooted in ethnic tensions.

Cyprus has been largely Greek in culture, language and population for more than 3,000 years and many Greek Cypriots have long favoured politically joining the nation of Greece. However, there is also a sizeable minority population of Turkish people who are uneasy about this possibility, as well as the country of Turkey itself, which is concerned about the situation in Cyprus because of its nearness to the Turkish coast. During the time around the island's independence, frictions between the ethnic groups in Cyprus grew, leading to the spread of strife and violence across the island in 1963.

The World Responds

Because of this unrest, Cyprus asked the UN to establish a peacekeeping force in 1964. Once it arrived, the situation was unlike anything that UN peacekeepers had previously experienced. The quarrelling populations of Turks and Greeks were very intermingled on the island and the UN troops were faced with maintaining the peace in a situation where many small groups of Turks lived among the larger Greek population. Canadian soldiers needed both their traditional skills of soldiering and the skills of managing disagreements and conflicts between civilians. It has been remarked of difficult situations like these that "Peacekeeping is not a soldier's job, but only a soldier can do it."

A fragile balance was reached but was upset in 1974 with a coup d'état by Greek Cypriots who wanted the island to become a part of Greece. In turn, Turkey invaded the island and took control of the northern part of Cyprus. Canadian and the other UN peacekeepers suddenly found themselves in the middle of a war zone where there was little stability and much violence.

After several weeks of active fighting in which three Canadians died and 17 were injured, a cease-fire was negotiated. The UN established the famous "Green Line," a cease-fire line and buffer zone stretching across Cyprus, separating the portions of the island controlled by the Greeks and the Turks.

UN peacekeeping forces patrolled this uneasy buffer zone which, in places, was only several metres wide. At times, gunfire regularly occurred along the Green Line. It was not safe to move so much as a sandbag along the buffer zone because it might create an incident. Canadian peacekeepers had to live with the fact that they were between two very agitated groups and that they were tasked with keeping a lid on simmering tensions. Crowd control and dealing with unruly mobs upset over some violation, whether real or imagined, were ongoing issues that the Canadians were constantly called on to diffuse.

Facts and Figures

The Canadian Forces contingent in Cyprus varied in size from fewer than 500 to more than 1,100 personnel.

More than 160 UN personnel from different countries have died in the course of the peace efforts in Cyprus.

The 180 kilometre-long Green Line buffer zone that runs the width of Cyprus varies in width from 20 metres to seven kilometres.

Heroes and Bravery

To one degree or another, bravery and heroism were integral parts of the efforts of all the Canadians in Cyprus over the years. The invasion of 1974 saw fierce fighting with thousands of Turkish soldiers landing in Cyprus in just the first 24 hours. Many episodes of Canadian courage and valour emerged from this period which saw one of the first uses of direct force by Canadians to protect themselves in a peacekeeping mission.

During the invasion, one of the main Turkish objectives was the airport in Nicosia, the capital of Cyprus. The UN commander was able to negotiate a local cease-fire and withdrawal of Greek and Turkish forces from the airport area, which the Canadian UN troops then occupied. However, the Turks still threatened to attack the airport. The defending Canadians had only a few anti-tank weapons and heavy machine guns, but the strategic Canadians moved around the airport, under cover of night, to create the illusion that the airport was heavily defended. The ruse worked and the Canadians held the location.

During the heavy fighting of the 1974 conflict, a number of bravery medals were awarded to Canadian soldiers. One example occurred when a group of Canadians in Cyprus came under fire. Several soldiers were hit, including the officer leading the patrol. Private Joseph Plouffe went at once to try to give the injured officer first aid but was wounded, as well. These two injured Canadians were in a very vulnerable position and threatened by machine gun fire. Corporal Joseph Whelan and Privates Joseph Belley and Joseph Pelletier braved the shooting to rescue their comrades.

Sacrifice

Canadians can be rightfully proud of our reputation around the world for being a force for peace, but this resolve comes at a steep cost: approximately 125 Canadian personnel have died in the course of our country's peace efforts.

In Cyprus, 28 Canadian peacekeepers gave their lives, paying the ultimate price in our country's efforts to help the people of that nation. The loss of Canadian lives in Cyprus demonstrates in the most profound way the dedication our military personnel have to their mission and to their country.

The injuries and harsh experiences that Veterans live through while on these international peace missions can impact them for the rest of their lives.

Canadian Forces in Syria

Being far from home and family is never easy, especially if your work takes you to a harsh and isolated part of the world where you must carry out your duties surrounded by barbed wire, trenches, and the wreckage of past conflicts between two bitter foes that could explode into flashes of violence. For the many Canadian Forces members who have served in the United Nations (UN) peace mission in the Golan Heights of Syria, this is not a hypothetical scenario. It is real – and they lived it.

The Canadian presence in the uplands between Syria and Israel is one of the longest-running international commitments ever undertaken by Canada. More than 12,000 Canadians have served there since the UN peace mission began in 1974.

Many Canadians have enjoyed peace for so long that it might be difficult to imagine its absence; but those who served in Syria deeply understand how fragile peace is, and how important it is to protect.

Syria

Syria is a small Arab country with a population of approximately 18 million people. It is located in the Middle East along the eastern edge of the Mediterranean Sea. Much of Syria's recent history is defined by the tensions and political unrest that have enveloped much of the volatile Middle East for the past half century. From time to time, conflicts between the Arab countries and Israel have broken out, as it did in the Yom Kippur War of 1973 when Syria and Egypt clashed with Israeli forces. It would be the next year before a cease-fire agreement was reached between Syria and Israel.

Canada and the World Responds

The UN was called upon in 1974 to create a mission, known as the United Nations Disengagement Observation Force (UNDOF), to supervise the cease-fire plan and to monitor the situation afterward.

The plan created a buffer zone between the forces of the two countries. This zone, called an "Area of Separation," is 80 kilometres long and from one to 10 kilometres wide. It is mostly located in the area known as the Golan Heights. Inside this special area, no military presence is allowed other than UN observers. Beyond this zone there is an "Area of Limitation" where there are restrictions upon any military presence and the activity of Israeli and Syrian forces.

The Canadians' primary role in Syria is to provide transportation, supply, maintenance, communications and other logistical support services for their fellow UN forces. Without these essential services, the larger UN peace forces could not continue their patrols and other vital activities that help stabilize the area.

Facts and Figures

The Golan Heights is a dry, inhospitable area where poisonous snakes and other natural threats are common. In places, the temperatures can reach 40 C in the summer and the weather can turn cold, wet and snowy in the winter.

The UN peace contingent in the Golan Heights has numbered more than 1,000 personnel strong, with tens of thousands of UN troops serving in the area over the years. In total, approximately 40 UN personnel have died in the course of peace efforts there, including four Canadians.

Heroes and Bravery

The challenges of peace missions are varied. In 1984, a Canadian, Lieutenant-Colonel Donald Ethell, was acting as the Force Commander in the area when he made the delicate last-minute arrangements for a large prisoner and body exchange between Israel and Syria. The situation was tense and violence was a distinct possibility, but Lt.-Col. Ethell was able to complete the exchange which involved more than 300 prisoners of war and soldier remains. A year later he successfully arranged a similar exchange of approximately 150 prisoners.

During the Gulf War of 1991, the UN forces stationed in the Golan Heights were on high alert. Scud missiles launched from Iraq and targeted on Israel would fly overhead on an almost nightly basis for a time. For the Canadians stationed in occupied Syria, this was a time of constant tension and sleepless nights as the perils of war again came calling on the Golan Heights.

Canadian Forces members serving in distant, dangerous places have found ways to cope. In the Golan Heights, for example, the Canadian contingent has a mascot. Digger is a dog who lives with the Maintenance Platoon and holds an honorary rank of sergeant. He has been with the contingent for more than 20 tours and even had his picture taken with the then-Prime Minister of Canada, Jean Chrétien, when he visited the troops.

Sacrifice

The presence of UN troops in the Golan Heights has helped to prevent the outbreak of new full-fledged hostilities between Israel and Syria. However, this has come with a high price.

The single highest loss of Canadian lives since our country began to participate in international peace missions involved our presence in Syria. Nine Canadian Forces members with the UN peace mission in Egypt were killed on August 9, 1974, when the plane they were in was shot down in a Syrian missile attack while making a routine supply run to the mission in the Golan Heights. Hostile fire, landmines and vehicle accidents are the most obvious dangers in a conflict zone, but they are not the only ones. Mysterious illnesses and psychological effects resulting from the harsh conditions take a serious toll that can last a lifetime.

Building a solid foundation for lasting peace in a region torn by years of strife can be a lengthy process. Because rotations are usually six months at a time, the Canadians serving there often do not get to see the full effects of their labours to support peace. Because of the nature of peace work, it sometimes takes years for the results of their work to be seen and understood. This can add to

the stress that Canadian Forces members feel when they return home and, when they leave the Forces, it can make it more difficult for them to reintegrate into civilian life.

All those who serve in peace efforts take their place of honour alongside Canadian Veterans who achieved and sacrificed so much in the First and Second World Wars and the Korean War.

Canadian Forces and the Persian Gulf War

Canada has participated in overseas peace efforts with international organizations like the United Nations (UN). However, not all of Canada's international military efforts over the last 50 years have been peacekeeping missions. At times, Canada has also responded by participating in military actions against aggressive nations who would deny basic human rights to others.

The Persian Gulf War of the early 1990s was a struggle that is well-known to many Canadians. More than 4,000 Canadian Forces personnel served in the tense Persian Gulf region in 1990-91, as part of the international coalition of countries that came together to force the invading forces of Iraq out of neighbouring Kuwait. In the aftermath of the conflict, Canadians continued to serve in peacekeeping and embargo-enforcement efforts in the region.

Persian Gulf

Iraq and Kuwait are Arab countries located next to each other in the heart of the oil-rich Middle East, a region of the world steeped in history. In fact, many archaeologists would say that civilization itself was born in the Fertile Crescent – the land between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers in modern-day Iraq.

In the 20th century, both Iraq and Kuwait achieved independence. However, the relationship between these two countries has not been smooth. Iraq had long felt that Kuwait was really a part of Iraq and that Kuwaiti oil rigs were illegally tapping into Iraqi oil fields. In the late 1980s, tensions grew and relations between Iraq and Kuwait became much worse. On August 2, 1990, the situation came to a head when Iraq invaded Kuwait, quickly taking control of its smaller neighbour.

The World Responds

The UN, along with many individual countries, condemned this bold and aggressive act. Canada joined a 35-country, American-led international coalition to liberate Kuwait. The coalition was operating under the mandate of a UN resolution that approved the use of force. In late 1990 and early 1991, the Canadian Forces and the military of other coalition countries moved into the region and prepared for the showdown.

The coalition forces began a devastating air campaign after a UN-set deadline for Iraqi withdrawal was ignored. This was followed by an armour and infantry offensive that rapidly pushed the Iraqis out of Kuwait and well back into their own country. This fulfilled the coalition's mandate to liberate Kuwait. The coalition suspended the fighting and offered a cease-fire which Iraq accepted on March 3, 1991. The official end of the war left Iraq's leader, Saddam Hussein, and his military, defeated – but Hussein retained power in Iraq. He would remain in control for more than 12 years until the second Gulf War of 2003 finally swept him from power.

After the Gulf War ended, Canadian troops remained in the region as part of the UN peacekeeping mission along the Iraq-Kuwait border, monitoring the demilitarized zone between the two countries, investigating cease-fire violations and clearing land mines. Canada also had a role in the special commission to seek out Iraq's biological, chemical and nuclear weapons production facilities. On the water, Canadian warships participated in Multinational Interception Force operations and helped to enforce the economic sanctions imposed against Iraq after the Gulf War.

Facts and Figures

The Canadian Naval Task Group, consisting of the destroyers HMCS *Terra Nova* and HMCS *Athabasca*, and the supply ship HMCS *Protecteur*, intercepted suspicious shipping in the area.

CF-18 jet squadrons with approximately 500 personnel, operating out of the Canada Dry bases on the Persian Gulf nation of Qatar, performed combat air control, escort and reconnaissance missions. For the first time since the Korean War, Canadian air-to-surface attacks took place during the conflict.

A Canadian field hospital with 530 personnel operated with the British division, caring for both British and Iraqi wounded.

The Air Command Transport Group provided air transport of personnel and cargo.

Heroes and Bravery

On a searing hot afternoon in Kuwait City, an overheated convoy truck caught fire suddenly, setting off a series of explosions that injured many American soldiers and caused widespread panic. Captain Fred Kaustinen, acting commander of 1 Combat Engineer Regiment, and 50 of his troops took immediate action, remaining on the scene to provide emergency treatment and medical evacuation for the wounded.

Maintaining the post-war embargo against Iraq could also be dangerous. In 2001, when HMCS *Winnipeg* stopped an oil tanker to check it for illegal activity, Petty Officer 2nd Class Richard Swann led a four-man boarding party that forced its way onto the boat. On board the tanker, he and his team were confronted by angry and uncooperative smugglers. However, PO2 Swann quickly took charge of the tense situation. The ship and its cargo of 7,000 tonnes of smuggled oil was successfully seized.

The Gulf War marked the first time that female enlisted soldiers operated in combat. It was especially challenging for these trail-blazing Canadian women because they were serving in orthodox Muslim countries in the Middle East where traditional gender roles are very different than in Canada.

Sacrifice

Theatres of war, like the Persian Gulf in the early 1990s, are dangerous places. There are many risks for soldiers in a modern war zone that go beyond the obvious ones of enemy fire or landmines. Friendly fire incidents, vehicle accidents, mysterious illnesses and the psychological stress of serving in such stressful conditions can take a terrible and life-long toll.

Fortunately, no Canadian Forces members died in the course of the Gulf War. However, about 125 Canadian personnel have died in the course of international military and peace efforts since the end of the Korean War. These people take their honoured place with their fellow service members from the First World War, the Second World War and Korean War as people who paid the ultimate price for their country.

Canadian Forces in the Balkans

When Canadians think about Canadian Forces personnel serving in overseas peace efforts, one of the first places they probably think about is the Balkan peninsula of southeast Europe.

Canadians have served in European Community, United Nations (UN) and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) missions in Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro, and Macedonia – new countries that have risen out of the ashes of the former country of Yugoslavia. Beginning in 1991, tens of thousands of Canadian Forces members strived over the years to help make the region secure and nurture the fragile peace so recovery can continue after years of fierce fighting.

Balkans

The Balkan countries which have seen such turmoil are located in southeast Europe, north of Greece and across the Adriatic Sea from Italy. This is a land of beautiful mountains, fertile plains and an island-studded coastline that stretches along the Adriatic Sea. For much of the 20th century, this area was a single Communist country known as Yugoslavia. However, long-standing ethnic, religious and political differences between the Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox and Muslim populations who have lived there for centuries created an environment of distrust that made for an unstable situation.

Once the authoritative rule in the country began to crumble, the different ethnic and religious factions erupted into violence. In the early 1990s, the various regions tried to split off and form their own countries, dividing along ethnic and religious lines. There were many cases of ethnic cleansing where entire villages or areas of minorities were persecuted, driven out or killed outright by armies.

The World Responds

As the world saw the violence descend on the region, the international community moved to respond. The first direct Canadian involvement would come in 1991-1992 when some Canadian Forces officers participated in the European Community Monitoring Mission there.

Canada and other countries then deployed a large UN peacekeeping force (known as the United Nations Protection Force, or UNPROFOR) to try to curb the violence in the region, particularly in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. This would be only the first of a series of UN (and later, NATO) peace support efforts in Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia and Kosovo in the former Yugoslavia.

The situations that Canadian Forces members encountered during their efforts in the Balkans were unique. The skills needed for a peace mission are often quite different from the skills required to fight a conventional conflict. Peacekeepers must be trained for war and for peace. The Canadians who have served in the Balkans over the years have performed many roles. They monitored ever-shifting and fragile cease-fire lines and forced open lines of supply to besieged areas in order to bring in food and humanitarian supplies to the civilians trapped in the middle of the fighting. In the waters of the Adriatic Sea, our country deployed naval and air resources to assist the UN in its naval blockade of arms shipments to the region. Canadians also tried to protect areas of ethnic minorities (so-called "safe areas" which would tragically prove to be not very safe) which were under siege from the majority militias.

Canada and other peacekeeping nations faced huge challenges in the Balkans and there was only so much they could do to curb the worst of the violence brought on by the hatred and viciousness of the combatants there. Many horrible acts were perpetrated that the peacekeepers simply could not prevent.

Today, the active fighting is over. The last sizable Canadian Forces presence left the region in 2004, but a European Union peace support force remains in the region to help keep the peace and support those who live in the region as they move toward a more peaceful future.

Facts and Figures

The largest number of Canadians to serve in a UN mission in the region at any one time was 2,000. More than 40,000 troops from many countries took part in the largest UN contingent that served during the peace support missions.

NATO contingents continue to play a peacekeeping role in the region. At times, NATO troop strengths have reached 60,000, including up to 1,500 Canadians.

In the spring of 1999, Canadian pilots flew combat missions for the first time since the Korean War.

In Macedonia in 1999-2000, Canada sent its largest single overseas deployment of troops since the Korean War. Canada also deployed heavy tanks in a conflict situation for the first time since the Korean War.

Heroes and Bravery

Often we think of the dangers of war and heroic acts of bravery as belonging to generations of the past. However, in the 1990s, Canadian Forces members found themselves in a full-fledged war zone where peacekeeping troops had to engage in firefights to try to fulfil their missions.

Major Joseph Servais and Captain Joseph Brosseau both won Meritorious Service Medals for their work as monitors with the European Union Monitoring Mission in the region in the early 1990s. Servais was responsible for eight monitoring teams, often conducting the most dangerous missions himself. Brosseau led the mission in Sarajevo at the time, planning and leading the dangerous six-hour convoy to safely evacuate his group when ordered to leave.

In September 1993, Canadian soldiers experienced their most intense firefight since the Korean War when members of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry were pounded with heavy machine gun fire, grenades, cannons and small arms fire in the Medak Pocket of Croatia.

Captain Joseph Bélisle and Sergeant Mario Forest received Medals of Bravery while serving in Sarajevo for rescuing two seriously wounded women. While under sniper fire, Capt. Bélisle returned fire to shield Sgt. Forest, who crawled to reach the two victims and remove them from danger. The two Canadians, still under fire, then helped the women into a military vehicle.

On two occasions, Canadian soldiers found themselves in hospitals full of patients that had been abandoned by staff due to increased fighting in the area. In one situation, troops found, protected and gave aid to a large number of mentally and physically challenged patients who needed a very high level of care.

Sacrifice

Canadians can be rightfully proud of their reputation around the world as a force for peace, but this comes at a price. About 125 Canadians have died in the course of Canada's peace support operations around the world. In the Balkans, 20 Canadians lost their lives in the various missions and many more were injured.

The wounds of peacekeeping are not always caused by hostile fire, landmines or accidents. They do not always leave physical scars. The mission in the former Yugoslavia was particularly difficult for those deployed there. The human atrocities perpetrated against the civilian population were horrific – witnessing human brutality on this scale has a deep impact on those who see it.

Learning about what the Veterans of these Canadian Forces missions in the Balkan States have done and sacrificed in the course of their duties is important. By understanding their role, we honour their achievements. Knowing about Canada's values and history helps us understand the Canada we live in today.

Canadian Forces in Somalia

Canada has long participated in international peace efforts, but the nature of these missions is far from simple. The Canadian men and women who find themselves on the ground in far-off countries in turmoil often must deal with a great deal of hostility and resistance from the citizens they are trying to help in the course of their duties.

One of the countries which would prove to be especially challenging for peace support personnel was Somalia. Canadian Forces members served in Somalia from 1992 to 1995. They took part in United Nations (UN) peace missions and a United States-led multinational peace support operation. The controversy that would come to surround Canada's efforts in the country has made the name Somalia a sensitive one for many.

Somalia

Somalia is a large country in the Horn of Africa. It is spread out along the Indian Ocean at the most eastern corner of the continent. The hot and arid country, straddling the equator, has a land mass of more than 600,000 square kilometres, making it roughly the size of Saskatchewan. Most of Somalia's eight million people are very poor.

The areas that would come together to become Somalia were once colonies of Europe. After the Second World War, they began moving down the path toward independence, becoming one nation in 1960.

The country's society is tribal-based, with strong clan ties having a great influence on the politics of the country. The years following independence were difficult for the people of Somalia. They lived with internal and international tensions, uprisings and drought. In the early 1990s, widespread civil war and famine engulfed the entire country. Hundreds of thousands died in the upheavals. The country became dominated by the activities of rival clans and local warlords with their brutal militias who spread terror and prevented any semblance of normal life.

The World Responds

In 1992, the international community took action. The UN formed a peacekeeping mission to help bring stability to the region and allow relief supplies to reach those in desperate need of it. A further United States-led multinational initiative was authorized by the UN in late 1992. Canada, along with more than 20 other nations, participated in this as well. During their time in Somalia, Canadians did many things to try to improve the desperate situation there. They escorted famine relief convoys, participated in the removal of landmines and collected or destroyed thousands of confiscated weapons. Despite their best efforts, the international forces could not end the strife in the country. In 1995, the final UN peace support mission withdrew.

Canada's mission in Somalia was clouded by controversial incidents involving the Canadian Airborne Regiment and the death of a young Somali intruder in the Canadian camp near the town of Belet Uen. A high-profile Canadian military inquiry would follow and the Airborne Division would eventually be disbanded.

Today, Somalia remains one of the world's poorest and least-developed countries. There is no real country-wide government. Local strongmen retain control of large areas of the region. Portions of the country have tried to break away and form their own nations. Somalia's infrastructure is in shambles and famine remains a problem. Many of its people rely on foreign aid to survive.

Facts and Figures

An estimated 300,000 Somalis died in the upheaval. Perhaps a million were forced to become refugees in neighbouring countries or within Somalia itself.

Approximately 28,000 UN troops were deployed to Somalia in the early 1990s. More than 150 UN personnel died there in the course of international peacekeeping efforts.

The UN authorized the creation of the United Task Force (UNITAF), a U.S.-led multinational force that had troop strength of almost 40,000, with personnel from over 20 countries. Canada's contribution to this mission was upward of 1,400 military personnel.

Somalia was a harsh and unforgiving place for Canadian Forces members – dry and dusty with temperatures over 50 degrees Celsius not being uncommon. Yellow fever and malaria, as well as venomous scorpions and snakes are commonplace there, adding to the risks.

Heroes and Bravery

Canadian Forces members in Somalia faced much violence and chaos. Peace support forces often faced great danger with even greater acts of valour.

Canada's Sea King helicopter crews took part in reconnaissance and intelligence-gathering activities, frequently coming under fire while doing so. They performed many medical evacuations (being dubbed "the body snatchers" by the American forces who were also operating in the area) and performed airborne transport of cargo and personnel from the HMCS *Preserver* off the coast.

Canadian soldiers came under fire several times in Somalia. On June 18, 1993, Warrant Officer Roch Lanteigne risked his life supplying ammunition to members of his platoon who were defending the new harbour facilities in Mogadishu, the country's capital. Under fire, he went from bunker to bunker three times to deliver ammunition to his platoon, only returning to safety when all the soldiers were re-supplied.

Naval Lieutenant Heather MacKinnon did much to help the people of Somalia during the UN operations there. She operated a medical clinic and worked in hospitals and orphanages to help the victims of war and famine in Mogadishu, despite the continual risks of working in a war zone.

Sacrifice

The peace support missions in Somalia were particularly difficult ones for the Canadian Forces members serving on them as, in the end they could only have a limited impact on the greater forces swirling around them. Somalia was a lawless war zone and peace support troops had to engage in firefights to try to fulfill some of its missions. The risks of serving in areas like Somalia are many – from hostile fire, landmines and driving accidents to exotic diseases, poisonous wildlife and the harsh and long-lasting psychological effects of serving under such arduous conditions. During the peace efforts in Somalia, one Canadian Forces member lost his life.

Canada's sacrifices on the battlefields of the First World War, Second World War and Korean War during the first half of the 20th century left our nation with a hard-earned resolve to be a power for peace in the world. Today, the Canadian Forces proudly carry on the tradition set many years ago by the Veterans of Canada's efforts in these great conflicts. Our country's willingness to contribute to international peace efforts and the willingness of our military personnel to put themselves in harm's way for the benefit of others has been integral to many international peace support efforts. Indeed it is one of our defining qualities in the eyes of the world.

Canadian Forces in Rwanda

Being a member of the Canadian Forces is not like any other job. The danger and threats that come along with the profession are difficult to understand for those who have not personally experienced them. A prime example of these special challenges was the situation faced by Canadians serving with United Nations (UN) peace missions to Rwanda from 1993 to 1996. At times, more than 400 Canadian soldiers would find themselves in the midst of some of the worst violence that could be imagined while taking part in international peace efforts to try to bring some stability to the embattled African nation.

Rwanda

Rwanda is a small, rural nation in central Africa. This densely-populated country has an area of about 26,000 square kilometres (making it about half the size of Nova Scotia) and a population of approximately eight million.

For centuries, two tribes have made up the vast majority of the country's population: the Hutus and the Tutsis. The Tutsis, despite being in the minority, dominated Rwanda's economy and politics for centuries. In 1960, the Hutu majority rose up and forced the Tutsi king and hundreds of thousands of Tutsis to flee the country in the ensuing upheaval.

Rwanda achieved independence in 1961 but the unrest continued. Some of the Tutsis who had fled the country formed rebel groups and repeatedly tried to make an armed comeback in Rwanda. This led to decades of renewed ethnic violence and tensions. In the early 1990s, these tensions flared dramatically. Violence became widespread and the situation in the country moved toward full-scale civil war.

The World Responds

In the face of this turmoil, Canada and other UN countries moved to try to end the bloodshed and restore order. The UN undertook peace missions to Rwanda from 1993 to 1996, the largest being the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) in which Canada played a leading role. At different times during the mission, two Canadians would serve as the Commander of the UN mission. They were Major-General Roméo Dallaire and Major-General Guy Tousignant.

Even with the UN mission to Rwanda in place, the bad situation in the country turned into a nightmare in April 1994. The Hutus began to massacre hundreds of thousands of Tutsis and moderate Hutus. The UN soldiers did what they could in this chaotic environment of widespread killing and mayhem, but they were too few in number and hamstrung by their limited mandate. In the end, they could not prevent the worst of the horrific violence. The Canadian and other UN forces did remain in the country for a time to try to help the country with some humanitarian efforts, mine clearing and refugee resettlement before leaving the devastated country in 1996.

Today, Rwanda still suffers from instability and outbreaks of violence as it struggles to overcome the legacies of its violent past. The civil war, genocide, and massive refugee upheavals still impact the country more than a decade later.

Facts and Figures

The estimated number of people who died in the genocide in Rwanda ranges between 500,000 and one million people. Millions more were left homeless and displaced in the upheaval.

In the time since the genocide, the world has come to realize the depth of the horrendous events in the country. In recognition of the 10th anniversary of the onset of the Rwandan genocide, April 7, 2004, was declared an International Day of Reflection.

Heroes and Bravery

Major Brent Beardsley, the Military Assistant to the Force Commander of the UN mission in Rwanda, was awarded the Meritorious Service Cross for facing armed and hostile civilian mobs and rebel soldiers to rescue people who were being threatened by the crowds. He entered violent crowds to save a family from being swarmed, to rescue a doctor and nurse from being assaulted, to get a severely-wounded man to a hospital and to escort the UN Force Commander to headquarters.

Major-General Roméo Dallaire won the Meritorious Service Cross for his efforts as head of the UN peacekeeping mission in Rwanda in 1993-94. He worked bravely and tirelessly in conditions of great danger to negotiate cease-fires and reduce the unrest in the country. He tried to get greater help from the UN to try to prevent the genocide he feared was coming. In the torrent of murder that occurred, he was able to evacuate many foreigners from the country and save the lives of thousands of Rwandans through his actions.

Sacrifice

When Canadian Forces members enter into a peace mission, they are going into a dangerous situation where the risk of harm is very real. Approximately 125 Canadian personnel have died in the course of peace missions in foreign lands, including one who gave his life in Rwanda.

When people think of peacekeeping, they may not realize just how little peace there often is to keep. In Rwanda, Canadian Forces members found themselves in the middle of a chaotic conflict zone where danger and bloodshed were everywhere.

Hostile fire, violent crowds and vehicle accidents all posed a risk to the Canadians in Rwanda, but there were other dangers too. The wounds of peacekeeping are not always the obvious physical ones of a war zone. Witnessing human brutality of the most horrific kind has a deep and lasting impact on those who see it. This has been one of the harshest legacies of Canada's peace support mission in Rwanda. Some of the Veterans who served there have since suffered from a serious emotional disorder called post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Canadian Forces Veterans proudly carried on the tradition set many years ago by the Veterans of Canada's efforts in the First World War, Second World War and Korean War. Our country has participated in the vast majority of peace missions that the UN has undertaken over the years, making our nation an important part of the effort to keep the peace around the globe. Like the Veterans who fought in these conflicts, they have made significant achievements and heavy sacrifices in the protection of peace and freedom worldwide.

Canadian Forces in Haiti

Our country's international peace efforts take Canadians in uniform to many far-off corners of the world. Canadians served in peace efforts in Haiti in the mid-1990s and returned again in 2004 in an attempt to bring stability to a country battered by strife and upheaval.

Haiti

Haiti is a mountainous, French-speaking country located in the West Indies. The small, densely-populated country (with a population of approximately 8,000,000 people occupying an area about half the size of Nova Scotia) has had a tumultuous history. The island where Haiti is located was discovered by Christopher Columbus in 1492, and was home to the first European colony in the Americas. Centuries later, Haiti became the first black-ruled republic in the world and just the second republic in the Western Hemisphere following a slave revolt. A country born in revolution, Haiti's politics continued to be tumultuous and the land went from being the richest colony in the world to one of the poorest countries in the Western Hemisphere.

From the 1950s to the mid-1980s, Haiti was controlled by the dictatorship of François "Papa Doc" Duvalier and, following his death, that of his son, Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier. During this period of upheaval and corruption, thousands of Haitians fled their country, many of them immigrating to Quebec to make new lives for themselves.

After the Duvalier era finally came to a close, a new constitution was eventually proclaimed and free elections were held. In November 1990, Jean Bertrand Aristide was elected as President of Haiti. However, in September 1991, he was ousted from power by a military coup d'état and forced into exile. The international community was disturbed by this turn of events and called for the restoration of democratic leadership and an end to the human rights violations in the country.

The World Responds

In June 1993, the United Nations Security Council imposed an oil and arms embargo against Haiti in an effort to force Haiti's military dictatorship to step aside and allow Aristide to return to power. After a deal with the Haitian military leaders fell through, the embargo continued and Canadian warships, under a United States-led effort, plied the waters off the country to enforce the trade restrictions.

In September 1994, UN forces were finally able to land in Haiti and enforce the deal to return Aristide to power. This UN mission was intended to create a stable environment in the country, reform Haiti's military and create an independent police force. Beginning in March 1995, 500 Canadian Forces personnel deployed to Haiti to contribute to this international effort. The Canadian contingent included aviation, engineering, transportation and administrative support personnel from across the country. They also provided logistical support and construction engineer services to the UN operations. In March 1996, the Canadian contingent expanded to 750 and their duties shifted to providing infantry personnel for security patrols, a helicopter detachment, engineers and a logistical support group as the UN mandate changed.

Canadians remained in the country as new UN missions continued, with up to 650 military personnel helping maintain stability in the country as the Haitian national police were trained (in part by Canadian civilian police officers) so they would be able to eventually do this themselves. As well, the Canadians also made important contributions to the people of the country by helping rebuild bridges, schools and water supply systems, operating medical clinics and delivering humanitarian aid. During their times in

Haiti, the Canadian Forces members were often greeted as protectors and friends as they travelled the chaotic streets of the capital, Port-au-Prince.

The international contingents continued their peacekeeping and humanitarian work in the country until the main military mission ended in 1997 (although Canadian police remained in the country until 2000). Unfortunately, Haiti has largely remained an impoverished country battered by violence and unrest. In early 2004, President Bertrand Aristide was again ousted from power and went into exile. With the nation descending into chaos again, a new multinational peace mission has been undertaken. Again, Canada has been there for the people of Haiti as approximately 500 Canadian Forces personnel, including an infantry company, a helicopter detachment and support personnel, went to the country to restore order until a new UN stabilization mission could be well established. While this larger Canadian effort came to a close in August 2004, some Canadian Forces officers continue to serve in key positions in the headquarters of the current UN mission.

Facts and Figures

The maximum size of the UN missions in Haiti has been approximately 7,500 military members and civilian police drawn from dozens of nations. At times, more than 750 Canadian Forces members and 100 Canadian civilian police officers have served there. Canadian Forces engineers brought their expertise in road maintenance, mine disposal, water supply and power generation to the peace support efforts. Logistical personnel provided vehicle maintenance, transport, administrative and medical capabilities while Canadian Hercules aircraft and military helicopters have provided air transport, patrol and medical evacuation capabilities to the international forces on occasion.

Canada has taken a leading role in the UN-led efforts in Haiti in the past, in large part due to the linguistic and cultural ties our two countries have shared over the years – we both have French as an official language, there is a large Haitian-Canadian community in Quebec and Canadian missionaries and foreign aid workers have long been active in Haiti.

Heroes and Bravery

Haiti has been a gruelling environment in which to work, with extremely hot and humid conditions being common. The Canadian Forces members serving in the country have had to carry out their demanding duties against this constantly challenging backdrop. Canadians serving in Haiti often donated their spare time to humanitarian efforts. For example, they often visited orphanages and unofficially adopted 30 homeless children who were in a nearby relief mission. Medical personnel helped the sick and elderly and also delivered babies. Canadian engineers also constructed a school in the country.

Master Corporal Joseph Lavallée was awarded a Meritorious Service Medal for his great courage and determination in maintaining security at the Haitian National Palace during a tense demonstration. He ensured his section prevented an angry group of 1,000 people from storming the building.

Sacrifice

The challenges faced by Canadians serving in peace support efforts are very different than those faced by most people. Not many careers see its professionals called on to spend months at a time away from home, serving in hot, dirty, dangerous conditions in which the constant threat of violence simmers around them. However, this is indeed the situation that has been faced by many Canadian Forces members trying to establish and nurture peace in Haiti. A total of 15 UN personnel from around the world have lost their lives in the various peace missions there.

Cultivating peace is often a long process and one that often does not pay full dividends for many years. The Canadian Forces members on missions like these usually do not get to see the ultimate results of their peace efforts because they are only there for a relatively short time, a situation that can be frustrating for them. Working in places like Haiti where the problems are complex and deeply rooted mean that the results of peace efforts are simply not always going to be dramatic – but the spirit of striving and sacrificing to help continues.

Canadian Forces in East Timor

Members of the Canadian Forces have served in many different parts of the world on international peace missions over the past six decades, but few of them have been as far away from home as the mission to the Southeast Asian land of East Timor, on the other side of the globe.

Canadian personnel were in East Timor from 1999 to 2001, first serving with a United Nations (UN) – sanctioned multinational peace-enforcement mission and then in a subsequent UN-administered effort to help restore peace and security in the troubled country.

East Timor

The small, tropical country of East Timor, (or Timor-Leste, as it has officially been known since 2002) is located on the island of Timor, several hundred kilometres north of Australia. It is an impoverished, mountainous land, having an area of about 15,000 square kilometres (making it about three times the size of Prince Edward Island) and a largely-rural population of approximately one million people.

East Timor experienced great turmoil in the 1970s when the territory began to move away from being a colony of Portugal. Controversy erupted over whether it should become an independent country or become a part of nearby Indonesia. In late 1974, the Indonesian military launched a secret operation to take over East Timor. In 1975, civil war erupted, thousands fled the territory for the neighbouring Indonesian province and one of the main factions in the fighting declared independence for East Timor. Indonesia then invaded and took over the territory. Ignoring UN resolutions supporting the right of the East Timorese people to self-determination, it was made a province of Indonesia in 1976. In the years following the invasion, armed resistance against the Indonesians, forced resettlement, and famine led to the deaths of more than a hundred thousand people in East Timor.

Despite years of UN-brokered diplomatic efforts, East Timor would not be able to begin to reassert its independence until 1999, a year after Mohammad Suharto, the long-time dictator of Indonesia, resigned and the political situation in that country finally changed.

A UN-supervised referendum was held for the people of East Timor to decide whether it should remain a part of Indonesia (but with special autonomy) or begin the process of becoming an independent country – and the citizens overwhelmingly voted for independence. However, this result unfortunately set off further strife in the territory that saw pro-Indonesian militias, at times supported by the Indonesian military, burn homes, kill civilians and create unrest that resulted in 500,000 to 700,000 people being displaced. Even members of the UN assistance mission there were being attacked.

The World Responds

With international pressure growing for Indonesia to halt the violence, that nation accepted a UN offer of assistance. A UN-authorized, Australian-led multinational force (which included Canada) went to East Timor in 1999 to restore peace and security, to protect and support the existing UN mission in carrying out its tasks, and to help humanitarian aid reach the citizens.

Canada's main contributions to the international peace missions in East Timor came at the beginning of these efforts in late 1999. Canada had committed to sending HMCS *Protecteur*, an infantry company, and transport planes to support the mission. The more than 600 Canadian Forces members who went to the region at this time filled important roles such as providing security, constructing a camp, repairing local facilities, keeping the naval task force supplied, and other similar duties. The Canadian Forces members were also able to help by reaching out to the people of the country with humanitarian aid and nation-building projects.

The 3rd Battalion, Royal 22nd Regiment (Vandoos) contributed 250 soldiers to the Canadian force. Their main role was to patrol a large territory from Ainaro in the east to Suai in the west. The soldiers also repaired a school and hospital, distributed basic sanitation needs, clothing and containers, and taught some English.

An important component of the Canadian efforts in the area was the work of the Canadian Airlift Task Force, made up of two Hercules aircraft and more than 100 personnel. Between September and November 1999, the Canadians transported approximately one million kilograms of cargo and more than 2,000 passengers between Australia and East Timor. As well, the Sea King helicopters based on the HMCS *Protecteur* flew many supply missions from the ship to different places ashore. Following this sizeable contribution early in the mission, Canada's military participation in East Timor was then scaled back.

With the steadying influence of international peacekeepers in the area, the political situation has improved. The new Indonesian government eventually recognized the independence of East Timor, withdrawing its troops and its political claim to the area. East Timor held democratic elections and finally became an independent country in 2002. However, UN forces remained until May 2005 to help maintain the country's security as it made the hard-won transition to full nationhood.

Facts and Figures

At times, the total international UN contingent size was more than 10,000 men and women, including civilian policemen who came to serve in the country as well.

In addition to the 650 Canadian Forces personnel who went to East Timor for a six-month deployment, a contingent of more than 15 Canadian civilian police officers served in the country, helping to train and mentor the local police forces there.

Heroes and Bravery

A Canadian engineering group repaired the electricity, plumbing and water supply of an East Timorese police academy, as well as renovated three main buildings in the academy compound so they could be used for classrooms, offices, and barracks for the police cadets.

Canadian sailors from the HMCS *Protecteur* supplied the multinational forces with fuel, food, spare parts and other materials. They also joined forces with RCMP officers serving with the peacekeeping effort in the country to help in the refurbishing of a police academy and a downtown police station.

Sacrifice

Canada's long experience in peace missions puts our military in high demand when an emergency situation arises. Indeed, in many ways the Canadian Forces members who participate in international peace and humanitarian support efforts like the one to East Timor act as Canada's ambassadors – the face of our country in places in turmoil. These men and women provide an array of expertise and, using both the skills of war and the skills of peace, are able to fulfill a wide variety of important tasks. However, serving on a peace mission is dangerous. The Canadian Forces members who participated in helping bring about the end of conflict and easing the suffering of people in East Timor put their lives on the line. While about 25 international peacekeepers lost their lives during the UN efforts in East Timor, fortunately no Canadian Forces members were among them. However, approximately 125 Canadians have died in the course of peace support missions overseas, paying the ultimate price in their efforts to help the people in these strife-torn places. Many more have been injured in these efforts.

Canadian Forces in Ethiopia and Eritrea

Canadian Forces members served in Ethiopia and Eritrea from 2000 to 2003, taking part in the United Nations (UN) peace mission there. There were times when more than 500 Canadians served in the hot, dusty, far-off region as part of the larger international effort. Ethiopia and Eritrea

Ethiopia and Eritrea are two neighbouring nations in the Horn of Africa, in the easternmost corner of the continent. This region of Africa has endured major problems over the years with both drought and strife often making life for the inhabitants very difficult.

Ethiopia is the oldest independent nation in Africa. This large, ethnically-diverse country has an area of more than 1.1 million square kilometres (making it about the size of the Northwest Territories) and a population of more than 65 million people. Eritrea is a small, largely-rural country just north of Ethiopia that sits along the shore of the Red Sea. It has an area of a little over 120,000 square kilometres (making it about twice the size of Nova Scotia) and a population of more than four million people.

In the years following the Second World War, Ethiopia and Eritrea were part of a political federation but many in Eritrea wanted independence and periodically revolted, resulting in decades of violence. Ethiopia, after a major civil war, finally dropped its claims to

Eritrea in the early 1990s and Eritrea became independent in 1993. This step did not end the unrest, however, and arguments between the two countries over the exact border between them (which had not been very clearly defined) caused major friction.

In 1998, clashes broke out again, with Ethiopia and Eritrea building up hundreds of thousands of troops along their shared border. By the next year they were locked in fierce fighting which degenerated into trench warfare, reminiscent of the First World War. More than 100,000 soldiers and civilians would die and 650,000 people become refugees in the region by the time a cease-fire was declared in 2000. By the end of that year, a peace agreement had been reached and the UN agreed to send in peacekeepers.

Canada and the World Responds

The UN peace effort undertaken in the border region of Ethiopia and Eritrea was established to monitor the terms of the peace treaty and ensure the 25 kilometre-wide temporary security zone that has been established between the two countries is maintained until a final border is agreed upon, working closely with both sides to promote peace, trust and security.

Canada's contribution to the peace efforts in Ethiopia and Eritrea came at the beginning of the UN mission. In late 2000, a 450-strong Canadian Forces contingent made a six-month commitment to help establish the international effort in the region. This Canadian presence included armoured reconnaissance, mechanized infantry, an engineer troop, and support elements.

The Canadians were part of the first battalion to become fully operational in the UN mission there. Canadian soldiers established checkpoints and bases for patrol and monitoring operations in important sectors in the region in an effort to ensure that the required troop pull-outs occurred. The first task was to ensure the two sides withdrew from the disputed area in order to create the temporary security zone – a process that took three months. Mounted on their Coyote light armoured vehicles, the Canadian troops were able to confront the forces of both sides who were raiding abandoned villages in the security zone for supplies to build new fortifications and to enforce the terms of the peace treaty. Once the opposing forces withdrew to the agreed positions and the temporary security zone was successfully established in April 2001, the Canadians continued to monitor the Eritrean and Ethiopian presence in the area. The bulk of the Canadians, their six-month deployment over, began to return home in June.

In addition to this larger force, six Canadian Forces members worked as part of an international group of approximately 220 UN Military Observers who monitored the security zone between the two countries, ensuring compliance with the peace treaty, and interacting with the forces of both sides to gain acceptance of the UN presence. These observers also spoke with local people to gather information and to determine their humanitarian needs. This Canadian presence continued until July 2003.

The border situation between Ethiopia and Eritrea is still unresolved and tensions remain. However, the continuing presence of the international peacekeepers has helped ensure that no renewed, large-scale fighting between the nations has erupted in recent years.

Facts and Figures

The Canadian contingent deployed with those of the Netherlands and Denmark as part of the UN's Standby High-Readiness Brigade (SHIRBRIG), a multinational rapid-deployment force intended to respond quickly to problems that arise in trouble spots around the globe. This force is designed to deploy for six months in order to allow a follow-up UN mission to be organized.

At times, the contingent size of UN peacekeepers serving in Ethiopia and Eritrea has numbered more than 4,000 military personnel and 450 civilians from more than 40 countries.

Heroes and Bravery

Canadian soldiers endure many hardships while on peacekeeping duties. In Ethiopia and Eritrea, the temperatures often reached 50 degrees during the day. Without any breeze at night, the high humidity made sleeping difficult. Flies were everywhere, invading food, tents and vehicles. The long drought in the area also created a fine powder-like dust that coated the soldiers.

While there is certainly a political aspect to peace missions, the Canadian Forces members who participate in these efforts often go beyond the strict definitions of their duties to help those in need. In Ethiopia and Eritrea, Canadians volunteered their resources and skills to work with the local people of an Eritrean town to rebuild a damaged school. These humanitarian efforts in the region – largely conceived and paid for by the Canadian Forces members themselves – included distributing clothes, school supplies, sports equipment, and toys to the children in the area they were stationed.

Sacrifice

Armed conflict brings suffering to all those involved, whether it is to those involved in the fighting, the civilians caught in the midst of the hostilities or those who must try to return stability to a region torn apart by violence. Canadian Forces members know well the sacrifices that go along with the rewards of participating in international peace support efforts.

Those who serve in peace support efforts must enter into volatile situations where the risk of personal harm is very real. Hostile fire and landmines (which damaged some Canadian vehicles during this mission) are perhaps the most obvious dangers in a conflict zone, but they are not the only ones. Vehicle accidents, mysterious illnesses, and psychological effects resulting from the arduous conditions that these people are exposed to take a serious toll as well – a toll that can continue for many years. While no Canadian Forces members lost their lives in Ethiopia and Eritrea, 10 UN personnel from six different countries died in the course of the international peace effort in this very hot and arid region. However, approximately 125 Canadian personnel have died in the course of other peace support efforts.

Canada Remembers Program

As the years have passed, the focus of commemorative events like Remembrance Day has expanded. Where once they centred on the achievements and sacrifices of the Veterans of the World Wars and Korea, they now include the Veterans of peacetime Canadian Forces activities.

The Canada Remembers Program of Veterans Affairs Canada encourages all Canadians to learn about the sacrifices and achievements made by Canada's Veterans during times of war, military conflict and peace, and to become involved in remembrance activities that will help to preserve their legacy for future generations.

The Origin of the Blue Helmets



The first United Nations (UN) peacekeeping force in Egypt in 1956 successfully kept the Suez Crisis from erupting into large-scale war. It wasn't easy, though. It took a lot of hard work and creative problem solving to make it work.

Egypt was hesitant when the UN suggested sending Canadian troops there. Canada has close historical ties to Britain, which was one of the countries initially involved in the Suez Crisis. It also didn't help that our armies uniforms looked like those of the British – and that we were planning to send a battalion called the "Queen's Own Rifles." In the end, Canadian troops went and contributed much-needed administrative, logistical and engineering support.

To distinguish themselves as members of the international contingent, Canadians and the other UN Forces painted their vehicles and helmets blue. In the process, they created the well-known symbol of UN peacekeeping–the blue helmet.



UN Peacekeepers Awarded the Nobel Peace Prize

In 1988, the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to all those who had served in United Nations peace support efforts over the years. Thousands of Canadian Forces members, like those who had served in places such as Egypt, the Congo, Cyprus and the Golan Heights, were honoured for their work in helping to end bloodshed and promote peace in troubled spots around the world.

This award inspired the creation of the Canadian Peacekeeping Service Medal in 2000. It is awarded to Canadians who served in an international peace support operation.

Note: above publications are from Veterans Affairs Canada