

HMCS WINNIPEG
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WIN: 5075-1

10 November 2015



Dear Family and Friends of *Winnipeg*,

Today, I am writing you from Toulon, France where we are currently enjoying an extended operational port of call for our Rest and Maintenance Period (RAMP). For 11 days, our dedicated team is getting some much deserved rest from exercises and operations while our beloved ship receives some required maintenance so that we can maintain effectiveness for the rest of the mission. We recently surpassed the halfway mark of our deployment and after five months, I am proud to report that our *Winnipeg* family is still doing well and continuing to perform at an extremely high standard.

After finishing Exercise JOINT WARRIOR in mid-October, we returned to Belfast where we participated in planning meetings with our Standing NATO Maritime Group One (SNMG1) colleagues for Exercise TRIDENT JUNCTURE. While in Belfast our Chaplain, Lieutenant (Navy) Matthew Squires organized a community relations event where he took a work party from the ship to tear down an unused building at a local school to make room for a community garden project. Our assistance was greatly appreciated by the school and the team had a lot of fun helping out.

We proceeded back to sea with SNMG1 on October 19th and on October 21st we enjoyed a barbeque meal and cake on the flight deck to celebrate the halfway mark of our deployment. After dinner, we were entertained by the ship's band, *The Zero's* and I had the honour of promoting some deserving sailors to their next rank. It was a great way to celebrate this significant milestone in our deployment.

During our celebrations, *Winnipeg* was sailing south from Belfast towards the coastal waters of Spain and Portugal to participate in Exercise TRIDENT JUNCTURE, the largest NATO exercise in more than 20 years. More than 70 warships, eight submarines, 140 aircraft and 3000 marines from 12 NATO countries participated in the exercise which focused primarily on operations east and west of the Straits of Gibraltar. It was an incredible training opportunity for our entire team.

Prior to coming to Toulon, we briefly stopped into Lisbon, Portugal. Once in Toulon, we participated in two Remembrance Day commemoration events. Twenty members of our crew proudly represented the Canadian Armed Forces at a parade in downtown Toulon and the rest of the Ship's Company participated in a parade at Arsenal de Toulon, the naval base where the ship is located. Commemorating Remembrance Day in France was unique and humbling experience for our team because for many, it was their first time in the country that hosted major Canadian military campaigns during World War One and Two.

After RAMP, we will proceed back to sea with our SNMG1 consorts as part of an Aircraft Carrier Battle Group in the Mediterranean Sea.

While we would all like to be at home for the season, the requirements of our service have us deployed throughout the holidays. To make the best of our holiday season, our ship's holiday committee has a lot of fun celebrations in store for the crew and I look forward to celebrating with them.

Chalk 7, the second last group to take advantage of the Home Leave Travel Assistance (HLTA) program is currently enjoying some rest time away from the ship and the final group, Chalk 8, will depart from France later this month.

I wish you all the best of the winter season and I look forward to sharing more about our journey in next letter as we all prepare to celebrate the holiday season.

Yours truly,

P.L. Belhumeur
Commander
Commanding Officer