

MEDALS AND MEMORIES MINUTES

Avalanche at Kangiqsualujjuaq



Disaster struck the 1999 New Year's celebration in a remote village on Ungava Bay in Quebec when a three metre high wall of snow tore out the wall of the gym and buried many of the more than 400 partiers. Ignoring 100 km winds and -20 degree C weather, survivors used shovels, frying pans and even bare hands to free those trapped. The avalanche killed nine and injured many more. Fortunately the remote Inuit community, surrounded by heavily scoured rolling glacial highlands, had a 28 member patrol of Canadian Rangers. These Canadian Forces volunteers helped dig out those trapped, built coffins and dug graves. The Rangers monitored the cliff face to assess further avalanche risk, patrolled the avalanche area to protect the young and curious from harm and helped at every stage of need as the community dealt with the disaster and grief. Forty additional Rangers from 11 different patrols flew in or assisted the community in some way. For example, the Coral Harbour Patrol, NWT, harvested and shipped fresh caribou to the disaster area. For their extraordinary leadership and co-operation the 2nd Canadian Rangers Patrol Group was awarded the Canadian Armed Forces Unit Commendation.