

39 COMBAT ENGINEER REGIMENTAL ASSOCIATION



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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Hi all, this newsletter covers the summer training period as well as a great Fraser River rafting exercise with our long time 671st Engr Coy (US). The Engineers in BC have been training with this unit since 1992. It is good to see them on the Fraser River with us again! OP Granite is coming up. Try to save to date. I will end this to congratulate on behalf of the Association to all the promotions in the Regiment. Leadership is the core of the Army. It is comforting to see the members stepping up and taking the required courses.

Chimo,

Bill Wenman
President

HONOURS AND AWARDS

Promotions



Pte Crane was promoted to Cpl on 4 Sep 25, flanked by Maj Kwan, OC 6 ES and MWO Park, SSM 6 ES



Pte Nicolson was promoted to Cpl on 11 Sep 25, flanked by Maj Kwan, OC 6 ES and MWO Park, SSM 6 ES



WO Savage on his promotion on Sept 25



Cpl Morgan promoted to MCpl by Rear Admiral Hopper (Chief of Reserves) on Sept 25

Awards

Rear Admiral Hopper (Chief of Reserves) visited 6ES on Sept 25. In addition to his visit, he presented the award for fittest soldier in 39CBG to Cpl Little. This was based on last year's Brigade Comd Fitness Challenge.

Rear Admiral Hopper was accompanied by the 39CBG Comd Team. CO 39CER gave a presentation about 39CER in addition to a Q&A with the Rear Admiral. There was a tour of a building in addition to a meeting with the CIC and a brief Q&A with the troops.



Cpl Little - fittest soldier in brigade

OPERATIONAL DEPLOYMENTS

MCpl Hirschfeld deployed on Op REASSURANCE 25-01 (Latvia) as the Orderly Room HRA IC from 8 Dec 2024 – 17 June 2025

Cpl Dewell deployed on Op CADENCE 25 – Kananaskis, AB - June 2025 – Support to G7 Summit

OCdt Popelka deployed on Op LENTUS 25-02 (Sask Wildfires) as a Section 2IC – August 2025



OCdt Popelka – Op LENTUS 2 – Fire Fighting Crew – OCdt Popelka pictured far right

COURSES

2Lt Williams completed BMOQ Pt 2

Cpl Horn completed PLQ Mod 3

MCpl McCready, Cpl Keehn, & Cpl Redding completed RQ Corporal (May Aug)

Pte Anderson, Pte Wesman, and Pte Wagg completed RQ Sapper. Shout out to Pte Anderson for receiving Top Candidate and Espirt de Corp (peer choice) and Pte Wagg for becoming the fastest qualified 44 ES Sapper in at least a decade!

Cpl Krenz and Pte Asmakov completed Mods 1 (Tools) and Mod 2 (Demo) of RQ Sapper

Pte McLeod and Pte Doll completed Mods 1 (Tools) and Mod 3 (Bridging) of RQ Sapper after 3 weeks of FTSE

Pte Tait completed Mod 2 (Demo) of RQ Sapper

Pte Kowalchuk, Pte Meester, and Pte Thompson are set to complete their Mod 1 (Tools) of RQ Sapper in Early Sept.

Pte Meyer completed his BMQ

MCpl Hoyt completed his Driver Instructor / Examiner Course

Cpl Getz is currently completing his Basic Conventional Munitions Disposal Course



RQ Sapper Picture – Pictured L-R – Graduation from RQ Sapper - Gagetown Pte Wagg (44 ES Trail – fastest qualified Sapper in 44 for a decade), Pte Anderson (44 ES Trail - Top Candidate and Espirt de Corp (peer choice)), Pte Wesman (44 ES Cranbrook)

TASKINGS

Lt(N) Fines completed a 5-month tasking in Quebec instructing on the Basic Officer Intelligence Course

MCpl Hunt instructed on Tools at CFSME for 3 months

MCpl Hoyt instructed on Breaching and Search at CFMSE for 3 months

Cpl Getz completed a tasking in Shilo for 3 weeks

COMMAND POSITIONS

CO: LCol S.J. Piers

DCO: Maj A.R. Gower

RSM: CWO S.R.C Batch

A/Adjutant: Captain H.S. Helmer-Smith

Chaplain: Capt L. Bae

OC 6 ES: Maj P. Kwok

OC 54 ES: Maj A. Jarvis

SSM 54 ES: MWO J.C. Mader

SSM 6 ES: MWO H. Park

A/OC 44 ES: Captain H.S. Helmer-Smith

A/SSM 44 ES: Sgt C.J. Wenman

OC Admin Sqn: TBD

SSM Admin Sqn: TBD

Regt Ops WO: WO A Van Erp

6 ES Op TBD

44 ES Ops. TBD

54 ES Ops. TBD

CHRA: PO1 K. Morrison

HCol: TBD

HLCol: Rebecca Weatherford

EXERCISES

Ex Cougar Castle



On 12 September 2025, Commander of 39 CBG Colonel Paul Lindsay and Brigade Sergeant Major CWO Anthony Harris visited soldiers on Ex COUGAR CASTLE in Chilliwack BC. This joint bridging exercise between 39 Combat Engineer Regiment and the U.S. Army's 671 Multi-Role Bridging Company focused on constructing floating rafts and practicing challenging river crossings.



Fraser River in Chilliwack 'optimal' swift-water training site for military

Canadian, U.S. soldiers join forces to build bridges together on challenging body of water
Chilliwack Progress: Jenna Hauck Sep 13, 2025

Canadian and American soldiers joined forces for a two-week, swift-water training exercise on the Fraser River in Chilliwack.

Called Exercise Cougar Castle, the fast-water bridging training saw about 30 Canadian Army Reserve personnel from the 39 Combat Engineer Regiment (39 CER) and 60 members of the U.S. Army at Island 22 from Sept. 8 to 21.

Similar to another operation dubbed Exercise Paladin Response which happens at Cultus Lake nearly every winter, the focus of Exercise Cougar Castle is to build a floating raft (floating bridge) directly on the water that is strong enough to carry a tank from one side of the river to the other.

The bridges are used not only in combat to transport troops and military vehicles, but also to bridge land gaps and move civilians over bodies of water during domestic operations such as earthquakes, fires and floods.

For training, the raft is made up of six pieces: four flat sections, plus a ramp on either end for a total length of about 170 feet. Each section, which is folded up like an accordion, is transported to the water by truck and then released from the shore into the water where it automatically opens up within seconds.

The sections are released one at a time, and boats are used to move or hold the pieces in place in order to connect them together.

It's a challenging spot to train because of the current, but that's exactly why they want to train on the mighty Fraser River.

"The whole reason why we shifted to here is now you're dealing with that river condition," said Capt. Kurt Murseli with 39 CER (Ex Ops O). "If you go on Cultus Lake, the wind picks up and you have to deal with that, but you're not really dealing with the current... it adds the complexities in river-crossing especially."

Sgt. Michael Popescu with the U.S. Army explained how different it is to assemble the floating bridge on a river as opposed to a lake.

"It's going to be pretty different in terms of dropping the loads into the water. The boat crews have to really be on their game to actually catch that, because as soon as it's touching the water, it's starting going down the current."

But in the first week on the water, they were met with another challenge – the river was too low to drop the raft sections in, plus there was an underwater gravel bar just off the shore. Crews were hoping for rain over the weekend and into their second week as they need the river to be at least one to two feet higher in order to drop the raft pieces in.

Despite the fact that by Sept. 12 they had not yet assembled a raft on the Fraser River, the training was still a big advantage, said American Lieut. Mike Jurczak.

"(It's) incredibly helpful still. This is huge for them just to be able to train loading and offloading (the boats)."



Getting the boats in and out of the water is the most difficult and time-consuming part, and the actual construction of the raft on the water is the easiest task.

"Time is money for us," Jurczak added.



The boats are brought to the shore on a pallet by a truck and lowered in using a hydraulic crane arm and winch. When taking the boat out of the river, they use a wrecker in tandem to help line up the back end of the boat to get it back onto the pallet.



Murseli said the Fraser River is an "optimal" location for fast-water training, since Chilliwack is the home of 39 CER, and it is close enough to the border for the American soldiers who brought their equipment across.

They were even able to keep Island 22 and the boat launch open for the public to use while they were training.

Although bridging training has taken place on and off at Island 22 for decades, Cougar Castle was a new exercise for nearly every soldier there.

One said the camaraderie between the Canadians and Americans was "immediate" and the soldiers were also trading patches.

"We are incredibly happy to be here. This is a huge opportunity. It takes a lot of co-ordination," Jurczak said. "The Canadian forces have been huge on all the logistics it takes with the border crossing and feeding us and finding routes. We're incredibly grateful for that."

The Americans will head home on Sept. 18 and continue their bridging training on a lake at home where they will be evaluated for the entire mission, while the Canadian soldiers will finish up on Sept. 21.



Capt Sidhu with MP for Chilliwack Mark Strahl (far left)



MCpl Couper received a US Army Reserve 416 Theatre Engineer Command coin. The 416 TEC consists of roughly 10,000 Engineers and is commanded by a 2 star general. His 2IC pictured delivered the coin to these soldiers.

OP GRANITE II

<https://operation-granite-ii.info/>



Operation GRANITE II, planned for July 2026 in Chilliwack, is a commemorative event being organized by the CMEA, the Retired Sappers Association, and the Royal Canadian Legion. It will mark the 80th Anniversary of the All Sappers Cenotaph in Chilliwack, BC, that is the principal CME and central to our history and heritage.

The event is scheduled for the weekend of July 17-19, 2026. It is intended to be a major reunion and celebration, likely the last significant gathering in what was the "Home of the Engineers" from 1942 to 1998. The format includes:

- Registration and a Meet & Greet on Friday
- A Rededication and a Service of Remembrance at the Cenotaph on Saturday, followed by a Gala Dinner
- Optional church and group memorial services on Sunday morning, concluding with a farewell brunch
- Historical displays, kit sales, and a videographer capturing personal interviews and stories throughout the event

The organizing committee aims to reconnect thousands of people who served in Chilliwack, honour their history, and pay homage to those who have passed. The event has received financial support from the CMEA to help launch the event.

Operation GRANITE II is a significant military heritage reunion and commemorative event centred on the Canadian Military Engineers' legacy in Chilliwack, planned for mid-July 2026.

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

39 CER ASSOCIATION CONTACTS

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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>