

Coalition members share experiences during Bold Alligator

2nd Marine Aircraft Wing & Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point

Story by [Lance Cpl. Scott L. Tomaszycski](#)



Photo by Lance Cpl. Scott L. Tomaszycski

Date Taken:02.09.2012

Date Posted:02.09.2012 22:53

Location:USS KEARSARGE, USAFRICOM, AT

Canadian Army soldiers board an MV-22 Osprey aboard the USS Kearsarge Feb. 6 during Exercise Bold Alligator 2012. Bold Alligator gave coalition countries the opportunity to familiarize themselves with each other to improve interoperability between the services.

ABOARD USS KEARSARGE, At Sea – Nine coalition partners joined the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps team for Exercise Bold Alligator 2012 sharing military experience from around the world.

Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Spain and the United Kingdom all participated or provided observers for the exercise.

Aboard the USS Kearsarge, a company of the Canadian Army and a company of Royal Marines each took an active part in the training. Training included martial arts, weapons familiarization training and participation in the beach assault. U.S. Marines have recently fought side-by-side with these allies in combat in Iraq and Afghanistan. This exercise still proved useful to prepare all coalition forces for their next opportunity to operate together and proved that they could work from a sea-based environment.

“I think it’s fair to say that the more familiarity you have working in a coalition setting with other partners in an exercise framework, the easier it becomes to then transition to real operations because we understand each other’s cultures and decision making processes at the operational level and tactical levels,” said Royal Marine Maj. Chris Samuel, commanding officer of J Company, 42 Commando, Royal Marines. “We become interoperable in terms of understanding each other’s equipment, capabilities, and each other’s tactics, techniques and procedures.”

The coordination between the different key players of the scenario was the most difficult, explained Canadian Sgt. Maj. Eric Proulx of C Company, 3rd Royal, 22nd Regiment of the Canadian Army. The Canadian Army trains at the battalion level during its largest exercises, but training with larger forces in a partnered exercise showed Proulx the complexity of moving a larger numbers of troops and working with a variety of military services and countries.

“For me, that’s a good learning experience,” Proulx added.

Proulx stated that C Company specializes in the Canadian brand of amphibious warfare, which encompasses going from one body of land across a small body of water in assault boats, landing and continuing on to the objective. According to him, most of the Canadian forces have never been aboard a ship larger than their assault boats. The new experience was both fun and practical.

“It’s definitely a great exercise because we both don’t know each other’s capabilities and it’s a fun time to experience those different things where you’re expanding your horizons,” said Canadian Lt. Mathieu M. Groulx, an infantry platoon commander with the company. “You’ve got an unknown world everywhere, so if you work more closely together then it would be easier when we get to a real mission; we would work more effectively together.”

Integration of the multiple forces had a major impact on the big picture of the Bold Alligator scenario, just like it does in real operations.

“The ability to give missions in a battle space to coalition folks is huge and critical,” said Lt. Col. Scott A. Cooper, the senior watch officer for Marine Aircraft Group 29, the air combat element. “One of the main efforts in this landing was the French who had to take a beach toward Wilmington, and they were the first ones to go. Look at Afghanistan, a Georgian battalion has a really key battle space in the Helmand province and they’re doing great work. Everybody’s got expertise and they all have great capabilities.”

As the exercise came to an end each country and service walked away with many lessons learned from not only conducting amphibious operations but doing so with coalition partners that they have worked with in combat in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as partners they could likely work with in the future.

Canadian Sgt. Maj. Eric Proulx of Charlie Company, 3rd Royal, 22nd Regiment; age 42; enlisted 1989; from Montreal, Quebec Province

We were invited to embark on Exercise Bold Alligator. We’re supposed to go to Landing Zone Hawk to do some company sized exercises.

Worked with U.S. Army previously

From our point of view the highest level that we train at is battalion level and every time that I have worked with U.S. forces it's so much bigger so I can see a lot more people on the ground and I can see all the complexity of moving all of these troops on the ground. For me, that's a good learning experience.

From my point of view, all of the coordination in between all of the parts of the scenario, working together, for me this is at my level the what is the most complicated because once I know what everybody else will be doing, it's easy for me to turn around and give direction to our troops. The big coordination between all of the key players is the most difficult and challenging.

I would say that more than half of our troops understand and speak English and about 75 per cent of them would understand with little visual aids what the message is. Our other language being French, at some point especially when things get complicated, or with English speakers talking really fast and using lots of slang, I'd say more than half our people won't understand it.

The higher you go in the chain of command, the more experience you get with other nations and for us we don't have any choice, you have to learn English if you want to climb up the ladder. We're surrounded by English speakers and if you want to go anywhere in the world, you have to at least speak English.

As far as I can remember when I was a young kid, I never had any problem going on vacation to the United States and for my whole life, the relations have been good.

For about 90 percent of us, we have never been on a boat bigger than a RIB before so this is a big experience even if it's only a week we're going to spend on ship. It's a big learning experience for us. None of us have actually had the AAV experience so that was another experience for us.

I think there's good interaction between the troops that are living altogether. There might have been friction in the very first days but nothing major because it hasn't come onto my desk. I visit the troops quite a few times a day and they seem to get along because I have seen Canadians wearing Marine's T-shirt or Royal Commando T-shirt and Americans wearing Canadian pieces of equipment so if they wear it in front of each other, it's because it hasn't been stolen so it's all good.

I think everybody's learning from each other's experience. In all three of us, everybody's been to Afghanistan. There's probably war stories going on in the corridors.

Lt. Mathieu M. Groulx

Infantry Platoon Commander for the 3rd Royal, 22nd Regiment of Canada, age 24; commissioned May 14, 2004; from Ottawa, Ontario; Graduated St. Matthew's HS in 2006; graduated from University of Ottawa with a degree in Health Science and a minor in psychology

Our amphibious operations will involve smaller assault boats going from land over a smaller body of water and then we'll hit the ground and from there we'll disperse to hit whatever objective we have to take care of.

It's one hell of an experience.

In my battalion, we have an airborne company with helicopters, we have a company that specializes in jungle warfare and another that specializes in mountain operations. Mine is amphibious [paraphrase]

It's definitely a great exercise because we both don't know each other's capabilities and it's a fun time to experience those different things where you're expanding your horizons. You've got an unknown world everywhere so if you work more closely together then it would be easier when we get to a real mission, we would work more effectively together.

In the planning process, we would be able to say, 'these guys have these assets and those guys have those assets' and be able to mix them in together and be able to work more efficiently together. It's a lot of fun just getting to know new people.

—

Lt. Col. Scott A. Cooper

It started over a year ago. I don't know how coalition members got brought in, but at the planning conference it was, 'hey we're doing this, this and this.' I wouldn't say there was friction, but there's levels of complexity. A French officer comes to me and talks about flying off the Mistral and some French pilots want to fly with us. I've flown with NATO guys before in Kosovo and other places. You don't have the same SOPs necessarily. Quite honestly, it's one of the reasons that that NATO is so successful. We founded NATO in 1949 because we were going to have to fight together.

The Dutch wanted to do fastroping, Royal Marines and the French brought the most. What we found doctrinally is it worked pretty well. The naval gunfire liaison companies were the ones that worked most closely with the French in close air support at the bombing ranges. Those guys integrated with the French. Canadians, Brits, they were part of the RLT we flew ashore. On the air wing side, there wasn't a whole lot of integration. Aviation support to coalition ground guys, we did quite a bit of. Like I said, Dutch fastroping and close air support for those guys. We supported the Dutch in the Military Operations in Urban Terrain facility on Camp Lejeune.

247 packs that were pushed ashore on D-Day, a number of them were Canadians and Brits.

One of the main efforts in this landing was the French who had to take a beach toward Wilmington and they were the first ones to go. That was critical in this operation that they landed ashore there. The ability to give missions in battle space to coalition folks is huge and critical. We find that wherever

we go. Look at Afghanistan, Georgia's battalion has a really key battle space in the Helmand province and they're doing great work. Similarly, if you look just south of Kabul it's Poles who have been some of the greatest contributors in Afghanistan. They all have great capabilities. Everybody's got expertise. We find the Georgians have remarkable abilities in counter-insurgency.

—
British CO Maj. Chris Samuel officer commanding of J Company, 42 Commando, Royal Marines; Commissioned May 1999; from Plymouth, UK; Royal Grammar School in Worcester, U.K. in 1998; University of Edinburgh; Bachelor's of Science in Geology

What we're doing is a series of cross-training with the United States Marine Corps, which enables us to have familiarization with your weapons systems and tactics because you are the most likely coalition partner for the United Kingdom in future operations.

From the U.K. perspective, the Royal Marines are only 7,000 versus 202,000 U.S. Marines, so the disparity is quite large. The Royal Marines, because it's so small, is likely to be involved in joint operations with other elements of the U.K. armed forces and in an international context with other elements around the world. So typically in Helmand, we take our turn with the British army cycling through and in Helmand the battle space is owned by the United States Marine Corps. So frequently we will be involved in operations with the U.S. Marine Corps. Periodically the Royal Marines, as part of a wider Royal Navy response group task force, they would send what you refer to as an amphibious ready group to the Mediterranean and we will operate an exercise with allies, typically the U.S., but also other allies including the French and the Dutch.

Because the Royal Marines are so small, we are frequently involved in joint operations and joint exercises around the world. Also, coalition operations with other nations in a variety of different theaters including our operations in Helmand and elsewhere.

I think it's fair to say that the more familiarity you have working in a coalition setting with other partners, in an exercise framework, the easier it becomes to then transition and when we do find we go on operations to understand each other's cultures, decision making processes, at the operational level and tactical level, interoperability in terms of understanding each other's equipment, capabilities, and each other's tactics techniques and procedures.

The company will conduct aviation assault onto Landing Zone Falcon. The company will then split into three, each troop or platoon will go with each of the rifle companies of 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marines and follow the training program that they are following for cross training purposes.

Connected Media



Coalition

Master Cpl. J.J. Tremblay, a soldier for C Company, 3rd...

members...



Coalition

Canadian Army soldiers rest before boarding U.S. Marine...

members...



Coalition

Canadian Army soldiers board an MV-22 Osprey aboard the...

members...



MCMAP

Marines with 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment...

bridges...

U.S.



MCMAP

U.S. Marines with 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment...

bridges...



Bold

Canadian forces with 3rd Battalion, 22nd Regiment,...

Alligator



MCMAP

U.S. Marine Corps Sgt. Marc Alwes with 3rd Battalion,...

bridges...



Bold

Canadian forces with 3rd Battalion, 22nd Regiment,...

Alligator



Bold

Canadian forces with 3rd Battalion, 22nd Regiment,...

Alligator