

Rough Transcript
Sgt Jonathan Lodge, CGG/20 IFB (20 July 2016)

Deployment(s): Camp Mirage (Dubai UAE) 2004

Interviewer/Transcriber: LCol M.C. Vernon

Note: *Quotations are not 100% verbatim*

Timecode	Content
0:30	Had been a member of CGG for several years prior to volunteering. A mix of Class A and B, on sabbatical from university in Montreal.
1:10	Wanted to put training into practice. To see more of the world. "Being a member of the military, I needed to deploy to get the full experience."
1:50	He was in his mid-20s, living in Montreal, a member of CGG doing Class A and B work. "I thought that in order to have the fullest experience of being in the military, for me that meant deploying." Quite a few volunteers—more than there were vacancies. "Lots of conversations. Did you hear? More spots? Going? Can't."
3:50	His friends were mostly from the regiment and they were keen. Some were selected and they went together. His family was more cautious, but understood he wasn't going to Afghanistan, which reassured them.
4:40	Originally, they'd volunteered for Op PALLADIUM (Bosnia). But as predeployment training drew to a close, it was clear fewer people were needed for Bosnia, so spots were offered to UAE. So the destination changed. It was their choice. In the end, all who were given the choice chose to go to UAE.
6:10	They'd heard Bosnia was winding down, so the more interesting tour was UAE. "Some of us didn't know where it was. Where's that?" But everyone had heard of Dubai. Took some adjustment. They had at least a day to think about it.
7:30	Training? They were with D Coy, 1 R22R for eight months in Valcartier. They practiced fighting in built-up areas, mine training, convoy operations, lots of physical fitness training, and field exercises that lasted 2-3 weeks. They were originally a Reserve company, the <i>compagnie mixtes infanterie reserve</i> —like the Composite Reserve Infantry Company of previous deployments. About a third of its members went to Mirage, a Defence and Security Platoon.
10:20	Expectations? Knew it was on Persian Gulf. Made its money from selling oil. Expected something like Saudi Arabia. Sand, heat, expensive infrastructure and shiny cars.
11:20	Mission specific training for Dubai? There was a cultural briefing—maybe two days' worth—at Camp Mirage. They were told to limit their interactions. Told the locals might not want to engage with them. Not sure about any such briefings in Valcartier.
12:45	He spoke French in Valcartier and within his platoon at Mirage. The

	remainder at Mirage spoke English.
13:45	Hopes for tour? “Most of all, I hoped we would all come back safe and sound. And it seemed like we would. It was a country at peace, not an outpost in a war zone. Hoped for a good experience as a platoon and as a section. Had been working and living together for eight months. Had an exceptionally good section. Others told us.” He was looking forward to feeling useful on a deployment, seeing more of world and making some money. Seemed likely to happen, and they did.
15:30	Francophone aspect was good.
15:50	First impressions? Flew from Quebec City on CF Airbus through Zagreb and on to Dubai/Camp Mirage. The staging point where aircraft off-loaded troops and equipment to smaller aircraft (Hercules) more suited to flying into an operational theatre. Most didn’t sleep on the flight over. Plenty of box lunches, “they fed us a lot”. They left in cold January and were hit “with wave of hot humidity, only about 25 degrees at that point and it would get much hotter.” One member of the platoon greeted them: “Welcome to paradise. Palm trees. Sand. A good level of hot.”
18:40	Layout? Two sides to the camp, inside a larger base. The camp was the core. A road down the middle. Airfield one side, accommodations on the other, including “a truly excellent dining hall.” Rectangular in shape, with towers made of Hesco bastions. Defensive positions if needed.
20:00	Threat at this time? Two vehicle checkpoints they manned. Two gates and a vehicle checkpoint (correction). They would search vehicles. Anticipated a vehicle-borne threat. Camp was in middle of nowhere. Out in the open and far from anything.
21:40	Had there been any attacks? Not to his knowledge.
22:00	How busy was it? A couple of flights a day. Sometimes an Antonov AN124, largest cargo carrier in the world. But it was not busy all the time. About 400 Canadians on the base, as well as some Australians and New Zealanders conducting flight operations from there. A lot of third country nationals employed on the base—cleaning and housekeeping. A small camp for them within the base, a few hundred metres from Mirage. A good deal of coming and going. They had to wand them to detect any metal. Busier flow in mornings and evenings.
25:10	Daily routine? They were riflemen fulfilling a security tasking, manning the two gates on the road that cut the camp in two, along with the vehicle checkpoint and an observation post overlooking the runway/flight line/ramps. Eventually they got a 30-foot observation tower. Once in a while there would be a practice alert and they would occupy defensive positions.
27:00	Used C7 rifles, C6 machine gun, C9s. No vehicles allocated for them. No anti-armour weapons at hand. There was a greater security presence forming the base perimeter, provided by host nation military—

	Humvees with .50 calibre machine guns and M4s.
28:55	Shifts? They worked 12-hour shifts, 1100-2300. One section on at a time. Most positions manned by two people at a time.
30:00	One section would be quick reaction force. Another section was "off" and had opportunity to go into Dubai on shuttle buses. Drivers were third country nationals on contract. They ran regularly from Mirage into locations in Dubai.
31:35	What was it like? It was all right. In addition to 17-day HLTA leave, they also had two two-day R and R leaves. The R and R was linked to their down time, so it was even longer. But by early July when they returned to Canada it was 48/49 Celsius in the shade. The medics wet bulb globe temperature gave them a humidex reading, equivalent to 78 Celsius. Every structure, including guard shacks, had an air conditioner. Seemed like luxury at first, but it was absolutely necessary. "It was like getting hit in the face by a sandbag doused in scalding water. It got very tiresome. Thick, wet fog too.
35:00	Equipment, dress? They wore combats, full fighting order, helmets during alerts (along with Kevlar vest and ballistic plates). Were never permitted to take off their over-shirts. The frag vests were available within arm's reach.
36:25	The main threat was explosives, uppermost in their minds. On people or in vehicles. There could have been other methods. The gates were almost in sight of each other, less than a minute's walk. They used Motorola walkie-talkies between posts. He describes how they would chat back and forth about personnel moving between them.
40:00	Searching women? He doesn't remember having to do so. A few times members of the host nation would come to the camp. Third country nationals were from Indian sub-continent. "I'm not remembering any women among the TCN." They had a number of women in their platoon, however. He doesn't recall anyone balking at being searched by a woman, or wanded by one. Perhaps the other person on the gate, a male, would do it.
41:45	The only women they saw at Mirage were members of the Canadian military or Personnel Support (PSP). Canadian civilians there to run the gym or plan members' HLTA travel.
42:40	Incidents? Early in the deployment his section was asleep, having finished night shift. Middle of the day, noon on the weekend. Ear-splitting alarm went off. "Go, go, go. Grab all your stuff. Get to your positions. Grabbed tactical vests and weapons. But it turned out to be a scheduled alert by the host nation. A weekly event. Word hadn't reached them, but for a few moments it seemed like they were under attack. But it was exactly 12 o'clock, so he thought it might be a scheduled thing. Doesn't recall if they grabbed weapons from the lockup before they were told to standdown."
45:20	That was the most adrenaline he experienced. But there was another

	incident. Israel had killed the spiritual leader of Hamas, so there were threats against westerners called into US embassy in Dubai. It was decided to put the base on lock-down for a few days, so they couldn't leave the camp for anything other than duty travel.
46:45	How sensitive? There were places they were forbidden to go, such as the Hard Rock Café, an obvious magnet for US service people. Another one or two places as well. Told to keep a low profile. Don't wear clothing that suggested they were military (civilian clothing with military slogans, camouflage). Don't talk shop. Avoid using military lingo, acronyms and military time. "It wasn't too hard to tell who was military, especially waiting for shuttle bus or on it. Obvious haircuts, one on the side and two on the top." It would have been fairly clear who's who.
50:00	Nervous? Some. They weren't told to be especially nervous, but they all kept an eye out while waiting for or using the bus. It was eye-opening, the hotel that looks like a sail. They could see it from the camp. A lot of wealth and opulence. Shiny, fast cars. He didn't know Dubai was built with a lot of foreign labour. They were told these people were housed in areas where tourists (or soldiers) would see them. Heard about desalination plants used to turn Gulf water into drinking water. Lots of greenery, grass, watered with grey water from sinks and showers. Ritzy shopping centres. He never went inside the Burg hotel because it cost money to do so, but others said it was astonishing. There were even clouds inside the building, with gold (not brass) fixtures. They were told the smaller the number on the license plate, the more important the person inside.
55:40	Alcohol policy? Mirage was dry, no alcohol. In town they were allowed two drinks.
56:10	Francophone experience? Very interesting. He had a good foundation in French thanks to French immersion school before he moved to Montreal. One person had to be let go because he didn't have enough facility in French. In the eight months in Valcartier, he could argue and tell jokes in French. "Ones that actually made people laugh appropriately. With me, not at me. And twice I dreamed in French." Half his section were from Saguenay region. Had to learn to understand each other. But it worked. Platoon got along well. A large part of it were English-speakers, reservists from Montreal. Good esprit de corps.
59:15	He had already done one military course in French before. Month-long, entirely in French.
1:00:15	Working language was French. In a group, they'd speak French (even the Anglophones). Tried to include everyone, even outside of work.
1:01:15	Male/female issues? None he can remember.
1:01:30	How satisfying? He was glad to have done it. When it was actually over, he felt kind of bereft. One of his friends from his unit and who

	<p>deployed, said, "With tour ending, it's like losing your job, losing your apartment, and having your relationship break up all at once. And that rang true for me. We had been fulfilling this role for half a year. The same group. And our section was a tight-knit group. Then all of a sudden were were back home and none of that was there any more." They were met by members of his regiment's senior leadership who had driven from Montreal, a nice touch. Then driven back to Montreal in vans. "Everyone wanted to go home, so that's it. We all went home. I let myself into my apartment that I'd kept all those months. It smelled like a place that hasn't been lived in. Musty, dusty. Unlived in smell. Then I was back. It took some adjusting. I remember being out with a civilian friend a week or two later. Sounds strange. He was bugging his other friend about the size of his cellphone, it was 2004. I didn't have one yet. The one guy wouldn't stop saying your phone is like a Dustbuster. I didn't think it was funny. Thought it was ridiculous. Strange and aggravating. Hadn't adjusted to being home yet. Thought it was very foolish and was quietly getting fed up, just being fed up for being present for that conversation."</p>
<p>1:07:10</p>	<p>He remembers feeling angrily impatient, in a way he usually is not. Riding the Metro was okay, despite crowded places. Certainly didn't think twice about bags of garbage. They weren't in Afghanistan. But when it was time to get off the train, he resented people flooding on. "Really wanted to shove them out of the way. Took me about a month to feel like I was back." They had to return to Valcartier for some outclearance/administration. It was great to see each other again. But one member said to him, "He felt unusually ... the same feeling of wanting to shove people aside, even though there's no Metro in the Saugenay. And he didn't know why that was, he wasn't expecting it. Was surprised by it. Maybe because they were over there for six months. Probably wouldn't be called upon to harm anyone or be harmed, but the possibility was a large part of why we were there. I guess it affected us. I told him I know what you mean. About wanting to get off the Metro. But after a month for all of us, we were back."</p>
<p>1:12:00</p>	<p>Today? Didn't dream in French any more. Spoke English to Anglophones at the gate. Half their talking then was in English. He was most fluent in French in Valcartier. Doesn't remember any dreams from tour. Doesn't remember dreaming he was on tour.</p>
<p>1:13:30</p>	<p>Decompression? No decompression scheduled. He doesn't recall where they landed on the way back.</p>
<p>1:14:15</p>	<p>Other deployments? He thought about it, but never applied. Just a domestic, Operation PODIUM in Vancouver in 2010. Had university to get back to. It seemed like spending another year and a half was a lot of time. He wanted to get on with his civilian life.</p>
<p>1:15:25</p>	<p>Changes? Glad he went. While he was there, he decided to return to university which he'd left several years prior. Got in touch with</p>

	<p>university and smoothed the way. That helped. Gave him the sense there would be something worthwhile and constructive to do on his return, to balance the loss of purpose and camaraderie. His friend Dave said, "The end of tour is like losing your job, losing your apartment, and having your relationship break up. All at the same time." It affected him, the life and death aspect of having been over, not pretending there was the likelihood of being troops in contact. But it was possible. Some of the poverty they saw alongside the colossal wealth was a sobering thing. They made him come back in a more serious frame of mind than when they left. "I don't think about the tour much now any more, but I still have friends from tour, from my section. Our section commander was very good at bringing the section together, like a family. We'd go to town together. It wasn't 'forced fun'." It was a young section. They were both 25, 26... a bit older. It was like a family. His name was Pierre Olivier Roy, a Maisonneuve. He recently died after a long battle with cancer. Thanks to his influence that Lodge has friends who might not have mattered as much to him otherwise.</p>
	<p>Additional visuals desired:</p>