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Français	Contact Us	Help	Search	Canada Site
Navy Home	News & Information	The Fleet	Operations & Exercises	Defence Site
Youth Section	Navy Life & Careers	Image & Video Gallery	Strategic Issues	Media & Links

CANADIAN
NAVY

NEWS & INFORMATION

NEWS & INFORMATION

THE FLEET

OPERATIONS & EXERCISES

YOUTH SECTION

CAREERS

IMAGE/VIDEO GALLERY

STRATEGIC ISSUES

MEDIA & LINKS

Quick navigation: All Categories

OK

*Domestic Stories***Navy clearance divers recognized with national award***By Darlene Blakeley*

The clearance diver community has been recognized by the Navy League of Canada for its lifesaving explosive ordinance disposal (EOD) activities in Afghanistan.

On March 28, 2008 in Ottawa, four Navy divers were on hand to receive the J.J. Kinley Award on behalf of their colleagues.

This honour is awarded by the National Board of Directors of the Navy League of Canada to members, employees or units of the Canadian Coast Guard, Department of Fisheries and Oceans or the Canadian Forces who have made remarkable contributions in support of naval and maritime interests.

This marks the first time the honour has been given to an entire trade, rather than a ship or individual.

"The Navy clearance divers have been called upon to perform dangerous missions in an environment that is very different from what they were trained for," says Jerrod Riley, National Deputy Director of the Navy League of Canada. "The dedication, bravery and skill that they have applied to combating improvised explosive devices in Afghanistan are a credit to the service, and have brought national and international recognition for the important role the Canadian Navy continues to play in the fight against terrorism."

*Credit: Jerrod Riley*

Ken Bowering, Vice-President for Maritime Affairs, the Navy League of Canada; LCdr Roland Leyte; PO2 Dave Poole; PO1 Paul Walsh; and MS Kevin March.

Divers present at the event included Lieutenant-Commander Roland Leyte, Petty Officer 1st Class Paul Walsh, Petty Officer 2nd Class Dave Poole and Master Seaman Kevin March – all four decorated sailors who have served in Afghanistan.

“We are humbled and honoured to have been selected by the Navy League of Canada for this award,” says LCdr Leyte.

The clearance diving community, specialists in diving, mine warfare and EOD, has been providing assistance to the Canadian Forces effort in Afghanistan since 2005, according to LCdr Leyte. “Although our efforts have been heralded as heroic and lifesaving, the branch is proud to serve as part of one team, the Canadian Forces, utilizing our specialized training to support the team wherever we are required to do the job.”

[Back to Listing](#)

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- ▶ Low-Frequency Active Sonar
- ▶ Guarding Our Coast and Our Environment

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