

New troops leaders graduate from the Royal Canadian Armoured Corps School

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OROMOCTO, NEW BRUNSWICK – The Royal Canadian Armoured Corps is getting some new members. On 31 July 2014, **twenty** new graduates of the Primary Reserve Armoured Reconnaissance Troop Leader (ARTL) course will have spent thirteen weeks learning to lead a troop of reconnaissance vehicles.

The course is held at the Royal Canadian Armoured Corps School at 5 Canadian Division Support Base Gagetown, as part of the Canadian Army's Combat Training Centre. Multi-faceted instruction takes place in classrooms, specialized simulators, and the vast Gagetown training area.

The role of a reconnaissance troop leader is as diverse as it is challenging. The candidates began the course learning to command the crew of a reconnaissance vehicle. Typically, a crew includes the commander, a driver, a gunner, and a surveillance operator.

Candidates spend four weeks in garrison learning the theory behind crew commanding, reconnaissance operations, and how to operate communications equipment and weapons systems. Teamwork is emphasized as reconnaissance troops work in a complex and dynamic environment in uncharted territory within the battlespace and domestic operations alike.

Next, the candidates put what they learnt to use in the field. When conducting manoeuvres in the training area, the students get a feel for operating as part of a reconnaissance, or "recce", troop.

"The crew has to be in constant communication, each of them multi-tasking and supporting each other," says Second Lieutenant Alan Murphy of the Prince Edward Island Regiment in Charlottetown, PEI. "It gets busy," he adds.

Back in garrison, the next module of the course focuses first on patrol commanding, when candidates are introduced to a more in-depth planning process for commanding their own vehicle as well as another.

Finally, the theory behind troop leading concludes the garrison portion of the course. The students are then ready to practice commanding their own vehicle, the junior vehicle in their patrol, and ultimately an entire troop.

Once again, the students head to the training area and are assessed on their ability to lead their peers in a variety of reconnaissance tasks including gathering information on routes, terrain, areas of interest, and potential targets.

The culminating exercise exposes students to managing the personnel and resource requirements of reconnaissance operations.

"We want the students to be ready to assume the duties of a troop leader at their unit when they leave the School," explains Captain Mathew McInnes, the course officer for ARTL. "Included is leadership of the soldiers under them, but also the management of the resources used by their sub-unit."

Regular and reserve force instructors mentor students on the duties and responsibilities at each level of command, and offer insights based on years of experience. Each staff member brings a different skill set that students can learn from. Learning to call in artillery fire missions was popular amongst the candidates.

“As recce soldiers, we get to work with different arms and learning to speak their language is critical,” says Second Lieutenant Sarah Gray of The Halifax Rifles (RCAC) based in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

After thirteen weeks, the candidates are ready to take on their next challenge of leading troops at their home units. They will now return to reserve regiments across the country that provide augmentation to regular force units and assist civil authorities during times of domestic emergencies.

When not assuming a tactical role as a troop leader at a unit, these newly qualified junior officers may also fill staff positions in headquarters at various levels.

“It’s time to do our part,” says Second Lieutenant Mark Jennings-Bates of the British Columbia Dragoons in Kelowna, British Columbia. “I’m looking forward to all of the opportunities the Army has to offer.”

Second Lieutenant Gavin Ducharme of the Windsor Regiment, based in Windsor, ON, scans with binoculars while adopting a position in the Gagetown Training Area during the Armoured Reconnaissance Troop Leader course held at 5 CDSB Gagetown. **(Photo: 2Lt Jake Rideout)**

