

MY ROLE IN THE CFDS

MY ROLE IN THE CFDS features military and civilian personnel and occupations throughout the Defence Team. Featured profiles use real-life stories to illustrate the dedication, excellence and professionalism of personnel and employees in their day-to-day jobs under the purview of the Canada First Defence Strategy.

LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER CHAD NAEFKEN: DEFENDING NORTH AMERICA

LCdr Naefken wears many hats. He is a clearance diving officer working at North American Aerospace Defence Command (NORAD) as a surveillance officer and exercise planner. More specifically, he is NORAD's Maritime Lead for Vigilant Shield, a continuing series of training exercises that ensure NORAD is able to succeed in its mission to deter, detect and defend against aerospace and maritime threats to North America. During his 22 years in the CF, he was also trained as a shipborne air controller and a submersible pilot. The possibility of personal challenges and the variety of work opportunities are two of the main reasons LCdr Naefken joined the Forces.

Having had no friends or family with military experience, however, he does admit he had no idea what he was getting himself into. "Many people don't realize the level of responsibility the CF takes on, the challenges we accept, what we ask of our families while, ultimately, putting our safety on the line," he says.

He is now based in Colorado Springs, although his military career has taken him to locations around the globe. "Colorado Springs is one of the most beautiful places in the world," LCdr Naefken says. "My family takes advantage of the outdoors with lots of skiing and camping."

But that's when he's not working with his US Vigilant Shield



counterparts, planning and coordinating exercises that enable the CF and US forces to maintain the ability to deliver excellence at home while remaining strong and reliable partners in the defence of North America.

Simulation exercises run NORAD personnel through a gamut

of threat scenarios such as plane hijackings and crashes, oil spills in the Arctic, natural disasters and the like. Although NORAD and its regions conduct regular training for potential threats, Vigilant Shield demands that participants react under difficult conditions and face multiple scenarios at the same time – all while still monitoring situations in the real world.

LCdr Naefken and the contingent of about 155 other Canadians in Colorado are in a very unique position. Being part of a bi-national military organization, there are "extremely imaginative chains of command by necessity, due to intermingling of nations, branches such

But that's not to say that this strong partnership doesn't come with some challenges. "Our governments have different rules when it comes to the handling of classified information," he says, "and we have had to work hard to develop ways and means that allow us to perform our jobs without compromising each nation's classified information. We also have to take into consideration each government's goals when we define our training objectives; that can be challenging, but we try to make the most of our training opportunities."

The Canada First Defence Strategy recognizes that if the CF

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as navy, air force, national guard and so on, with high strategic importance," LCdr Naefken explains. He, for example, reports to an US Coast Guard Commander.

"The advantages to our partnership with the United States are endless," LCdr Naefken says. "The sharing of best practices, communications, the variety of senior staff with the amazing experiences and knowledge they impart, along with the more practical advantages of combining exercises and utilizing the same resources, all lead to the ultimate goal of increased surveillance and security for Canada, and for North America as a whole."

are to be effective in such difficult and diverse environments as the Arctic, and given our common defence and security requirements, then it is in Canada's strategic interest to remain a reliable partner in the defence of the continent by supporting such programs as NORAD.

Ultimately, LCdr Naefken just wants to make the training environment better for the person following in his footsteps. "The next exercise planner will, hopefully, have an easier time with a more mature exercise framework, and be able to leverage established relationships," he says, "with the end result being a safer North America." ♦

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