

"C" Force - The Hong Kong Story

The Trip to Hong Kong

Upon completion of their training, "C" Force was to begin the train trip to the west coast to board ships which were to take them to Hong Kong. This "C" Force mission was to be kept in secrecy as the military did not want the Japanese to know that the Canadians were on their way to reinforce the garrison at Hong Kong. Newspapers were not allowed to publish any photos or description of the troops leaving their camps to the railroad stations, total censorship existed in both Winnipeg and Quebec City papers. Even the soldiers and officers themselves were not aware of their final destination.

The Royal Rifles of Canada (RRC) left Valcartier on the morning of October 23, 1941, their train proceeded to Ottawa where "C" Force Headquarters company had gathered at Lansdowne Park, HQ entrained and headed west together reaching Vancouver on October 27.

The Winnipeg Grenadiers left Winnipeg on October 25 and also reached Vancouver on October 27.



Newspapers were not allowed to publish any details or photos of the troops leaving Winnipeg, upon their arrival at Hong Kong they were then given permission to show photos of the entraining. - Winnipeg Tribune - November 17, 1945



Grenadiers saying good bye to their families. - Winnipeg Tribune - November 17, 1945

The ships leave Vancouver

On October 27, 1941, HMCS Prince Robert left Vancouver as she was the escort ship to the HMT Awatea which was a New Zealand liner converted to a troop ship. The Prince Robert had a crew of 241 and carried four army officers and 106 ranks of the Royal Rifles of Canada. The Awatea carried the balance of "C" Force which numbered 96 officers and 1,877 other ranks.

On their way to Hong Kong the two ships made stops at Honolulu and Manila for supplies and at Manila another escort ship was provided the HMS Danae. The two ships arrived at Honolulu early in the morning on November 2, 1941, due to Japanese spies in the Hawaiian Islands, no members of the crew or soldiers were allowed to leave the ships if they had any reference to Canada on their uniforms.

On the early morning of November 14, 1941 the two ships arrived at Manila to pick up supplies and drop off the mail. At 16:00 hours on the 14th the two ships left Manila and arrived at Hong Kong on November 16.



Members of the Royal Rifles of Canada with their mascot "Gander" aboard the Prince Robert at sea. - Canada Dept. of National Defence, Courtesy Library and Archives Canada, PA-166999



Infantry men of "C" Company, Royal Rifles of Canada boarding HMCS Prince Robert at Vancouver. - Canada Dept. of National Defence, Courtesy Library and Archives Canada, PA-114891



Infantry men of "C" Company, Royal Rifles of Canada disembarking HMCS Prince Robert at Hong Kong. - Canada Dept. of National Defence, Courtesy Library and Archives Canada, PA-037419



A Hawaiian concert on the pier for the soldiers on HMT Awatea (in background) and the crew of HMCS Prince Robert (in foreground). - Photo from MacFarlane family Collection



Photo of the Awatea at Hong Kong. - Photo from MacFarlane family Collection

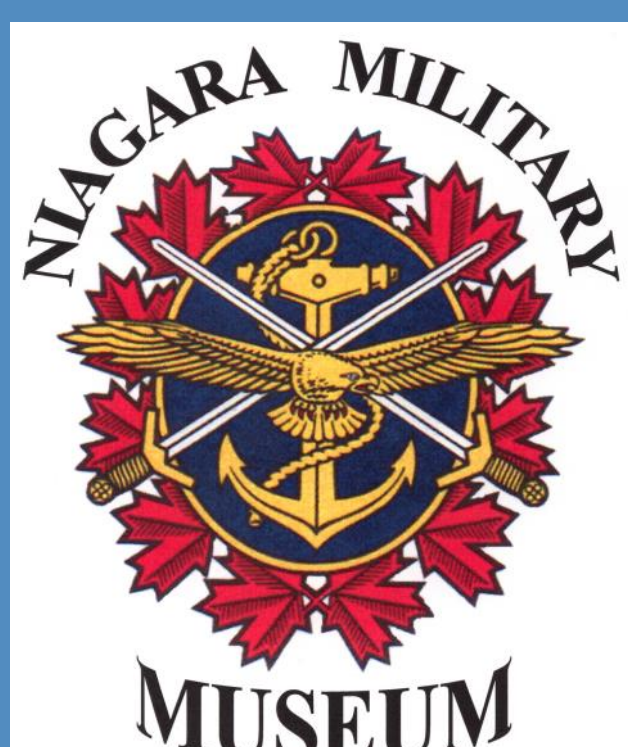
After the arrival of "C" Force at Hong Kong, the newspapers were allowed to print the stories of the troops arriving at Hong Kong.



Front page of the November 17, issue of the Winnipeg Free Press which tells the story of the Grenadiers in Hong Kong. - Winnipeg Free Press, November 17, 1941



Front page of the November 17, issue of the Winnipeg Tribune which also tells the story of the Grenadiers at Hong Kong. - Winnipeg Tribune, November 17, 1941



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