

RCMP recruits to benefit from new training technology

Karen Brownlee, **Saskatchewan** News Network; Regina Leader-Post

REGINA -- Encountering meth labs and **marijuana** grow-ops, dealing with individuals carrying weapons and driving in hazardous conditions are experiences **RCMP** officers face in their careers.

Now **RCMP cadets** can face those situations before they encounter them in the field as officers.

Technology new to the **RCMP Academy Depot** Division in Regina will allow training officers to simulate those situations. Cadets can interact with the technology and apply the lessons they have learned through traditional methods. Once a scenario is over, the technology allows training officers to analyse a cadet's performance.

The training **depot** also has a mock **marijuana** grow-op and a meth lab as part of the training on **illegal drugs**. In total, cadets spend six months in basic training. After graduating, they spend another six months with experienced officers in the field.

On Wednesday, the media was invited to view and experience the technology and mock-ups. The intent of the open house was to give the public a better understanding of what **RCMP** officers experience as well as to show how cadets are prepared for such situations.

"We have a great organization, a great training program and the future is bright given the kind of cadets that we have today," said Chief Supt. Bob Smart, who is in charge of the cadet **training program**.

In recent years, a number of **RCMP** officers have been killed in the line of duty, including four near Mayerthorpe, **Alta.**, in 2005, two near Spiritwood in 2006 and another two in separate incidents in the Northwest Territories in 2007. The **RCMP** has also faced scrutiny for its officers' use of Tasers, including a situation in the Vancouver International Airport during which Robert Dziekanski died in 2007.

Acquiring the training technology, worth around \$1.3 million, had more to do with the recent availability of the appropriate technology than as a response to those tragedies, said Dr. Garry Bell, a training, innovation and research analyst.

"Since its inception in 1994, (the cadet **training program**) has adapted and evolved continuously. It can never remain still because the environment into which the cadets are graduating changes continuously," said Smart.

The technology was paid for through **Depot's** operating budget as well as with \$280,000 provided by the Canadian Police Research Centre.

Others, including militaries around the world, use technology similar to what's now at the training **depot**.

For example, a driving simulator allows cadets to immerse themselves in a variety of experiences. Weather conditions, vehicle type and capabilities as well as the types of road hazards can be changed to simulate various experiences too dangerous or difficult to re-create on the streets.

"The system doesn't teach you how to drive," said Cpl. Ryan Currie. "It gives us that platform where cadets can practise and (use lights and sirens) in a safe environment."

There is also a virtual firing range. Cadets start with **pistols** equipped with lasers, then move up to ones filled with compressed air cartridges that produce some recoil. While some cadets begin at the virtual range before moving to a range with live ammunition, others will move back and forth. Analysis will determine what most improves the cadets' performance, said Bell.

Across the hall are use-of-force simulators where cadets can be equipped with a **pistol** and pepper spray. They interact with a screen displaying a recording of individuals involved in a scenario, such as a man who is pulled over and must be arrested on a warrant. The action on the screen can change depending on how the cadet responds.

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