

THE NAVY IN 1958

The year 1958 was one of solid progress for the Royal Canadian Navy.

It was a year in which the development of new levels of efficiency among existing forces and an even greater concentration on improving the RCN's anti-submarine capability overshadowed statistical gains in ships and personnel.

Ships of the fleet were at sea from the beginning of the year to its end, on training cruises, exercises and operational duties that took them as far as Malta, in one direction, and South Vietnam in the other. Every opportunity was sought and taken to practice for an anti-submarine role which, as it became more sharply defined, became more complex and demanding.

Ashore the story was the same, with the training of personnel and the command and logistic organizations devoting their efforts exclusively to the present and future needs of the fleet and its specialized function.

At the year's end, the navy had 47 warships in commission, two Royal Navy submarines under its operational control and a further six warships under refit. This compared with 45 ships in commission and five in refit at the end of 1957.

The regular force totalled 19,817 officers, men and wrens at November 1, compared with a strength of 19,258 at the beginning of November, 1957. In addition, there were 361 officer cadets and 185 technical apprentices under training. Last year's figures for these categories were 267 and 157, respectively.

Major additions to the fleet in 1958 were:

Destroyer escorts - HMC Ships Restigouche and St. Croix, first two of the new Restigouche class anti-submarine vessels. The other five of this class are nearing completion and are scheduled to be commissioned in 1959.

Frigates - HMCS New Waterford, last of 21 anti-submarine frigates to be modernized.

Anti-submarine aircraft - of 100 CS2F Trackers on order, 43 have been delivered to date. Work has begun on a modified version with improved anti-submarine capabilities. First of the modified Trackers is expected to be in service by mid-1959.

Fighter aircraft - The Banshee jet fighter procurement programme was completed, bringing to 39 the total number purchased from the U.S. Navy.

To give further flexibility to the fleet, HMC Ships Cape Breton and Cape Scott were taken in hand for refit as mobile repair ships. Entering service in 1959, they will be capable of carrying out non-major repair work for ships either at sea or at points remote from dockyards and shipyards.

Armament additions included:

Guided missiles - Banshee jet fighters were fitted with the air-to-air "Sidewinder", first guided missile to be put into operational service in Canada's armed forces.

Homing torpedoes - Anti-submarine helicopters were fitted to carry homing torpedoes. Previously limited to submarine detection, these helicopters now have a "kill" capability as well. The homing torpedo is carried also by destroyer escorts and Tracker aircraft.

Training advances included:

Opening of the new Naval Technical School at Esquimalt on October 18. The school will serve as a primary source of highly skilled personnel required to operate and maintain the increasingly complex equipment being developed for ships of the fleet.

Formation of a cadet training squadron on the Pacific Coast. Primary task of the squadron, composed of frigates, is to provide sea training for naval cadets from the Canadian Services Colleges, universities and HMCS Venture, the junior officer training establishment at Esquimalt, B.C.

The squadron has taken over the duties of the training cruiser Ontario, which was paid off October 15. The move made available nearly 600 officers and men for anti-submarine ships of the fleet. Establishment of a cadet training squadron has the advantage of training cadets in ships more comparable in size and equipment to the destroyer escorts in which the majority will serve on receiving their commissions. The frigates are also capable of rapid transfer to operational duties if required.

Further steps were taken during the year to implement the navy's long-range plan for revision of its personnel structure. Among these was the introduction of a streamlined educational service broadening career opportunities for serving personnel.

Sea training activities ranged all the way from single-ship workups to large-scale NATO exercises. Canadian warships worked alongside those of France, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, the United Kingdom, United States and West Germany. Their travels took them to numerous ports on both coasts of Canada and the U.S.A. and to Japan, Hawaii, Hong Kong, South Vietnam, Okinawa, Fiji, Australia, New Zealand, Alaska, Central America, Mexico, The West Indies, France, Malta, Italy, the Azores, Gibraltar and the United Kingdom.

On the Great Lakes, a training squadron from the Atlantic Command provided sea training during the summer for naval reserves from across Canada. More than 500 new entry seamen of the RCN (Reserve) passed through the Great Lakes Training Centre at Hamilton, during the Peak months of July and August.

A proud and colourful occasion was the review by Her Royal Highness, the Princess Margaret, of 32 ships from Canada, the United Kingdom and United States at Royal Roads, near Victoria. It was the first Royal Fleet Review ever held in Canada.

RCN ships also took a prominent part, along with others from France, the Royal Navy and U.S. Navy, in Quebec City's 350th anniversary celebrations.