

Canadians thank Alaskans for aid

by Barbara Crane

for the Tundra Times

Jan. 29 was a tragic day for Canadian and Alaskan military forces participating in the biennial Brim Frost training exercise.

That was the day a Canadian C-130 plane crashed while attempting to land at Ft. Wainwright, near Fairbanks, killing nine Canadian soldiers.

Members of the Canadian Forces visited Anchorage March 2 to thank the Alaska Army National Guard's 5th Battalion for their assistance at the crash site.

"The 5th Battalion was the unit that was first on the scene of the crash," said Col. Tom Carroll, trooper commander for the Army National Guard. "They provided lighting and a warm place for the survivors, and their medics were the first ones to treat the injured."

One of the Canadian visitors, Maj. Luigi Rosetto from Edmonton, lost a friend in the crash. A lieutenant who had worked with him for three years was one of those who died.

Rosetto said he was grateful for the 5th Battalion's immediate response and for the offers of help from the community.

"People showed up at the gate at Ft. Wainwright wanting to donate blood," Rosetto recalled.

Col. Bill Buckham, a Canadian Forces wing commander from Edmonton, formally thanked everyone involved and presented a plaque to Col. Joseph Beans, commander of the Guard's 207th Infantry Group.

He said that if it hadn't been for the 5th Battalion, more lives would have been lost.

"The response of the forces and the people in the Ft. Wainwright and Anchorage areas was so outstanding, so compassionate and so sensitive," said Buckham. "We felt we should come up to give our personal thanks for your extraordinary efforts in looking after our people."

"You have no idea how comforting it was to know that we were being supported so well up here."