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FOR: VETERANS AFFAIRS CANADA

MAY 8, 2003 - 12:23 EST

VAC: Canadian Naval Monument Dedicated in Belgium

OTTAWA, ONTARIO--Today, during the celebration of VE Day, the commissioning of a Monument to commemorate the almost forgotten disaster of the 29th Canadian Motor Torpedo Boat Flotilla will take place in the City of Oostende, Belgium.

On the 14th of February, 1945, 26 sailors of the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve and five of their boats were lost to an accidental fire and explosions in the harbour of Oostende. Through the efforts of the Oostende Memorial Task Force of the Royal Canadian Naval Association, a project was developed to erect a monument at the harbour. The City provided an appropriate site very close to the actual canal berth where the catastrophe occurred.

The Memorial was erected on a paved esplanade that is known as the Montgomery Dock, the location chosen by the late General for landing support to the Allied Forces as they liberated the low countries in their final push of the Second World War. Dedication of the Monument took place today as part of the celebration of VE Day in Oostende. This is considered Liberation Day by the Belgians at which time their hearts go out to Canadian Navy, Army, and Air Force personnel.

The event was attended by members of the former Coastal Forces Association and all branches and members of the Royal Canadian Naval Association throughout Canada. Following is part of the text of a letter sent to Jean Vandecasteele, Mayor of Oostende, by the Naval Association.

"Dear Mr. Mayor:

I am privileged today to offer to the citizens of Oostende a gift that consists of a little bit of Canada. This work in Canadian granite is inscribed with the names of twenty-six sailors of the 29th Canadian Motor Torpedo Boat Flotilla. They join the many sons of Canada who in two world conflicts perished in the Fields of Flanders in the struggle for freedom and world peace.

May their sacrifice be another link in the ever-growing friendship and goodwill that flows between our two great nations.

We ask that this Memorial become a part of the maritime traditions of this City and that it be freely utilized in the conducting of ceremonies that reflect on the trials and triumphs of the men and women who go down to the sea in ships. Now, Mr. Mayor, this child is yours. Take it under your wing and into the family of your Great City.

Welcome it and display it with the same kindness and goodwill that you have always welcomed other visitors from Canada. God bless you and all the people of Belgium. May you continue to live

in peace and happiness with the free nations of the World."

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#### CONTACT INFORMATION

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