

The Royal Canadian Dental Corps:

DEPLOYMENTS IN THE GULF AND BALKAN CONFLICTS

In the lead-up to the 100th anniversary of the Royal Canadian Dental Corps (RCDC) in 2015, this article is the fifth in a series that brings to light the history of the RCDC over the last century, celebrating the heritage, accomplishments and dedication of the dental services personnel of the Canadian Armed Forces. During the time of the Gulf and the Balkan Wars, RCDC was known as the Canadian Forces Dental Services.

A dental detachment was also deployed with 1 Canadian Field Hospital. Their original task was to provide dental care for hospital patients and prisoners-of-war, but due to a lack of patients they concentrated their efforts on treating allied personnel.



CDAessentials is honoured to publish a regular series of articles, leading up to the celebration of RCDC's 100th anniversary.



The Gulf War, 1990-91

In the early 1990s, Canada deployed three ships, a field hospital and a CF-18 fighter jet squadron with 4,000 personnel in response to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. HMCS *Protecteur* had a dental team on board that treated dental emergencies from all of the multinational coalition ships. Captain Margaret Cupples and Sergeant Chris Simpson were the first Canadian Forces dental team to sail in a war zone in many years.

The Canadian Forces Dental Services (CFDS) also deployed a military oral and maxillofacial surgeon and assistant to the Persian Gulf on board USNS *Mercy*, a 1000-bed US Navy hospital ship. The USNS *Mercy* and HMCS *Protecteur* operated in different geographic areas within the Persian Gulf. Both ship's dental teams were rotated after several months on station.

The Balkan Conflict, 1992-2004

Over 40 dental teams of the CFDS, consisting of a Captain Dental Officer and a Sergeant Dental Technician, were deployed on 6-month tours in the former republic of Yugoslavia. Up to three teams were present in theatre at any given time.

Dental personnel were located in various camps and would use mobile dental clinics to visit other camps. Some camps had portable dental equipment set up in trailers or under canvas, ready for visiting dental teams to use. For dental emergencies, patients were evacuated to the dental team's location.

The summer of 1998 saw open hostilities between Federal Republic of Yugoslavia forces and the underground Kosovo Liberation Army. The dental team of

“*The dental team of Captain Jason Comeau and Sergeant Nora Larocque faced many challenges during the Kosovo operation, as their camp was located only four kilometres from the Macedonia/Kosovo border.*”

Captain Jason Comeau and Sergeant Nora Larocque faced many challenges during this operation, as their camp was located only four kilometres from the Macedonia/Kosovo border. When the NATO air campaign started in March 1999, the risk of the camp being hit with both enemy and friendly fire was very real.

A dental technician, Master Warrant Officer Leslie Burton, was chosen as the first Canadian to be named Squadron Sergeant-Major at the Role Three Multinational Integrated Medical Unit in Šipovo, a

position traditionally filled by Dutch medical forces. She was also the first Dental Corps member of this rank level to deploy overseas since Korea. ✦

CDA is playing a central role in commemorating the 100th anniversary of the RCDC in May 2015, reflecting CDA's role in establishing a military dental service in Canada and the close partnership between CDA and RCDC since that time.



- 1 Master Warrant Officer Leslie Burton (l.) with Allied colleagues in Šipovo.
- 2 A Canadian Navy auxiliary oil replenishment vessel conducts a simultaneous jack-stay transfer during the Gulf War.
- 3 Captain Jason Comeau and Sergeant Nora Larocque, in the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia (Op GUARANTOR).