

# Canada, Russia, United States gear up for Arctic SAREX '05

by 2Lt Steve Neta

To many Canadians, the Arctic is a vast uninhabited territory. That's understandable, considering the tremendous distance between communities, coupled with the extreme weather, and lack of highways. But what if you had to travel in the Arctic? Worse yet, what if something went wrong? For these worst-case aeronautical or maritime scenarios, the search and rescue (SAR) expertise of the Canadian Forces is frequently called upon. Canada's area of responsibility for SAR covers over 15.5 million square kilometres, of which over 60% is above the tree line. Given those facts, training for arctic rescue is critical to ensure an appropriate response to distresses in that region. Arctic SAREX is a testament to the Canadian Forces' dedication that others may live.

Arctic SAREX '05 will take place from September 12-16 at Eielson Air Force Base in Alaska. Hosted this year by the United States Alaska Command, the tri-lateral exercise draws participation from Canada, Russia, and the US; SAR teams from the three arctic nations will deploy contingents to partake in arctic joint rescue scenarios.

This exercise intends to emulate an integrated multinational response to a major air disaster in the Arctic. The scenario objective for Arctic SAREX '05 is to locate and render aid to a crashed aircraft with approximately 20 people on board. SAR Techs from each country will parachute into the simulated mass casualty scene, provide medical aid to the wounded, and extricate victims by helicopter.

Arctic SAREX typically runs over five days and include briefings, meetings, cultural activities. Friendship jumps and helicopter insertion/extraction training provide an opportunity for SAR Techs to familiarize themselves with the local area and procedures for the exercise. The actual crash rescue exercise takes place in the middle of the week.

Each participating nation will send a delegation of 15 members to participate in the week's event. These



*"Cosmonaut" Maj Marty Zimmer is evacuated by stretcher on the jetty on Gelendzhik Bay, Russian Federation, during Arctic SAREX '03.*

include SAR Techs, aircrew observers, medical staff, exercise coordinators, VIPs, and interpreters. The USAF will provide all the aircraft support for this exercise, as typically the host nation will provide most or all of the aircraft support for the exercise.

Lieutenant-Colonel Colin Goodman, A3 SAR at 1 Canadian Air Division Headquarters, will be a part of the Canadian delegation. "Arctic SAREX is an exceptional opportunity for the countries to exchange information about SAR equipment, procedures, and training. By presenting the



*A Canadian SAR Tech under canopy with the CSAR 7 parachute, on exercise in 2003. Arctic SAREX did not take place last year.*

teams with the same challenges, the exercise creates an excellent environment to understand each other's capabilities and improves interoperability in the event of one nation calling upon the other for aid in a SAR scenario," says LCol Goodman.

Arctic SAREX has as many diplomatic advantages as it does operational ones. LCol Goodman adds, "Like most other joint exercises between different militaries, it is a forum under which commanders from each nation can exchange dialogue on mutual challenges." Major General Charlie Bouchard, Commander of 1 Canadian Air Division, will be in attendance fostering the relationship between commanders from each nation. The exchange of contacts and information is essential to the commitment of joint arctic SAR.

Canada routinely conducts joint SAR operations with the United States along our common borders and waters. Although just over 1% of the yearly average 9,000 Canadian SAR cases involving the three Joint Rescue Coordination Centres occur north of 60°, the potential for a joint rescue in the Arctic will always exist. These joint operational scenarios serve as reminders of rare tragedies like the Canadian CC-130 Hercules crash on 31 October, 1991, near Canadian Forces Station Alert, killing five of the 18 crew members on board. The crash response involved both Canadian and American SAR resources.

The first Arctic SAREX (1993) was held in Siberia, Russia with goals of improving arctic rescue and developing the SAR relationship between the three nations. Since the exercise's inception, hosting responsibilities have rotated between the three nations, with Canada playing host three times in the past – Cold Lake, Alberta ('95); Trenton, Ontario ('98); and Gimli, Manitoba ('02).

Search and Rescue is a critical mandate for the Canadian Forces, as such Arctic SAREX is just one of the several exercises in which Canadian SAR units participate. Typically, each year Canadian Forces SAR units participate in Arctic SAREX, a national SAREX, and local SAREXs held by individual SAR squadrons. The continuous training keeps these specialists at their peaks in pursuit of the SAR motto, "that others may live." **FL**

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