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Canadian Battlegroup Badges

Ed Storey

Every military unit, large or small, likes in some way to distinguish itself from other units. This is especially the case with today's somewhat drab camouflage uniform. There is a trend by the Canadian units operating in Southwest Asia to adopt individual distinctive insignia or "theatre-made" patches. Unlike past Canadian wars and military operations, this trend is widespread and has resulted in a unique collection of colourful cloth insignia with motifs that reflect the individualism of each sub-unit.

Colourful insignia is not unique to the Canadian military. The introduction of first khaki and drab serge uniforms by the British and Commonwealth armies during the late part of the 19th and early 20th century relegated what had been splendid colourful field uniforms to ceremonial use. The new field uniforms reflected the changes in tactics and doctrine which had been brought about by advances in small arms technology. No longer could long rows of colourfully dressed massed infantry blast away at each other until one side broke. Soldiers now fought in extended formation, taking advantage of ground cover and used drab earth-toned uniforms to help conceal themselves. Units distinguished themselves by brass insignia in the form of cap, collar and shoulder titles with perhaps corps or regimental buttons. The metal insignia was based upon an inspirational motif such as a battle

Abstract: The Canadian Army has always strictly controlled the badges and insignia worn on its uniforms. Still, there are examples of non-regulation insignia being issued and worn. As the Canadian Army evolved after the Second World War non-regulation insignia became more acceptable for short periods of time or for specific units serving overseas. With the average Canadian soldier earning more money and with newer machinery being able to manufacture custom insignia more cheaply than before, it has become easier for unit-procured or "theatre-made" insignia to be purchased and worn on the various uniforms. Combat operations in Afghanistan are now characterized by a willingness to obtain and wear non-regulation 'theatre-made' badges by all types of units.

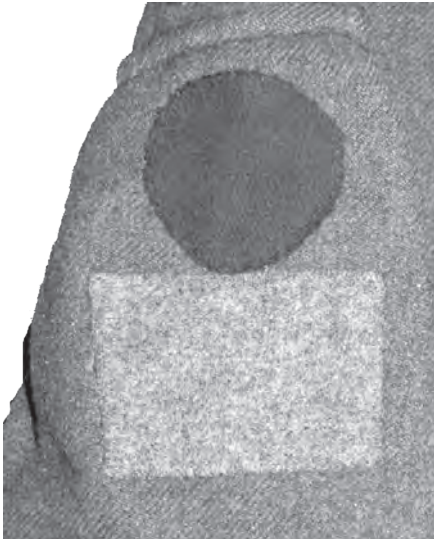
honour or a symbol of a past historical event and were designed to inspire a sense of *esprit de corps* or belonging to the specific corps or regiment. The insignia was designed by the unit, but approval was granted at a higher level at national headquarters, thus ensuring that the badges were in keeping with heraldic convention and service.

During the First World War, the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) in 1916 loosely adopted a colour patch system developed by the British in 1915 in order to identify and control units more readily on the battlefield. The instructions for these patches were outlined in a letter from the assistant quartermaster general in August 1916 and the patches were to be made of wool three inches wide and two inches high. The colours for

these divisional patches were: 1st Division – red, 2nd Division – blue, 3rd Division – grey, 4th Division – green and 5th Division – maroon. To further identify the brigades within the divisions a device was added to the patch and the colour of this device identified each of the brigades. The colours chosen for the brigade identifiers were green, red and blue with green being the senior brigade and blue the junior. Finally, the shape of the device, which was also made of wool, identified each battalion within a brigade. The chosen shapes, again in wool were; a circle, 1½ inches in diameter; a half-circle, 2 inches in diameter; a triangle, 2 inches along each side and a square, 1½ inches along each side. The circle represented the senior battalion with the square representing the junior.

These patches were provided at Crown expense to the soldier to be sewn onto the upper sleeves of the service dress jacket. (There were exceptions such as Railway Troops who wore their hollow red square at shoulder level in the centre of the back.) These patches were a great source of pride as they were only worn by units serving in Europe. After the war, the patches continued to be worn by veterans who remained in the Canadian Militia as a form of recognition for active service in France and Flanders although permission for wear was eventually withdrawn in 1929.

During the Second World War a system of coloured patches was again



Distinguishing patch of the 43rd Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force. The rectangle is grey, indicating the 3rd Canadian Division, while the blue circle represents the senior battalion of the junior brigade.

required to identify and control units in the field. Just as in the Great War, this system would compliment the brass cap and collar insignia already in use as well as the colourful cloth shoulder titles just coming into use by the corps and regiments of the army.

By mid-1940, again following British practice, it had generally been settled by Canadian Military Headquarters in London that a series of coloured geometric patches similar to those of the Great War would be used. Over the succeeding war years this system grew into a bewildering array of patches that rivalled those of the Great War. Overseas formations were allowed to wear patches, but so were home defence formations and reinforcement units.

As in the Great War, the patches were provided at Crown expense. Division patches were the same size at three inches high and two inches wide and were made of wool. Again, they were sewn onto the upper sleeves of the uniform, this time the battle dress tunic which had replaced the service dress jacket for field wear in the late 1930s. The colours for the divisions were the same although

now the 4th and 5th divisions were armoured formations. Only the 2nd Canadian Infantry Division adopted the Great War system of brigade and battalion devices above the division patch with the same colours and shapes. This patch system lasted until just after the ill-fated Dieppe raid when it switched to using the division patch in conjunction with some form of unit shoulder title.

While the overseas divisions used the same single colour as in the Great War, the patches of the three home defence divisions were bisected laterally from the bottom left corner to the top right corner using two colours. The army, corps and tank brigade formations used diamonds with colours that generally corresponded to those used by the divisions; and reinforcement units used yellow circles. The home defence commands also used diamonds, in this case grey for Atlantic and green for Pacific. "Y" Force in Bermuda also used a yellow diamond. The patches could be worn in conjunction with the cloth embroidered shoulder title, but supporting corps had patches with the abbreviated corps name embroidered at the centre of the patch. Within 5th Canadian Armoured Division the regimental names were abbreviated for inclusion within the division patch.

Other formations had their own patches, such as the Canadian Infantry Corps, Canadian Military Headquarters, Exercise Eskimo, Exercise Musk-Ox and the survivors of "C" Force from Hong Kong. The Canadian Army Pacific Force also had its own hexagonal patch which employed the five colours of the divisions as well as black for the armoured corps.

Following the end of hostilities, repatriated troops, like their father's generation, wore their distinctive formation patches home as a symbol of pride in their overseas service. With rapid demobilization of the army, the formation patches fell out



Distinguishing patches of the Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadians) in the Second World War. The rectangular patch is maroon for the 5th Canadian Armoured Division.

of use and all were to be removed from the uniform by January 1947.

Conflict and the threat of conflict soon renewed the issue of formation insignia. The Canadian 25th Brigade serving with the United Nations forces in Korea in 1950-53 had a red shield incorporating two silver olive sprays and a gold maple leaf with the word "CANADA." It was worn on the top of both sleeves of the battledress (BD) tunic. When the 25th Brigade became part of the 1st Commonwealth Division, it received the pale blue shield which was adorned with a crown and the word "COMMONWEALTH," which was worn on the left sleeve. The crowns changed from Tudor to Edwardian with the change of monarchs in 1952. An early example of what could be considered as "theatre-made" insignia would be the wire embroidered 25th Brigade and 1st Commonwealth Division patches that were widely available to Canadian troops for purchase when transiting through Japan. Although not officially approved, many were worn home from Korea.

The 27th Brigade in Germany, Canada's contribution to the British

Army on the Rhine (BAOR), received a French grey shield shaped patch that came in four variations. The first had the word "CANADA" across the top and was worn by brigade headquarters and the supporting arms. The three other patches each identified the different battalions within the brigade and had embroidered devices that represented the brigade's affiliation, in this case a thistle, a bayonet and a rifle bugle which denoted Highland, Light Infantry and Rifle Regiment respectively. Again these patches, with cloth embroidered regimental shoulder titles were provided at crown expense and worn at the top of both BD tunic sleeves. In late 1953 the 1st Canadian Infantry Division was reconstituted with the traditional "Old Red Patch" being brought back into use. The Second War First Canadian Army patch was briefly also brought back into use during the 1950s to identify Canadian Base Units – Europe.

The 1960s brought about a massive change in not only the make up of the Canadian Army but the look

of its uniforms and badges. During the Great War, the service dress uniform was used for both garrison and field duty and this was much the same case with battledress during the Second World War and both of these uniforms were suitably adorned with the corresponding formation patches. Following the end of the Second World War the Canadian Army adopted other uniforms for wear other than BD. A green bush uniform was adopted for field wear during the summer and a tropical worsted (TDub) uniform was adopted for summer garrison wear. Each could still be augmented with the appropriate cloth and metal insignia, which in the case of the bush uniform was usually mounted on removable panels or sleeve armlets. In the early 1960s a new uniform was adopted which started to replace the Bush uniform. The OG107 green coloured combat uniform was introduced in 1964 and would have its own series of green subdued insignia leaving the colourful badges for wear on the corresponding garrison uniforms which were still BD and TDubs. The adoption of the combat uniform not only modernized the garments worn in the field by the Army, but also brought back the camouflage and security principle first envisioned with the introduction of drab uniforms at the start of the century

by using subdued insignia. In the late 1960s unification was changing the face of the Canadian military uniform to make it distinctively "Canadian." Combats stayed as the field uniform with BD and TDubs being replaced with a rifle green Canadian Forces (CF) service dress uniform and a lagoon green workdress (WD) uniform for use on bases. These two uniforms still benefited from a host of colourful badges and patches such as enamel command badges for the CF uniform and unit or station patches for the WD uniform. The command badges were officially approved and supplied by the Crown, but the station and unit patches were local purchase items that were designed and procured at the unit level and were either provided to individuals out of unit funds or purchased by the member. These patches were not strictly controlled by the Canadian military and are a study in their own right.

Over time the combat uniform gained a little colour. Early examples were a red and white Canadian flag and the blue and white United Nations

During the Korean War, the Canadians wore two different formation patches. These examples, of a major from the Royal Canadian Dental Corps, shows the Canadian UN badge on the left and the patch of the 1st Commonwealth Division on the right.



Canadian Forces brassard for the Kabul Multi-National Brigade (KMNb) of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)



issued to individual soldiers as required. Eventually some units, and at times units that were only formed for a specific exercise, would procure their own titles and issue them or have the members purchase them. These "private purchase" titles looked very close to issue titles, with some being indistinguishable from official insignia. Following with tradition, a subdued version of a corps or regimental cloth badge could be worn on the

front of the combat cap which had been introduced for field wear at the same time as the combat uniform.

One area where Canadian "theatre-made" insignia flourished was UN missions in the Middle East and to a lesser extent the Former Yugoslavia where enamelled fob badges were popular. Many militaries, including the United States have a long tradition of using enamelled badges as a colourful means to distinguish sub-units or awards and qualifications. Relying primarily on cloth and brass insignia the Canadian military only adopted enamelled badges when the new CF uniform was introduced in the late 1960s. Well established firms producing enamelled badges for both the civilian and military market were commonplace in many countries and had representatives who would market their products to local UN units. Since many UN contingents were from countries other

than Canada who were already using enamelled badges, it was not uncommon for "theatre-made" insignia to be adopted for wear by Canadians when overseas. Usually these badges were attached to a leather fob and hung from the right hand button pocket. The badges were approved for use while serving in the mission area but were unofficial as far as the military were concerned and for the most part had to be purchased by the individual for wear. The use of enamel fob badges by Canadian UN contingents is an area that requires further study.

By the late 20th century the Canadian military was changing its monotone green combat uniform to a modern digital camouflage uniform called CADPAT - Canadian Disruptive Pattern. There are three types of camouflage in the set, Arctic, Arid, and Woodland (Temperate); with the last two patterns being the most prevalent. Temperate was the first camouflage uniform to

Canadian Forces brassard for the Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART)



badge worn on UN missions, and the orange and white Multinational Force and Observers badge worn in the Sinai. During the later part of the 20th century, several different types of officially approved patches such as the Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) and the various NATO badges for use in the Former Yugoslavia were either sewn to the uniform or worn on detachable brassards. All of these badges were provided by the Crown and were removed from the uniform once the specific mission was completed.

In Canada the situation was different. Other than medical personnel and loadmasters whose duties required colourful symbols on detachable brassards for instant recognition, subdued insignia on the combat uniform both at home and in Germany (except for the full colour Canada flag) was the norm. As part of the combat uniform, each unit had its own abbreviated title that was worn on a slip-on over each shoulder strap. Initially all of these titles were officially sanctioned by the military hierarchy and were

be issued during the 2000-2001 period and along with this uniform came a whole new series of badges. Much like the old combat uniform these badges were devoid of colour and manufactured of camouflage material. As with the old combat uniform, rank and unit titles were mounted on a slip-on, but, since shoulder straps had been removed from the uniform, this identifier was placed at the centre of the chest. (This feature of wearing rank insignia and unit identifiers is common with most current uniforms and had actually been pioneered by the Canadians in the early 1950s with the nylon winter parka.)

Canada flags now come in three versions, full colour, subdued green, and tan and are worn on the top of the left sleeve. An ingenious method has been devised to attach a brassard to the CADPAT uniform. A small flap, secured with Velcro, is at the top of the left sleeve. By opening the flap and inserting it through the top slit of a brassard and then securing the flap to the Velcro underneath, a brassard can be held on. Affixed to the outside face of the flap is a patch of Velcro which is where the flag is attached. Much like air force flight clothing, which for years used Velcro in order to hold the patches so that they could be easily removed and replaced without having to unstitch them and

potentially damage the garment, the new CADPAT uniform uses this method for securing the Canada flag and the name tag. No corps (now called branches since unification) or regimental badge was to be worn on the new "boonie" or field hat, a distinct change from the combat uniform which had a cloth badge sewn to the front centre of the combat cap.

With any drab uniform some form of colourful insignia will eventually be adopted and CADPAT has been no exception. Besides the full colour Canada flag, and the usual medical and loadmaster insignia which are still worn on brassards, other special mission insignia which were again officially authorized, and also worn on brassards. Examples of these include the DART, Army News, International Military Advisory Training Team (IMATT) and the initial CF deployments to Kabul, Afghanistan with the Kabul Multi-

National Brigade. During the period 2003-2005 Canadian Forces Land Central Area embarked on a three-year training cycle for the Militia units within Ontario. Known as Exercise Stalwart Guardian, this exercise brought together soldiers from 31, 32 and 33 Brigade Groups into a composite formation, 3 Light Brigade Group. The militia units contributed elements to form combined operational units for the exercises. These composite units were issued with an authorized colourful, small, fully embroidered unit patch to be worn on a cloth mount just below the Canada flag. The colours used were traditional and heraldic in nature corresponding to the unit being represented.

Since 2002, the Canadian Forces, in conjunction with NATO, has been conducting military and reconstruction operations in Afghanistan in order to control insurgents and help bring security and stability to that nation. When initially deployed to Afghanistan, Canadians were wearing CADPAT TR (Temperate Region) green uniforms. By 2003 Canadians were wearing CADPAT AR (Arid Region) tan uniforms which were more fitting for the terrain of the region. Originally these uniforms were identical in cut and style to the CADPAT TR versions. There was a need for more pockets on the upper sleeves and a requirement to wear infrared reflecting Canada flags and patches which led to large pieces of Velcro being added to these new sleeve pockets in order to secure the badges. These large Velcro patches created room for other, non-regulation, "theatre-made" insignia.

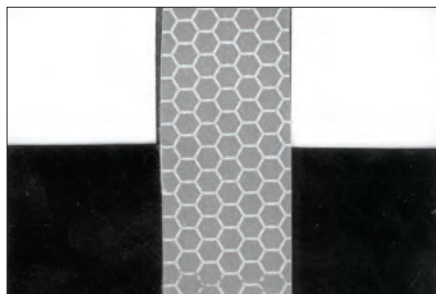


Examples of Canadian Forces shoulder titles (clockwise from top left):

A warrant officer in the Mapping and Charting Establishment; A captain (pre-unification) in the Canadian Airborne Regiment; A sergeant in the Royal Highland Fusiliers of Canada (CADPAT TR); A master corporal in the Royal 22e Régiment (CADPAT AR).

In a hundred years of Canadian Army uniform history, there have only been a few isolated cases in which non-regulation or unofficial badges have been used in any quantity. Since at least 2004 in Afghanistan, however, there has been a steady stream of unofficial or “theatre-made” insignia in use. The exact reason for this trend may never be known but there are a few theories. Even though there is still a branch or regimental title worn on the central slip-on, the loss of the branch and regimental badge on the “boonie” hat may mean that there is an unfulfilled need for additional unit recognition, especially in an overseas combat, multinational environment. The latest generation of Canadian military may have a different ethos from their forefathers and are more willing to adopt short-term distinctive insignia in order to reflect their unit’s individualism. Today’s soldier is also better paid and receives more financial benefits than previous combat missions which means that they may have more disposable income available to spend on things like badges, which can initially cost as much as \$15.00 each. Technology and availability may also have something to do with this trend as computer driven sewing machines are now much less expensive than in the recent past and can manufacture a badge from any design. There is also a badge shop conveniently located at Kandahar Airfield that can deliver a product within a couple of days.

Prior to the introduction of computerized sewing machines it was time consuming to manufacture specialist or “theatre-made” badges. These badges were usually produced in small shops and were often hand-sewn or in the case of the enamel badges, manufactured in a special factory. Nevertheless in the 1960s and early 1970s a large and interesting array of both enamel and more importantly cloth “theatre-made” patches were worn by the various US and South Vietnamese



From top:

Captain Joel Chartrand was assigned to the Operational Mentor and Liaison Team (OMLT) in Kandahar, June 2009.

ISAF reflective marker.

Tactical Combat Casualty Care badge.

ISAF Patch.

Forces on their field uniforms. These uniforms were for the most part drab green or camouflage and very nondescript. The imagery used on the insignia reflected the nature of the insurgency war. With the Canadian military fighting an insurgency in Afghanistan, perhaps there is a link between the “theatre-made” insignia in Southeast Asia some 40 years ago and in Southwest Asia today.

The Canadian “theatre-made” badges fall into two categories. The first is unit identifiers and these are generally the most colourful with many employing imagery that relates to the theatre of operations. The other category is badges that identify a function. These are usually in black or brown and include a series of initials (for example Military Police – MP) that describe what the person does or at times give valuable data on the person such as a blood group. Whether worn individually or grouped together, these Canadian Southwest Asia “theatre-made” battlegroup badges make an interesting and colourful addition to the lineage of Canadian insignia.

Note: all insignia are from the Ed Storey Collection.

Ed Storey is retired from the Mapping and Charting Establishment and lives with his wife and two teenage children in Ottawa. He served the military for 26 years in such diverse locations as The Former Yugoslavia with both the UN and NATO, Central Africa and first DART mission in Central America. For over 35 years Ed has been an avid collector of Canadian Army militaria and in the past 25 years has written numerous magazine articles and one book on various aspects of his collection. He is currently researching the newest designs in uniforms and equipment that have been issued to the Canadian military and he is cataloguing his photograph collection. Ed now has a three-year contract as a Class B Reserve Warrant Officer with Canadian Expeditionary Force Command Headquarters (CEFCOM HQ) as their War Diarist. In the short time that he has been in the job, he has already been to Afghanistan and is busy maintaining an electronic database of key files.