

Celebrating RCEME Day in Latvia

By Cpl M.T. Kearney

This year the Corp of RCEME celebrated its 74th anniversary. Everywhere RCEME soldiers can be found celebrating RCEME Day with camaraderie, good cheer, and spirited competition; naturally the Battlegroup of the Enhanced Forward Presence Latvia was no exception. No sooner had the maintainers of the Battle Group hit the ground this winter did thoughts turned to RCEME day and how we wanted to mark this important day. In no time at all OPIs came forward and planning began their events. There is no greater motivation for a technician than the promise of a day of fun and shenanigans. At home or abroad our day should always be marked with the RCEME flag flying high.



Figure 1: The maintainers of the eFP celebrate RCEME Day

This year's competitions included traditional favorites like washer toss, tug-of-war, ball hockey and soccer. Since free time and resources were at a premium here, some RCEME ingenuity had to be shown; Cpl Peters and Cpl Thomson made the three washer toss sets that were used during the competition. No doubt their efforts will be greatly appreciated by the subsequent rotations of Canadian maintainers as they were by this rotation.

Given the eFP's commitment to multinational cooperation it seemed only proper that the Canadian contingent invite the maintainers from all of the other nations to join us in the festivities. In addition to soldiers from Slovenia, Poland, Spain and Italy, REME soldiers from the United Kingdom journeyed from eFP Estonia to join in the celebrations and to see how Canadians have taken on the REME tradition.

After a fantastic steak lunch (barbequed with care by the Sgts) the opening ceremonies were held and the day's events could begin. The first event of the day was the tug-of-war, although it is not as

popular among the Sending Nations as it is with Canada they certainly put forth a great effort and really got into the spirit of it. Although the Polish team ultimately won the tug-of-war competition there is no doubt that the highlight of the competition came when the two Spanish teams squared off against each other and managed to break the rope, sending both teams flying backwards and eliciting a great cheer from the crowd. Of all the day's events the washer toss proved to be the most popular by a wide margin. Long after the official competition had ended people continued to play in a tournament of their own devising.



Figure 2: Canada vs Poland in the tug-of-war finals

Overall it can be said that the day was a resounding success. Soldiers from every nation in the eFP were able to come together to celebrate the proud tradition of being a soldier technician and to enjoy some quality time outside of the shop.

For many of us this was our first deployment and therefore our first RCEME Day off of Canadian soil. After years of hearing the stories of RCEME day celebrations in places like Afghanistan, Bosnia and Germany, it was gratifying to be here to create a few stories of our own. As the years go by and the RCEME Day celebrations grow here in Latvia those of us who took part will be able to look back fondly on the tradition that we kept alive.

The day after the celebrations the British troops paid a visit to the maintenance shop to see what kind of work we have been doing and to see how we operate. They also presented the Battle Group with a plaque to commemorate what would hopefully be the first of many such visits between the two nations. In return we presented the REME soldiers with the RCEME flag which had been hanging up during RCEME Day. The flag, which had

been made by MCpl Gillis, was signed by the entire maintenance platoon.

RCEME Day was just one of the many opportunities which we have had to work and play alongside the other nations. Through field exercises, soldier exchanges, community engagement efforts and rubbing shoulders in the mess we have gotten to know the soldiers from the other nations quite well over the course of the tour. The more time we spend together the clearer it becomes that in spite of perceived differences, across all armies, maintainers have the same very special qualities. We share the same hardships (old equipment, lack of parts, lack of tooling, long hours), the same penchant for a cold beer after work and we all form the same unique bonds with our fellow technicians. Even with a significant language barrier it is easy to tell when a group of experienced technicians are making fun of a brand new tech. It is also clear that, regardless of language, swearing at a problem is a fundamental part of the repair process.



Figure 3: Rain or shine washer toss will not be stopped

Overall it was a very special day for all of us. We got the chance to play our part in the ongoing history of the RCEME Corp, share a few laughs with new friends and celebrate 74 years of RCEME. No doubt the group who is here for the 75th anniversary will pick up where we left off and build and even bigger and better RCEME Day. In the mean time we will carry on with our mission the same way we have been for the past 74 years: by skill and by fighting.

ARTE ET MARTE

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