

Canadian officer receives U.S. decoration

By Ruthanne Urquhart

Major Renée Forcier, Directorate of Pay Policy Development (DPPD) 5, has been awarded the United States Meritorious Service Medal in recognition of her contributions to the peace process in the Middle East.

"My work meant traveling extensively to the West Bank, Ramallah (Muqata), Bethlehem, Jericho, and to Gaza, Gaza City (Al-Muntada) and Rafah," Maj Forcier says. "I met a wealth of interesting Palestinian Security Forces officers, Presidential Guardsmen, Force 17 personnel, and members of the National Security Forces. It was a very interesting experience."

Maj Forcier's tasks included working in partnership with another allied officer to produce a comprehensive assessment of the Palestinian Presidential Guard.

"Because they [Palestinian Security Forces] don't have any female officers in their military," she says, "their reaction toward me at first sight was freezing mode. I never had any problem, though – because they were not sure how to react, they were extremely polite with me at all times."

The resulting assessment may serve as a blueprint for future work with the Palestinian Security Forces.

As well, Maj Forcier was tasked with international donor co-ordination. She developed a funding and project support

mechanism to help co-ordinate and channel international support to the Palestinian Security Sector.

Canada liked the results so much that the government decided to take the lead on the project.

"I want to extend my sincere appreciation to task force commander Lieutenant-Colonel Barry Southern, whose extensive strategic knowledge helped me tremendously throughout my tour," says Maj Forcier. "I learned so much on that tour and, hopefully, I will have the chance to go on another, when I will be able to put the skills and expertise I acquired in the Middle East to good use. I am ready for another tour any day!"

The medal citation highlights Maj Forcier's "...exceptionally meritorious service in the performance of her duties with the Armed Forces of the United States of America as the Canadian Military Liaison to the United States Security Coordinator of Israel-Palestine from 7 January 2006 to 8 August 2006.

"Major Forcier was selected by the Canadian Defense Forces to be one of four representatives in Israel on an international team that is dedicated to the transformation of the Palestinian Security Forces as directed by the International community. Major Forcier's willingness to enter the Palestinian Area of the Gaza Strip during the extremely turbulent period after the Israeli disengagement from Gaza and during the Gaza conflict was critical to the United



Maj Renée Forcier receives the U.S. Meritorious Service Medal from RAdm Tyrone Pile, Chief Military Personnel. RAdm Pile made the presentation on behalf of the Government of the United States.

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States Security Coordinator as he continually briefed the President of the United States and the Secretary of State on this region.

"In addition to this, Major Forcier was a constant representative between the Security Coordinator and the Canadian Ambassador to Israel as each government

work to support this critical mission that is significant to the stability of the entire region. The distinctive accomplishments of Major Forcier reflect great credit upon her, the Canadian Forces and the nation of Canada." ♦

Shilo opens multi-faith centre

By Sgt Dennis Power, Army News

CF policies and practices evolve to accommodate the diverse religious and spiritual needs of CF personnel and their families.

The CFB/ASU Shilo Faith Centre, a purpose-built facility designed to meet those needs, was opened May 16 with a ceremony that included representatives from a variety of faith groups based in Southwestern Manitoba.

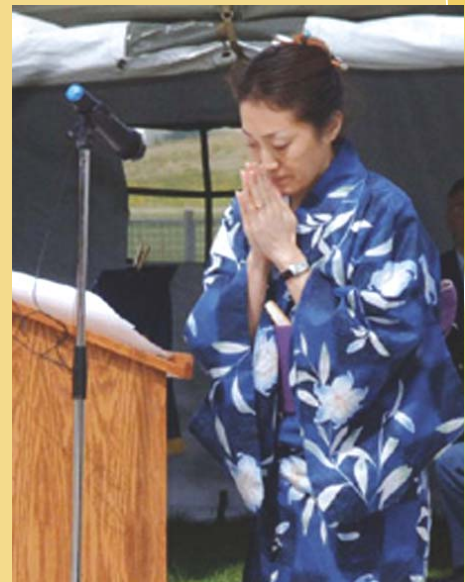
"This building is meant primarily for non-Christians," said Base Chaplain Lieutenant-Commander Douglas Ohs. "Christians can worship here, but really it's meant for the other faith groups of the world."

Many faith groups are well represented at Shilo, and the new facility will allow them to worship in a space that is more conducive to a variety of celebrations and ceremonies.

"As the religious diversity of Canada continues to change and grow, it's important for the Canadian Forces to recognize how that diversity impacts on us," said Army Command Chaplain Lieutenant-Colonel John Fletcher. "If we're going to take seriously the responsibility to care spiritually for all our soldiers and families, then we need to provide the resources and facilities in which everyone can come and worship." ♦



Capt Pam Pahl, CFB/ASU Shilo Base Personnel Selection Officer, designed and crafted the Faith Centre's beautiful "Tree of Life" window.



A member of the Buddhist community confers a blessing upon the Faith Centre during the opening ceremony.