

51 Fd Sqn conducts Joint Operations

by Sgt Martin Bouchard, 5 CER

Exercise *Rafale Blanche* was conducted in two phases from January 31 to February 8, 2012. 5 CER guided Phase I and served as a support unit to 2 Bn, R22eR, in Phase II.

As a transition between the exercise's two phases, Coy A, 2 Bn, R22eR, invited us to the sugar shack to watch Super Bowl XLVI. The New York Giants were pitted against the New England Patriots. While we watched the game, we were treated to an authentic sugar bush meal. The troop really appreciated it, having eaten only rations during the exercise. A festive atmosphere and friendly rivalry reigned among those gathered around the table. We enjoyed a great game of football (the Giants won) and, above all, a nice break between the two phases of our exercise. The break did the troop a lot of good.

In Phase II of the exercise, conducted near Thetford Mines, Tp 1 helped Coy A, 2 Bn, Royal 22e Regiment, to build the Northern FOB. Tp 1 erected firing positions for infantry soldiers riding light armoured vehicles. An LAV (Engineering) shovel was used to remove snow from the firing positions. The troop then erected an obstacle for dismounted personnel. This consisted of three Type 3 concertina-wire obstacles, with barbed wire one foot from the ground between each obstacle. The troop then unrolled 180 m of concertina wire about 30 m from the road in a very thick forest, for protection against attacks on our flank. These operations were not easy to conduct. We had to wear snowshoes to transport materiel.

During the final attack on the Canadian target, engineering elements had to be prepared for a task like breaching an obstacle, digging or any other engineering task. Tp 1's sappers represented 5 CER very well. They enthusiastically succeeded in performing all of the tasks that arose during the attack. We breached a concertina-wire fence to enable infantry soldiers to access the target. On reaching the target, the engineering sections were responsible for searching the site, including the body of a suspicious vehicle.

All section members displayed a high degree of professionalism and a good sense of urgency. Training as a combat team adds an element of the reality often seen in a theatre of operations.



A sapper inspects the undercarriage of a vehicle for booby traps.