



Fleet divers take the plunge under the ice in Québec



A diver from FDU(A) prepares to dive.

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A nine-member team from the Fleet Diving Unit Atlantic (FDU (A)) participated in ice diving training in Thetford Mines, Québec from February 18 to 26. "The training is being conducted in order to maintain the under ice proficiencies of the members as well as the mobilization of the unit as a self-sufficient entity requiring minimal support," said Lt(N) Troy Beechinor, Underwater Engineering Officer in

charge of the team going to Québec.

The members ventured into the near-zero waters through a 2m per side triangle cut through the ice. They are tethered to the surface via an umbilical, or Light Weight Surface Supplied Diving System (LWSSDS), which also allows the diver a constant supply of air and provides a means of communications with the rest of the team on the surface.

The team typically consists of a supervisor, diver, standby diver, two attendants and the diving console

operator/communicator.

While underwater, team members perform a variety of searches and salvage training.

The average dive lasts 15 to 30 minutes, depending on the depth of the dive.

The divers keep warm in the core-numbing conditions by wearing specialized equipment that keeps them comfortable for an extended period of time under the water. Their system consists of high-tech long underwear, a dry suit and a full-face mask. As well, the divers have an emergency air supply attached to the breathing system in the event of a failure of the main air supply.

While diving can be precarious under idyllic conditions, the ice adds a further element of risk.

It is because of this risk that the FDU (A) annually practices going beneath the ice, as well as the set up of all the equipment necessary to function with minimal support.

The dive training is important to maintain and refine their skills under the ice in case they are needed to recover equipment that has become lost or to save others who are in a dire situation.