

Fire Mission Troop!

CAPT ANDREW MELVIN

The weekend of March 18 to 20, 2016, saw 3rd Field Artillery Regiment, RCA (The Loyal Company) deployed to Base Gagetown on a high profile exercise in support of multiple courses. Exercise Thunderous Shield simultaneously supported 4th Artillery Regiment (General Support) in conducting a Lightweight Counter-Mortar Radar course, as well as 3rd Field Regiment's in-house Mortar course, which required live fire of the weapon systems for students to become fully qualified. The exercise was also an opportunity for the junior leadership of the regiment to practice artillery special engagement missions, including Sniping Gun, Harassing Fire and Open Action, in preparation for the Regiment's annual Gunnery Confirmation Exercise being held at the end of April.

The exercise kicked off early Saturday morning with four mortars being deployed at Lawfield alongside C6 and C9 machine guns. While the mortars fired to support the radar systems in their detection requirements, the machine guns simultaneously fired live into Lawfield as well. This added a sense of realism to the shoot and provided soldiers an opportunity to maintain their basic soldiering skills. All told, over a hundred mortar rounds were fired into the impact area, supported by a hail of thousands of machine gun bullets. The Deputy Commander of the 5th Canadian Division, Brigadier General J.F. Camsell, and the Commander of the 37th Canadian Brigade Group, Colonel M.J. Morin, were both able to visit the mortarline during the live fire in the morning and early afternoon; both spoke to the complexity of the exercise, the level of support the Regiment was able to provide and the skill levels displayed of the Regiment's gunners.

The afternoon brought yet another

change of pace for the Regiment as gears shifted from mortars, machine guns and soldiering skills, to howitzers and junior leadership. Detachment Commanders were refreshed on the various types of special engagements that can be conducted by a single howitzer, all of which will be put to the test in April when the Regiment's Top Detachment will be determined by the annual Gunnery Confirmation Exercise. Each Detachment Commander was then able to practice their skills by conducting a Sniping Gun engagement, where they have the unique position of observing their own call for fire into the impact area, while their Second-in-Command independently supervises the howitzer's deployment.

Exercise Thunderous Shield wound down early Sunday morning with a demonstration.

Exercise Thunderous Shield wound down early Sunday morning with a demonstration of the various types of pyrotechnic ammunition that soldiers may come across during their careers in the Canadian Armed Forces, including Thunder Flashes, Artillery Simulators, Paraflares and Smoke Grenades. The exercise overall had many moving parts, requiring detailed coordination from the leadership at all levels. While not as fast paced as some of the Regiment's other exercises, it nonetheless provided a rich and safe learning environment and ample opportunity for soldiers to learn and practice a multitude of complex gunnery and soldiering skills.

Ubique!



Tube #4 Detachment, commanded by MBdr Tompkins, preparing to fire into Lawfield. PHOTO: MWO PERRY GILLINGHAM