

737(Saskatoon) Communication Squadron

Unit History

The unit was officially designated 734 (Saskatoon) Communication Squadron as a detachment of 734 (Regina) Communication Squadron, under the authority of Lieutenant Colonel (LCol) Osborne, Commander of 73 Communication Group Headquarters in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Master Corporal D.J. McNeil, a member of the regular force already stationed in Saskatoon, recruited the original 23 Troop members, including its first Commanding Officer and Sergeant Major – Mr. R.E. Wilson and Sergeant (Retired) N.H. Drew respectively.

At its conception, the unit had very little in terms of space and equipment. It was originally lodged in a few offices of Her Majesty's Canadian Ship (HMCS) Unicorn, 405 24th St E. It was given temporary loan of 2, ¾ Ton Trucks and Very High Frequency (VHF) radio equipment from units within 73 Communication Group. It also received some radio teletype and High Frequency (HF) Radio Base Station (RadBasStn) equipment from 731 (Shilo) Communication Squadron.

As the years passed, the unit gained more equipment and responsibility, and the original equipment eventually became its property. Of particular significance, the unit assumed the duties of the now antiquated Automated Defence Data Network, the Canadian Forces national message protection system for Saskatoon area units – a system which was replaced in 1995 by computer's local and wide area networks and unit FAX machines. The unit also received a CRTTZ, Mobile Radio Detachment, which enabled the unit to send teletype transmissions using long range HF radios. The unit manned the CRTTZ until its recall in 1996. On a more recent note, the unit now mans and operates an MSAT, QRT, and INMARSAT - all very transportable systems which incorporate both voice and data transmission capabilities via HF and satellite means. It is also the most technological advanced unit in the Saskatoon area and has a completely integrated Local Area Network with approximately 25 on-line work stations.

The unit also grew within HMCS Unicorn. What started as a few offices eventually grew to include enough space to house the unit's own supply area, a technician's shop and offices and classroom space for unit operators and training. Before its move to its current location, 2321 Hanselman Avenue, the unit's lines encompassed the entire upper floor hallway and most of the vehicle compound in HMCS Unicorn. Of historical significance, when the unit radio detachment vehicles were replaced by 1 ¼ ton trucks, the unit kept the "pod" from one of the ¾ ton trucks and used it as a storage area. The unit still uses the "pod" and it has become a symbol the unit's meager beginnings.

Obviously, as the unit grew in technology and space, it also grew in size. By 1981, the unit had grown to 43 personnel, and because of financial allocations, it was ordered to reduce this number to 34. After a few years, the unit started to recruit again and by 1994 it reached its largest personnel base of 71 persons. Once again the unit was ordered to reduce its size and has been operating with an average personnel base of 55 persons ever since.

The unit has always proven itself as a viable resource, and has done so within a changing organization. First, Canadian Forces Communication Command (CFCC) was restructured into the Defence Information Services Organization (DISO), and although this seemingly didn't affect the unit's role, the restructuring ultimately led to the amalgamation of 73 Communication Group into 73/74 Communication Group in Edmonton AB. The new Communication Group is now the largest in area in the nation and spans from Thunder Bay ON, to Nanaimo BC. Even with the change in command the unit, as always, maintains a high caliber of training and standards and easily fulfills all of its commitments, often setting the standard within the Group.

As an example of the unit's ability to consistently perform at high levels, you simply have to look at its record in competitions – specifically the Malloch. LCol F.G. Malloch MC, VD, the first president of the Signals Association, donated an antique sterling silver tankard to Canadian Forces Communication Command (CFCC). This prestigious trophy is awarded annually to the unit displaying the highest degree of general proficiency in the nation. To be eligible for the competition, units have to win regional competitions first, which in 73 Communication Group was the Mooney trophy competition, named in honor of Brigadier General Mooney, Colonel Commandant of CFCC. The unit first participated in the competition for experience, but has had extremely good success ever since. It became the first Troop to win regional competitions in 1983 and went on to win the Mooney trophy four more times in 1985, 1987, 1989, and 1991. The unit did well at the national level competition placing fourth twice and did the ultimate in winning the Malloch trophy in 1989 – the first and only time in history that a Troop has accomplished such a feat. Unfortunately, due to changing roles and circumstances, the Malloch trophy competition was discontinued in 1991, the unit having placed third in this last event.

The unit atypically does not have a lot of traditions, but the few it does have are woven into the very fabric of what the unit has become today. Upon a request from one of a unit member's father, a WWII veteran, the unit first attended the Remembrance Day ceremony in Delisle SK, a tradition that this unit proudly continues today. The unit's first mess dinner was held years later but it has become an occasion to show the lighter, less intense side of its members and gives each person a forum to relax with his or her military compatriots. The unit has always had close ties to the community, and to show its fondness for this relationship, the unit started and maintains the traditional Operation Secret Santa which gives school children the opportunity to talk to "Santa" over VHF and HF radios. The unit also has a tradition in producing some of the nation's most proficient soldiers. Not a year goes by, without unit personnel showing their professionalism and proficiency, most often being selected as top student on courses or being awarded commendations for their efforts. The unit also has the reputation for its reliability and commitment as it has sent qualified personnel on Operational taskings to places such as Syria, Egypt, Golan Heights, Iraq, Somalia, Cypress and Bosnia/Croatia/Kosovo.

Last Updated: 21 Dec 03
By: Sgt K.A. Eyvindson

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Unit Time Line

- 01 Nov 1975 **734 (Regina) Communication Squadron, Detachment Saskatoon is officially designated under authority of 73 Communication Group in Winnipeg MB.**
- Nov 1975 **Unit participates in Remembrance Day Ceremony in Delisle SK**
- Nov 1977 **Unit participates in the Mooney Trophy Competition**
- 01 Jun 1978 **737 (Saskatoon) Communication Troop gains independent unit status**
- Aug 1979 **The Unit provides radio communications and Operation Cell Staff for the funeral of the Right Honorable John G. Diefenbaker.**
- Jan 1982 **Unit Crest is granted Royal Assent**
- Nov 1982 **Unit holds its 1st Mess Dinner**
- Apr 1983 **Unit places 1st in the Mooney Trophy Competition. It places 4th in the Malloch Trophy Competition.**
- Feb 1985 **Unit wins Mooney Trophy Competition. Once again, it places fourth in the Malloch Trophy Competition.**
- Apr 1987 **Unit wins Mooney Trophy Competition**
- Apr 1989 **Unit wins Mooney Trophy and Malloch Trophy Competition**
- Feb 1990 **731 Communication Detachment Saskatoon is stood down and 737 Communication Troop assumes Automated Defense Data Network message protection for Saskatoon area units.**
- Aug 1990 **Unit receives CRTTZ, Mobile Radio teletype Detachment from 731 Communication Squadron Shilo**
- Dec 1990 **Unit organizes and executes Operation Secret Santa**
- Apr 1991 **Unit wins Mooney Trophy Competition and Communication and Electronic Association Cup.**
- Nov 1992 **Unit moves to new location; 2321 Hanselman Avenue**
- 01 Jul 1994 **Unit is granted Squadron status**
- May 1995 **Unit wins Mooney Trophy Competition**
- Jul 1996 **73 Communication Group in Winnipeg MB is stood down and 737 Communication Squadron reported to newly formed 73/74 Communication Group in Edmonton AB**
- Sep 1997 **Unit receives 73/74 Communication Group Commander's Commendation**
- 01 Jun 1998 **Unit granted approval to appoint Major E.J. Vincent (Retired) as unit's 1st Honorary Lieutenant Colonel**
- 26 Sep 1998 **Unit granted Freedom of the City of Saskatoon**

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Commanding Officers and Sergeant Majors

01 Nov 75 – 01 Apr 78	Captain R.E. Wilson	01 Nov 75 – Feb 78	Acting Master Warrant Officer N. Drew
01 Apr 78 – 10 May 86	Major E.J. Vincent	Feb 78 – Oct 79	Warrant Officer J.I. Craig
		Oct 79 – Apr 80	Warrant Officer K. Roenspies
		Apr 80 – Sep 85	Warrant Officer J.I. Craig
10 May 86 – 28 Sep 88	Captain W.M. Boswick	Sep 85 – Nov 86	Warrant Officer S.A. Seline
		Nov 86 – Apr 88	Warrant Officer G.J. Hawes
		Apr 88 – Jun 88	Sergeant A. Fogwell
28 Sep 88 – 08 Apr 95	Captain G.J. Hawes	Jun 88 – Oct 88	Warrant Officer J.I. Craig
		Oct 88 – Jan 89	Master Warrant Officer S.A. Seline
		Jan 89 – Oct 89	Sergeant C. Reid
		Oct 89 – Sep 90	Sergeant S. Clarke
		Sep 90 – Jan 91	Sergeant G. Simonot
		Jan 91 – Jun 91	Warrant Officer T. Macklin
08 Apr 95 – 11 Apr 99	Major D.C. McLellan	Jun 91 – Sep 95	Warrant Officer E. Wilkinson
		Sep 95 – Dec 98	Warrant Officer R.J. Black
		Dec 98 – Jul 03	Master Warrant Officer W.M. Gramiak
1 Jan 99 – 1 Oct 00	LCol J.H. Hoekstra		
10 Apr 99 – Mar 02	Capt I.G.E. Pedley (OC)		
1 Oct 00 – 1 Jun 03	LCol G.J. Hawes		
Mar 02 – 1 Jun 03	Captain P.H. Pitzel (OC)		
1 Jun 03 – Present	Captain P.H. Pitzel	Jul 03 – Jan 05	Master Warrant Officer S.A. Joslin
	Major P.H. Pitzel	Jan 05 – Aug 07	Master Warrant Officer C.J. Hawes
25 Sep 07 – Present		Sep 07 - present	Warrant Officer Jon Moberly

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Regular Force Staff

	<u>RFTA</u>		<u>RFTS</u>		<u>RFAA</u>
1975 - 1978	Master Corporal D.J. McNeill	1990 – 1992	Master Corporal W. Southcombe (211 Rad Op)	1985 – 1986	Private G. Weibe
1978 – 1979	Master Corporal R.R. Clarke	1990 – 1991	Master Corporal J.M. Wright (221 Tel Op)	1986	Private Grant
1979 – 1982	Sergeant C. Thibault	1991 – 1992	Master Corporal S. Clarkson (221 Tel Op)	1989 – 1993	Master Seaman M. Stocklein
1982 – 1984	Sergeant W. Clarkson	1992 – 1994	Master Corporal J.A. Rothermund (211 Rad Op)	1993 – 1997	Master Corporal R. MacDonnell
1984 – 1988	Warrant Officer D.W. Lupton	1992 – 1993	Master Corporal D. Masse (221 Tel Op)	1997 – 1999	Master Corporal G. Magee
1988 – 1991	Warrant Officer T.C. Macklin	1993 - 1996	Master Corporal D. Rivard (221 Tel Op)	1999-2006	Not Filled
1991 – 1994	Warrant Officer S.A. Martin	1996 - 2000	Not Filled	2006 -	Master Corporal Clint Caswell (RMS Clerk)
1994 - 2000	Warrant Officer R.J. Black	2000 – 2002	Master Corporal S. Dupuis (215 Sig Op)		
2000 – 2003	Warrant Officer J.C. Morais	2003 – 2005	Master Corporal P.J. Sullivan (215 Sig Op)		
2004 -	Warrant Officer John Moberly	2007 -	Sergeant Vincent Paul Parsons (215 Sig Op)		

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Personal Honours and Awards

1979	Major E.J. Vincent.....	Order of St John of Jerusalem
1981	Major E.J. Vincent.....	Chief of Defence Staff Award
1984	Sergeant S.A. Selin.....	Canadian Forces Communication Command, Commander's Commendation
1986	Corporal D.C. McLellan.....	737 Communication Troop Soldier of the Year
1987	Master Corporal M. Haidl.....	737 Communication Troop and 73 Communication Group Soldier of the Year
1988	Master Corporal E. Wilkinson..	737 Communication Troop and 73 Communication Group Soldier of the Year
1988	Lieutenant G.J. Hawes.....	Canadian Forces Communication Command Commander's Commendation
1988	Major E.J. Vincent.....	Commander (Brother) in the Order of St John of Jerusalem
1989	Corporal L.N. Bacchetto.....	737 Communication Troop Soldier of the Year
1990	Corporal C.D. Erhardt.....	737 Communication Troop and 73 Communication Group Soldier of the Year
1991	Corporal S.A. Joslin.....	737 Communication Troop Soldier of the Year
1992	Corporal T.A. Flath.....	737 Communication Troop Soldier of the Year
1993	Corporal R. Gidluck.....	737 Communication Troop Soldier of the Year
1994	Corporal S. Payne.....	737 Communication Troop and 73 Communication Group Soldier of the Year
1994	Sergeant R.R. Reynaud.....	Canadian Forces Communication Command Certificate of Appreciation
1994	Master Corporal C.D. Erhardt..	73 Communication Group Commander's Commendation
1995	Corporal C.D. Chicoine.....	737 Communication Squadron and 73 Communication Group Soldier of the Year
1996	Corporal B. Bell.....	737 Communication Squadron Soldier of the Year
1996	Sergeant W.M. Gramiak.....	73/74 Communication Group Commander's Commendation
1997	Corporal S. Ng.....	737 Communication Squadron Soldier of the Year
1997	Private L.L. Brauner.....	APEC Force Commander's Commendation
1997	Lieutenant S.J. Doucet.....	Land Forces Command Commander's Commendation

2006 Capt W. Gramiak, MWO C.
 Hawes, Sgt R. Mowat, Cpl S.
 MacBean

The Commemorative Medal for the Centennial of Saskatchewan

