

## *The Royal Canadian Dental Corps after World War II:*

# THE KOREAN CONFLICT, THE SUEZ CANAL AND NATO IN EUROPE

Canada's military dental services have looked after the oral health needs of Canada's troops in both World Wars, Korea, Afghanistan and many other peacemaking, peacekeeping, humanitarian and forensic operations. In the lead-up to the 100th anniversary of the Royal Canadian Dental Corps (RCDC) in 2015, this article is the third in a series that will bring 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 (CAF).



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



### Korea (1950–57)

In August 1950, the Canadian government decided that Canada would participate in the United Nations police action in Korea. The participation of the RCDC in the Korean War was of significant importance to the development of the Corps. During this action, both the Canadian Forces and the Dental Corps more than doubled in size. The high standard of dental service provided in Korea under difficult conditions enhanced the reputation of the Corps with the soldiers and officers of the CAF and our Allies.

The first dental detachment arrived in Pusan on November 7, 1950 and the last detachment departed Korea on July 1, 1957. During these 7 years, 43 officers and 85 non-commissioned members served in Korea with great distinction, continuing the tradition

of a high standard of mobile dental service to Canadian troops in the field. This was in addition to the immense task of preparing the troops at home for military service, many of whom were WWII veterans who had not had any dental care for several years or were new volunteers "in dreadful dental condition." The commanding officer of the dental detachment at the staging area in Fort Lewis, Washington, reported that many members of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry who had departed for Korea were edentulous, which he considered a "scandalous" situation.

Captain W.O. Mulligan described service in Korea: "Everything was under canvas except the dental clinic itself. The dental clinic was in 'B' echelon where the canteen was located; troops were glad to get back for 'shopping' plus a few fillings." RCDC mobile clinics were often as far forward as the 'A' echelon and it was never very difficult for the front line troops to travel back for treatment. The dental detachment had a well equipped laboratory that could provide a wide range of services, from partial dentures to bridgework, while the dental clinics of our Allies were part of the Mobile Army Surgical Hospital (MASH), well back from the front lines.



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## UNEF – Suez Canal (1956–67) NATO in Europe

As the Korea operation was coming to an end, hostilities between Egypt and Israel in 1956 threatened to disrupt the freedom of navigation through the Suez Canal, forcing the United Nations to deploy a police force. The RCDC, as part of the Canadian contribution to the campaign, would be called upon once more to assist in providing dental support to this operation, entitled United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) Middle East. This mission ran from 1956 to 1967.

Following WWII, 27 Canadian Field Dental Detachment supported Canada's contribution to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Eighty-seven officers and 141 non-commissioned members served with the dental unit, providing service to brigade personnel and their families. 35 Field Dental Unit had clinics in Metz and Marville in France, and in Zweibrücken and Baden-Soellingen in Germany. In 1967, all NATO bases in France were closed, and 35 Field Dental Unit moved to Lahr, Germany.

In 1983, 35 Field Dental Unit, now renamed 35 Dental Unit, operated dental clinics in Lahr and in Baden-Soellingen, Germany. The clinic in Lahr also had a fleet of mobile dental clinics. After Canada withdrew these formations from Germany in 1994, dental detachments remained at Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) in Casteau, Belgium, and in Geilenkirchen, Germany, where they continue to provide dental care today to Canadian military members and their families 

- 1 Military exercise in Germany, 1965
- 2 (L. to r.) Major Ross Covey, Major Garth Evans and Captain Maurice Gourdeau in Korea, 1951
- 3 Canadian Korea Medal
- 4 United Nations Service Medal for Korea



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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.