



Heavy weather replenishment.

## STANAVFORLANT UNDER CANADIAN COMMAND

**N**ATO's Standing Naval Force Atlantic (STANAVFORLANT) is a multinational squadron of frigates and destroyers that was stood-up over 30 years ago. Ships are permanently committed to the squadron by Canada, the US, the UK, the Netherlands, Germany and, beginning this year, Spain. Other countries contributing ships to the Force for extended periods, depending on where operations are being conducted, include Belgium, Denmark, Norway and Portugal. In the future, we can expect participation by Poland after their acquisition of modern frigates from the US. Canada has provided a ship to STANAVFORLANT continually throughout its existence, and provides a Force Commander, at the rank of Commodore or Rear-Admiral, in rotation with the other nations who permanently assign a ship to the squadron.

In addition to being one of NATO's Immediate Reaction Forces (IRF) under the operational command of the Supreme Allied Commander Atlantic (SACLANT), STANAVFORLANT is a force that is continually advancing Alliance interoperability through using NATO's tactics and procedures to ensure they work in the real world. It has also conducted port visits

to, and operations with a number of the Partnership for Peace (PfP) nations in recent years.

Canada's year in command of the Standing Naval Force Atlantic came to an end on 31 March, with the turn-over to a US Navy (USN) commander in Halifax. During the last nine months of this command, a number of interesting trends in maritime warfare became evident. These will be discussed briefly, and this article will also provide some observations on last year's NATO action in Kosovo.

### MARITIME TRENDS

**T**oday's operational emphasis is on littoral (coastal and confined waters) rather than the blue water operations for which NATO's maritime forces were trained during the Cold War years. Over the course of the past decade, real-world maritime operations have taken place in the Persian Gulf and in the Adriatic. Others have involved interdiction of contraband off Haiti and support to forces ashore in Somalia and East

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Canadian Forces Photo

Sea King helicopter replenishing HMCS Athabaskan.

Timor. In many ways littoral operations present a more difficult problem to forces afloat than operating in the open ocean. Because of reduced transit times from shore bases, there is a greater air threat and reduced response times than in traditional Cold War scenarios. Integral air resources are frequently devoted to supporting objectives on land, rather than conducting surveillance around the Task Group and providing a Combat Air Patrol, as is the case in blue water operations.

A maritime force can contribute a number of capabilities to a predominantly land operation. If the force is capable of operating fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters from aircraft carriers, amphibious vessels with large flight decks, or destroyers and frigates, then these resources can be brought to bear relatively quickly to support land operations. Sea-based air resources can be tasked to conduct surveillance, combat search and rescue, close air support to troops ashore, and spotting for naval gunfire support. Ships operating just outside territorial waters can deny the use of the sea to hostile forces, enable its use by own its forces, and exclude the transport of war supplies. This is a strength that should be fully exploited, and it has the added benefit of not having to worry about such land complexities as status of forces' agreements and establishing new support infrastructures.

Surface and sub-surface based land-attack missiles, such as Tomahawk, provide a precision strike capability at times when weather extremes may not permit the operation of manned aircraft. With timely intelligence, Tomahawk can respond to missions at very short notice – within an hour. Naval fire support, ranging from medium-calibre guns (20 to 30 kilometres) to specialized missiles and rockets with ranges of up to 320 kilometres, are available or under development. Such a capability means that at least a portion of land force artillery requirements can be provided from the sea. This expedites the speedy deployment of such forces and reduces delays caused by the requirement to deploy heavy weapons and the necessary ammunition supply chain.

In addition to such roles as deploying land-attack missiles and helping to counter unfriendly naval forces, reconnaissance by friendly submarines in littoral operations is essential. They are able to loiter in a covert posture for extended periods, building up an intelligence plot and passing it to the Officer in Tactical Command. In addition, such submarines are able to land Special Forces to conduct a variety of missions ashore and then safely extract them.

The most recent operations have demonstrated that information management is becoming a complex affair. The USN is leading the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) at sea, and countries that wish to operate with the USN, in the littorals or elsewhere, must try to stay in step. This requires compatible high-speed and secure data links, use of the Internet for open source intelligence, internal ship and staff Local Area Networks (LANs), video teleconferencing between ships and formations, and other means of rapid and reliable communication. The Canadian Navy is well placed to conduct operations with the US and other Allied navies; however, a great deal of effort will be required to achieve Network-Centric Warfare (NCW), where all operational maritime units are 'netted-in' to the operational picture. NCW will likely lead to centralized control of sensors and weapons to optimize capabilities, thus making the waging of maritime warfare more efficient. Ultimately, this enhanced 'connectivity' will allow naval forces to 'link in' more completely with both land and air forces that are also operating in the littorals.

## STANAVFORLANT AND KOSOVO

While STANAVFORLANT was conducting work-up exercises in northern Europe, the senior NATO leadership in Brussels considered reallocation of the Force from the Supreme Allied Commander Atlantic (SACLANT) to the Supreme Allied Commander Europe

(SACEUR) to support Operation Allied Force in the Balkans. The final decision was not reached until mid-May, but in anticipation of being assigned to the Adriatic Sea, planned visits to Barcelona and Lisbon were cancelled. Because of the superb co-operation of the Portuguese Navy, we were able to conduct an early maintenance period in Lisbon and were then ready for a long-term tasking in the operation.

Operation “Allied Force” was a case study in peace-making operations, with a number of added non-traditional roles such as the escort of humanitarian relief supplies and the safeguarding of refugees. The primary mission was, however, always controlling the Adriatic Sea in concert with the forces of a dozen other Allied navies. By containing the operations of the Serbian Navy and ensuring the safe conduct of ships and aircraft conducting strike operations, the Alliance was able to focus on the campaign in Kosovo. NATO was, of course, concerned about the importation of oil and other war supplies through Montenegrin ports, so plans were developed and our capability exercised to impose a strict embargo.

This was a very similar operation to the one that STANAVFORLANT experienced during Operation “Sharp Guard” in 1993 to 1996. In fact, the current Chief of the Maritime Staff and last Canadian to command STANAVFORLANT, Vice-Admiral Greg Maddison, spent most of his time in 1993 conducting this task.

Maritime aircraft conducted many strikes on Serb targets in the mission area, they escorted air force bombers to their target areas, and they carried out many intelligence gathering missions, including sending real-time images to forces at sea which occasionally permitted rapid and successful targeting of military forces. Surface and sub-surface vessels also contributed by launching many Tomahawk missiles against targets ashore.

As was mentioned, maritime forces brought considerable capability to Operation “Allied Force”. The original Allied plan was, however, based on employing only air forces, and this caused problems having to do with command and control, and rules of engagement among the various maritime forces in the area, most of which operated under national control. Perhaps the most difficult challenge the Alliance will face in the future will be achieving unanimity of purpose and method in the conduct of such operations. NATO and national staffs continue to examine these issues.

This kind of employment is nothing new, for our sailors and ships from both Maritime Force Atlantic and

Maritime Force Pacific have extensive experience in this area. HMCS *Regina*, recently attached to the USS *Constellation* Battle Group, is the latest in a line of Canadian warships that have helped to enforce UN trade sanctions against Iraq since the end of the Gulf War. The threat of attack from surface-to-surface missiles, the uncertainty about submarine operations and the possibility of the use of chemical weapons are all issues for which we train regularly.

Our sailors understand the job they are being asked to do. They are well equipped and trained for the mission and adapt extremely well to the demands of these



Canadian Forces Photo

Commodore Morse assuming command of the Standing Naval Force Atlantic.

tasks. Of course, none of this would be possible without the careful investments in naval capability made by Canadians to ensure this kind of interoperability exists.

The Canadian STANAVFORLANT flagships – HMC Ships *Athabaskan* and *Iroquois* for 1999/2000 – although nearing 30 years of service life, are well-balanced and capable ships. They stand alone among the Allies in the degree of integration in their command and control systems, and they have the only communications suite in the current Force that provides direct connec-



Boarding exercise off HMCS *Athabaskan*.

Canadian Forces Photo

tions through the NATO Intranet to our operational commanders. They are also the only ships in the Force with a balanced and long-range weapons capability, and the only long-range helicopter.

### BUSINESS AS USUAL

In past months we examined the ability of the ships of the Force to operate together in a variety of scenarios. A number of formal trials were conducted, such as electronic warfare trials off Stavanger, Norway in August 1999, along with dozens of other major and minor tests of our combined abilities. For example, we operated British and German helicopters from the Dutch frigate HNLMS *Philips Van Almonde* for periods of up to a week. This might seem like a simple endeavour, but it entailed the transfer of the aircraft, maintenance and flight crews, as well as deck handling and maintenance equipment, and it required a high degree of standardization of flight deck and air control procedures.

We practised combining boarding teams to conduct inspections of large vessels. This demanded the careful coordination of inspection procedures, weapons handling, rules of engagement, and boat and aircraft tactics. We tested and exposed a number of equipment and procedural incompatibilities. We determined, for example, that message-broadcast procedures in some NATO automated systems were not strictly in accordance with the standardization agreements, and were able to implement a software solution in several ships.

We also expanded the use at sea of advanced operational information systems. The new capabilities of electronic distribution of intelligence, the ability to consult directly with senior commanders, and the ability to transfer graphical data, operations orders and political appreciations are an enormous enhancement of a commander's ability to command a multinational and immediate reaction force.

Another role of STANAVFORLANT, especially in the NATO 50th anniversary year (1999), was to be high-

ly visible. We made well-publicized visits to many countries, including the first NATO visit to Poland since it joined the organization. We were warmly received in every port, and we welcomed thousands of visitors. In Zeebrugge, Belgium, for example, the Force received 35,000 visitors during the Belgian Navy Days weekend. Among them were several government ministers, ambassadors, chiefs of defence and of navies, senior officers, municipal officials and, most importantly, hundreds of young people and veterans. Perhaps the most poignant memory is that of a Belgian veteran who carried a Canadian flag during the Navy Days parade. This man spoke neither English nor French, but was a representative of the Belgian people liberated by Canadians in 1944. To pay respect to our own veterans during this port call, several busloads of Canadian sailors made a three-hour journey from Zeebrugge to Vimy Ridge.

If there is one burning memory of this deployment, it is the esteem and admiration that the Canadian flag receives in Europe. It is a legacy and heritage that guides our actions in STANAVFORLANT.



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Jackstay transfer of personnel.