

39 COMBAT ENGINEER REGIMENTAL ASSOCIATION



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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

This newsletter closes off 2024 with an outstanding article on Exercise Paladin Response. The mere fact that every Reserve Regiment gets together between 26-31 Dec every year boggles the imagination. 39 CER takes a lead role, but it was 8 FER (now 41 CER) that initiated this exercise for Engineer Units in Western Canada. The exercise has now turned into a National Engineer exercise enjoyed by all. We end off with the 44 Engineer Squadron Polar Bear Swim and 6 Fd Engineer Squadron Reunion in New Zealand.

Chimo,

Bill Wenman
President

EXERCISES

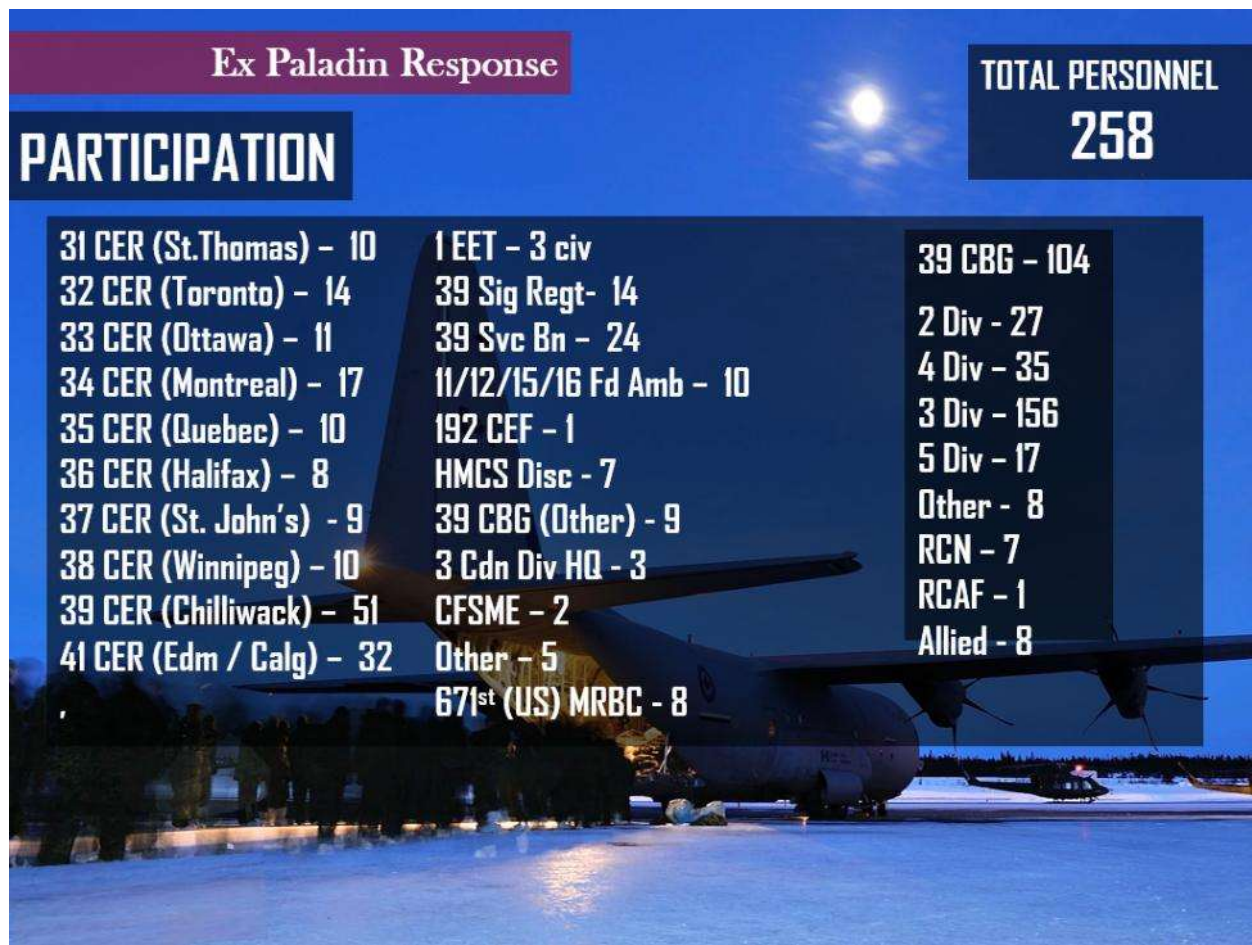
Paladin Response - 26-31 December 2024

Lt Pearson



The final exercise photo for Ex Paladin Response 2024. Standing front and center is the Ex Comd Tm LCol Stephen Piers (CO 39 CER) and CWO Mazerolle (41 CER)

Exercise Paladin Response is an annual Reserve-Force centric exercise that has been conducted annually in the Chilliwack, BC area since 1998. Paladin Response is conducted from Dec 26-31st and serves to refresh core bridging capabilities in a domestic response context. The exercise is structured in a stand-based training format, where engineer Troops rotate through 4 different sites, renewing their skills in the Medium Girder Bridge, ACROW Bridge, Medium Raft, and Assault Boat operations. Paladin Response also engages a wide secondary training audience, with a fully staffed regimental structure command post developing junior officers and maintaining C2, as well as enabling the reserve force medics, signalers, and maintainers that provide real-life support to the training. In total, 258 soldiers participated in the exercise and renewed the skills they have developed on previous courses.



Paladin Response 2024 concluded with the traditional 5-Bay MGB Build Competition, which 1 Tp won with a time of 21:24, and the awarding of the Sgt George Miok Trophy, which was awarded to Cpl McCurdy of 36 CER.



Cpl McCurdy of 36 CER receiving the Sgt George Miok Trophy.

December 26th

December 26th was day one of the exercise. Members from 39 CER hit the ground running at 0800, establishing the exercise CP, RSOMI, and coordinating the arrival of troops from across Canada. The day concluded with the exercise welcome brief, where all exercise personnel gathered for the first time of the exercise and were introduced to the exercise goals, end state, and concept of operations. Medical, safety, environmental, and camp briefs were also delivered to all personnel.



Exercise personnel gather for the exercise welcome brief, PRTC

Exercise personnel included combat engineers from every CA PRes CER, as well as supporters from 39 Svc Bn, 39 Signals Regiment, 11/12/15/16 Fd Amb, 192 CEF, and HMCS Discovery. In addition, 8 soldiers from 671st Multi Role Bridging Company, US Army attended the Ex, taking advantage of some valuable cross-training with Canadian soldiers, as well as leveraging the opportunity to conduct a recce of the Fraser River for future exercises in Canada.



A US Army soldier poses with a Canadian Combat Engineer.

Following the welcome brief, key exercise personnel conducted a coordination brief in order to set the conditions for the following day.

December 27th

December 27th started up with the three Engineer Troops of approx. 42 pers deploying to their assigned sites, with a troop each going to the OPSEE Training Area for MGB and Gap Reece, Cultus Lake Provincial Park for Medium Rafting and Assault Boat Operations, and the Chilliwack Armoury for ACROW Bridging.



Two heavy equipment operators work together under the direction of the bridge commander to boom the ACROW bridge safely across the gap.

The ACROW Bridge is a civilian pattern bridge that is stockpiled by many Canadian provinces, including British Columbia. One member of the PTA related the experience gained on Paladin Response to a domestic response operation they participated in in 2017, where a bridge was knocked out in the Maritimes and the CAF constructed an ACROW to replace it for the local population. Constructing an ACROW bridge also provides a valuable opportunity for Combat Engineers to develop their skills as Heavy Equipment operators, which they often transfer over to their civilian careers.

Concurrent with the ACROW bridge was construction of the Medium Girder Bridge at the OPSEE Training Area.



A POV from the driver of an HLWV as they boom a nearly completed MGB across the gap.

One very valuable addition to the exercise was Sgt Hume, a Regular Force Advanced Bridging Specialist from CFSME. Sgt Hume provided excellent guidance to Stand OPis and also took the opportunity to introduce the PTA, officers, and senior NCOs to the new Bridging Specialist Course being offered at CFSME, as well as imparting some lessons learned from their experience at the school. They imparted valuable wisdom to the PTA, and helped ensure the Reserve Force is held to the same standard as their Regular Force counterparts.



Sgt Hume, a CFSME Bridging Specialist inspects the MGB with the MWO Izawa (39 CER), PTA SSM

The third bridging site on the trace was the Medium Raft Site, where the PTA practiced constructing a Medium Raft in a permissive environment, and spent the day developing their skills in maneuvering the raft around Cultus Lake.



Cpl Dewell and Cpl Crossan (39 CER) operate a SHLVW to launch a ramp into the water at Maple Bay, overseen by Sgt Hanson (41 CER), MR Stand OPT, Cultus Lake.

Cultus Lake was also the location of the Assault Boat stand, where soldiers practice launching and conducting Assault Boat operations. The Assault Boat is a valuable tool in the Engineer Toolbox, as it can operate in very shallow water and has little POL requirements, making it an excellent resource for flood response.



Combat Engineers practice launching and recovering assault boats, Cultus Lake

The first day of training concluded with the teardown and repalletization of all the bridge components at each site, and the troops returning to PRTC for a hot meal and some rest before the next day.

December 28th

December 28th was the second full training day of the exercise, as well as the official Visits Day. Visitors were both military and civilian, and included the 3 Div DComd Tm, 39 CBG Comd Tm, and representatives from 41 CER and 41 CBG. Among the civilian visitors were Engineering Students from both the British Columbia Institute of Technology and the University of the Fraser Valley, students of the NATO Field School, and business executives from BC Hydro, who attended as part of a unit employer recognition package.



39 CBG BSM (CWO Harris) chats with Sgt Liu (32 CER), I Tp WO at the Medium Girder Bridge Site

The visitors received a full tour of the exercise, and had the opportunity to ride on the Medium Raft. The civilian visitors were also introduced to a variety of CAF Service weapons, including the C9 LMG, C7A2, Remington 870 Shotgun, and C22 Pistol. Although Paladin Response is conducted in a domestic response context, the visitors valued the opportunity to view some of the tools of the trade and left the exercise with a greater appreciation for the army reservist.



Civilian visitors study a display of the C9 and Remington 870 Shotgun

Throughout the day, the PTA continued to develop their skills at the bridging stands and got many repetitions of assault boat operations and rafting, as well as a complete build and tear down of both a 12 Bay Double Story MGB, and a 3 Bay Double Single ACROW bridge.



MCpl Au (CJOC), MGB Stand OPT looks on as the decking units are placed on the second MGB build of the exercise.

Day 2 also involved a visit from the local media to capture the exercise, specifically a reporter each from both Global News and the Fraser Valley News Network (FVN). The reporting effectively captured the content of the exercise, and overall was a credit to the unit.



Reporters from Global News interview the Medium Raft Stand OPI, Sgt Hanson (41 CER)

Day 2 of the exercise concluded with the troops repalletizing their bridge components, and retiring back to PRTC for some rest before one more day of bridging.

December 29th

Day 3 was the final full day of bridging for the PTA and included one more Visits package made up of local Air, Army, and Sea Cadets. The troops continued to develop their skills, finalized their bridging repetitions, and began to thin out their sites in preparation for the remediation day on the 30th.



Cadets pose for a group photo aboard the Medium Raft

The whole exercise was a busy time for all support trades. The maintainers from 39 Svc Bn worked hard from day one to ensure all the vehicles critical for exercise success were kept in good working order. In total, 39 Svc Bn provided repair or recovery for 34 RRR requests, and were essential to the success of the training.



A maintainer from 39 Svc Bn works on a disabled support vehicle

The Signals Tp from 39 Signals Regiment was also critical to the success of the exercise. They provided robust communications support in the form of voice, satellite, and data connectivity, including the deployment of a RRB. Paladin Response also served as one of the first trials for the Tactical Awareness Kit (TAK) system. The TAK system provided live tracking and comms to all key callsigns and enabled the exercise command post to maintain situational awareness to a higher degree than that typically enabled by standard radio and map methods.

The final key supporter for the exercise was the medics and ambulances from 11, 12, 15, and 16 Fd Amb. These supporters provided both urgent and routine medical care for all exercise participants, and maintained an ambulance at each bridging site, as well as a UMS station at the Chilliwack Armoury.



Two medics in front of their ambulance at the MGB site.

The final day of bridging for the exercise concluded with the cadets departing the trace and the site commanders beginning the remediation process before the final full day of the exercise on the 30th.

December 30th

December 30th was the final full day of the exercise, and saw the final remediation of the sites, and the conduct of the single story MGB build competition. Each of the 3 PTA Troops generated a team of 10 soldiers to compete in the construction of a 5-bay single story MGB, complete with ramp and curb units. The winning team was 1 Tp with a time of 21 minutes, 24 seconds. The members of 1 Tp team were:

MCpl Pike - 37 CER
Cpl Mallet - 35 RGC
Cpl Laberge - 38 CER
Cpl Thompson - 38 CER
Cpl Fairweather - 38 CER
Cpl Fletcher - 38 CER
SSG Fry - 671st Coy - US Army
Cpl Valade - 34 RGC
Cpl McCurdy - 36 CER
Cpl Blanchard - 36 CER

The MGB comp is always a highlight of Paladin Response, and the entire exercise contingent gathers to cheer on the participants. Following the MGB comp, the Sgt George Miok Trophy is awarded to the most deserving soldier, in this case Cpl McCurdy of 36 CER.



Members work to boom the 5-bay MGB across the gap, as members from the PTA spectate in the background.

The exercise was officially concluded on December 30th, and soldiers spent their last evening on the ground at the PRTC for the final exercise BBQ, before flying out early on the morning of the 31st to make it home to spend New Years Eve with their family and friends.

POLAR BEAR SWIM

More than 100 bold souls dive into Columbia River

The 44 Engineer Squadron celebrated the new year with the 35th Polar Bear Plunge at Gyro Park in Trail by Jim Bailey Trail Times



Over 100 daring souls signed up for the 44 Engineer Squadron's annual Polar Bear Plunge and dove into the Columbia River for an invigorating and inspiring start to the new year.

The water temperature measured 4C and the air temperature was exactly the same, so diving into the river at Gyro Park at noon wasn't as daunting as previous years.



"We had 116 people go in, so kudos to you guys," said Master Corporal Trent Coomes. "We haven't broken a record but next year everyone bring a friend and we'll knock this record out of the park here."

Some swim to kick off the new year with a splash, others to provide a natural cure for an over-indulgent New Years Eve, and many are attracted by the draw prizes provided by the Engineers' gracious sponsors.

Trail's Darren Kissock says he has been taking the cold dip for more than a decade, a Rossland woman said she had participated for a dozen years, but few have the credentials of Jim Harrold who has been diving into the Columbia on Jan. 1 since moving to Trail 22 years ago.

"I think it gives me energy," said Harrold, who was wearing his swim suit and getting acclimated about 30 minutes before diving in.

"And I think it's good for the skin, the heat and the cold, it's good for you."

There had been a skiff of snow on the beach when the 44 Engineer Squadron arrived, but by the time registration ended and the ATCO fire was set, the weather was almost mild, and the water inviting.



That is until the participants entered the water, and exited a lot quicker; a brief but refreshing way to enter 2025.

The 44th also had support from the Trail's 531 Squadron Royal Canadian Air Cadets, and have organized the event since 1988, when Master Warrant Officer Sharman Thomas and six other recruits dove into the Columbia to ring in the new year.



For the 44 Engineers Squadron, the Polar Plunge is a way to reach out and interact with the community, and provide a fun and exhilarating event for polar plungers.



6 FES REUNION – NEW ZEALAND

While the hair may be a little grey, the spirit is still there.



MWO (retd) Ian MacArthur and Colonel (retd) Brent Warne reunited in Taupo New Zealand. MWO MacArthur and Colonel Warne served together in 6 Fd Engr Sqn in the 1970's.



Under the watchful eye of Caro MacArthur (ex 6FES) and Elaine Warne, past exuberance's were recounted. Many past members of 6 FES who passed on were remembered.

VETERAN AFFAIRS

Our Board member David Blake-Knox Maj (Ret'd) (blake_knoxd@hotmail.com) has offered his services to assist individuals in submitting claims to Veterans Affairs. David has had success in navigating the bureaucracy in submitting his own claims and those of others.

MEMBERSHIP

For those wishing to become members of 39 CER Association, a membership form can be acquired from: membership@39cer.ca

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The 39 CER Museum website can be accessed at: <http://www.39cer-museum.net/>

Recent editions of the 39 CER Newsletter can be accessed at: [39 CER Association \(39cer-museum.net\)](http://www.39cer-museum.net/). Earlier editions can be obtained from the Secretary or Editor.

For more Engineer news please visit the Canadian Military Engineer Association website at: <https://cmea-agmc.ca>