



Canadian Forces Photo by: Whitlock IS 70-79-4

Soldiers of the 3rd Battalion, Royal Canadian Regiment check a map of the area of Rockcliffe Park, where they were tasked to guard the homes of VIPs during Operation "Ginger", 13 October 1970.

## A 'MERE RUSTLE OF LEAVES': CANADIAN STRATEGY AND THE 1970 FLQ CRISIS

*The big bourgeoisie in Quebec are in such a state of frenzy that it is made to display its impotent arsenal by the mere rustle of leaves . . .*

*FLQ communiqué.<sup>1</sup>*

*Any sensible government should attempt to defeat an insurgent movement during the subversive build-up phase before it enters the guerrilla phase.... Unfortunately, during the build-up phase, the signs are not always recognized, and existence of a subversive movement may even be ignored or denied for short-sighted political reasons. It is not easy for a government to alert its people to the danger.*

*Sir Robert Thompson, Defeating Communist Insurgency.*

**T**he literature dealing with the Canadian government's response to political violence in Quebec has focused on the political aspects of separatism and the legal ramifications of the War Measures Act. There is little examination of the larger aspects of Canadian strategy or the activities of the Canadian Forces within the context of this

strategy during the period leading up to the climax of FLQ activities in 1970. This is unusual given the magnitude and political importance of the operations. Undoubtedly, restrictions placed on information about what went on was a serious prophylactic to stimulating

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such discussion. Of the books to emerge dealing with these matters, Dan Loomis's *Not Much Glory: Quelling the FLQ* was criticized as not presenting an accurate interpretation of events.<sup>2</sup> The other, Pierre Vallieres' *The Assassination of Pierre Laporte: Behind the October '70 Scenario* can readily be discarded as conspiracy theory agitation.

The two most controversial contentions of *Not Much Glory* are, first, that Mobile Command was specifically structured by Lieutenant-General Jean Victor

consciousness on the part of French Canadians in the 1960s produced a situation in which both moderate and radical groups called for independence. Undoubtedly influenced by Castro's success in Cuba, the IRA's Border Campaign, and the retreat of the French Army from Algeria, Quebecois revolutionary ideologues formed a secret group called the Comité de la liberation nationale (CLN) in October 1962. CLN called for the violent overthrow of the capitalist system and the establishment of an independent socialist Quebec state.

Operating under the cover of and within a legitimate political party, the Rassemblement independence nationale (RIN), the CLN changed its name to Front de la Liberation du Quebec (FLQ) in February 1963 and began with a serious bombing campaign (34 attacks) that year.<sup>4</sup>

FLQ ideologists distributed revolutionary tracts and purported plans of action, published by both English and French-speaking media outlets. Army analysis suggested that the FLQ was pursuing the five-stage Maoist revolutionary war doctrine which had been successful in Cuba and Algeria: Mass Organization, Political Mobilization, Armed Resistance, Preparations for Mobile Warfare, and

National Liberation. In some contemporary analysts' views, the FLQ was in the Armed Resistance phase, and was ready to proceed further.<sup>5</sup>

Though the actual internal make-up of the FLQ is still not fully understood, it consisted of many non-hierarchical units called 'cells' which were organized on a functional basis (fund raising, propaganda, agitation, and active measures). Some cells were led by a still-unidentified shadowy central committee while others operated autonomously or even spontaneously. A 1970 estimate suggests that there were in the vicinity of 100 'trigger pullers', 100 propagandists, 200 to 300 dealing with infrastructure (monetary support, safe-houses) and up to 3,000 other passive sympathizers (labour agitators, transport, media sympathizers).<sup>6</sup>

In March 1963, three Montreal-area armouries were firebombed, a bomb attack against Prime



Sea King helicopter replenishing HMCS Athabaskan.

Allard in 1965-66 to fight a counter-revolutionary war in Quebec and, second, that a Canadian government grand strategy to counter separatist revolutionary warfare in Quebec existed during the tenure of the governments of both Lester B. Pearson and Pierre E. Trudeau (and the same strategy was articulated from 1963 to 1970), and that this strategy was said to include a coherently articulated military component. Vallieres echoes some of these views, albeit from another political perspective.<sup>3</sup> Was this in fact the case? The purpose of this study is to re-examine Operations "Essay" and "Ginger" with an eye towards shedding light on these two issues.

## ORIGINS AND OPERATIONS OF THE FLQ, 1963-1969

The collapse of the corrupt Duplessis political machine in Quebec and the emergence of a new ethnic

Minister John Diefenbaker's train was thwarted, and three other economic targets were attacked. Throughout 1963, the FLQ groups constructed training camps, bombed Army and RCAF facilities, and killed a night watchman. These actions were followed by violent demonstrations in the Montreal area and calls for the overthrow of the federal and provincial governments.<sup>7</sup>

Between 1963 to 1968, FLQ cells and affiliated groups raided Militia armouries to steal automatic and anti-tank weapons. They bombed provincial and federal targets, they engaged in sophisticated labour and student group agitation which produced increasing waves of violence, and even planned the assassination of future Prime Minister Trudeau. FLQ cells would also attack hundreds of government and private industry targets with increasingly sophisticated bombs. FLQ personnel trained in Jordan and Algeria and infiltrated Government of Canada departments (including the CBC and the Company of Young Canadians), the Militia, the Regular Army, and the RCAF. They raided armouries to secure weapons and communications equipment, established training camps in the Laurentians, attempted to bomb Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson's aircraft, and orchestrated increasingly violent political and labour-oriented demonstrations.<sup>8</sup> The next spike was the 1968-1970 bombing campaign (137 attacks with weapons of increasing size and sophistication) which did not remain confined to Quebec. Ottawa was also targeted; one incident resulted in the death of a DND civil servant.<sup>9</sup>

### **THE ARMY, MOBILE COMMAND, AND THE ANTI-FLQ EFFORT, 1963-1969**

In 1963 the Lesage government explored with Army regional commanders the possibility of deploying troops in plainclothes to Montreal to guard government buildings. Lieutenant-General Geoffrey Walsh, the Chief of the General Staff of the day, concluded that this would be ineffective as the troops would become targets, and their presence "would only serve to spread the activities of the FLQ to points outside Montreal."<sup>10</sup> Minister of National Defence Paul Hellyer thought the operation would be "extremely difficult and expensive . . . ineffective . . . and politically unwise and undesirable" since "the degree of protection the Army could provide would not be sufficient to prevent all acts of terrorism." All in all, Prime Minister Pearson's Cabinet was not enamoured with using military forces in Quebec to counter FLQ terrorism, particularly after Hellyer was publicly criticized in Parliament after an embarrassing 'raid' on Ottawa's Ashbury College to seize the local Cadet unit's small arms which consisted of .22 calibre Cooney training rifles.<sup>11</sup>

Canadian Army and RCAF intelligence units did, however, provide information to the counter-terrorism efforts of the Quebec Provincial, RCMP and Montreal police forces. In one case, the Army inserted a deep cover agent. This man, a young soldier from the Van Doos, successfully infiltrated several FLQ cells, and reported directly to General Allard. With the exception of intelligence gathering, however, the role of the Canadian Forces in anti-FLQ operations prior to 1970 was minimal.<sup>12</sup>

If the provincial government wanted military support, a formal request would have to be made for Aid of the Civil Power. No such request was made in 1963, but in 1965 a 100-man company from 2 R22eR was moved into Montreal to protect Militia armouries after weapons thefts took place.<sup>13</sup> The threat was considered to be at a level that police forces could handle, though the federal government and the Army conducted studies which indicated that the situation could grow into a wider revolutionary war along the lines of those already in progress.<sup>14</sup>

Canadian Army infantry battalions did conduct Internal Security (IS) training as part of their annual training between 1963 and 1968.<sup>15</sup> There was a difference, however, between IS training and counter-insurgency training. IS focused on riot control, cordon and search operations, and vital point protection. Counter-insurgency training in Mobile Command during this time overlapped with peacekeeping training, and in exercises, Canadian 'UN peacekeeping troops' hunted down terrorists and guerrillas in traditional light infantry operations which resembled American and Australian methods used in Vietnam.<sup>16</sup>

These exercises were mostly at the battalion level, and thus entirely tactical in nature. There appears to have been no formal operational-level IS or counter-insurgency doctrine at the Mobile Command Headquarters level in the years leading up to the October Crisis. However, there were some operational-level exercises. One of these, Exercise "Poncho IV" held by 2 Brigade in 1967, was a command-post exercise and thus did not involve the entire brigade. "Poncho IV" simulated "the deployment of 2 CIBG in a thinly populated emerging nation which was being subverted by a neighboring country. The Brigade's task was to provide internal security and if necessary to contain and destroy any enemy penetration."<sup>17</sup>

These efforts should be put in the larger context of Mobile Command commitments and training for the period. It is one thing to argue that the entire force was being prepared for employment anywhere around the

world in low-intensity operations, but it is quite another to argue that such forces were being explicitly prepared for future operations in Quebec. The former is the more likely case. Mobile Command's taskings and structure suggest this.

The first commander of Mobile Command, Lieutenant-General J.V. Allard, was appointed in 1965. He was "immediately confronted by several questions. What was meant by Mobile Command? A force to intervene in unknown theatres of operations? A force for internal stabilization? A force for the defence of northern territories?"<sup>18</sup> A Mobile Command study group concluded, and Allard concurred based on policy established in the 1964 *White Paper*, that Mobile Command had to have the ability to conduct the following types of operations: peacekeeping, internal security, limited war, Defence of Canada Force operations, ACE Mobile Force operations in NATO, and high-intensity NATO Central Front operations.<sup>19</sup>

Mobile Command was thus structured to provide immediately deployable forces capable of carrying out all these missions. Each of the four brigade group were given primary and secondary roles:<sup>20</sup>

- *1 Canadian Infantry Brigade (Calgary):*  
Primary role: Defence of Canada (with expertise in Arctic operations).  
Secondary role: Peacekeeping, internal security, limited war, AMF(L).
- *2 Canadian Infantry Brigade (Petawawa):*  
Primary role: Peacekeeping, internal security, limited war (with expertise in tropical environments).  
Secondary role: Defence of Canada, ACE Mobile Force.
- *3 Canadian Mechanized Brigade Group (Valcartier):*  
Primary Role: to support and complement 4 CMBG in West Germany (expertise in temperate climate operations).  
Secondary: Peacekeeping, internal security, limited war, Defence of Canada operations.
- *4 Canadian Mechanized Brigade Group (West Germany):*  
Primary: NATO (expertise in nuclear warfare).  
Secondary: Peacekeeping, internal security, limited war.

There is simply no evidence that Mobile Command was explicitly designed for IS or counter-revolutionary warfare in Quebec. However, it was a very flexible formation and could have been

used to do so had it had been properly trained and equipped, and had the Reserve Forces been re-equipped for military operations and not merely post-nuclear strike rescue operations. As General Allard, in his capacity as CDS, put it in a secret 1969 address:

We have already been warned of the risk that the current unfortunate civil outbreaks in the United States could spill over into Canada . . . this is an aspect of possible military involvement to which we have devoted relatively little thought and effort. We are perhaps weakest in our understanding of the psychology of such disturbances.<sup>21</sup>

By 1969, the magnitude of the political demonstrations were such that the police forces were incapable of containing them if they turned violent. In March 1969, 15,000 students, led by an FLQ-affiliated Marxist professor, demonstrated at McGill University to demand that it be transformed into a French-speaking institution. While the Montreal police were capable of dealing with the violence, 3 R22eR, a mechanized infantry battalion, was requested under Aid of the Civil Power and temporarily deployed to Montreal to back up the police. Fortunately they were not required.

FLQ labour agitation was successful in disrupting the civil services of the City of Montreal, including 3,000 of the 3,200 police officers who went on strike over pay on 7 October 1969. The Quebec Minister of Justice consulted with the commander of 5e Groupement du Combat<sup>22</sup>, who passed the request to the CDS. In anticipation of a positive reply which was soon given, 3 R22eR was alerted and deployed to the outskirts of Montreal as part of an existing regional contingency plan. Dubbed Operation "Pegasus", the troops protected Canadian Forces depots, armouries and bases, guarded police headquarters, and conducted mobile patrols. By 12 October the police were back on duty and the troops withdrawn.<sup>23</sup> Later in October 1969 units at CFB Valcartier were once again placed on alert when 40,000 demonstrators marched on the National Assembly in Quebec City. This prompted the creation of a contingency plan, "Plan d'operation II" (PO II), which was designed for a battalion-size riot control operation.<sup>24</sup> It was only in 1969 that the Directorate of Operations at Canadian Forces Headquarters took notice of what was going on in Quebec and started to keep an eye on events.<sup>25</sup>

## A CANADIAN COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARY STRATEGY? 1968-1969

Government policy during the Pearson years revolved around attempts to define the nature of the political problem in Quebec as opposed to producing a definitive plan to confront it. Significant headway was made by Pearson in improving Quebecois representation in the Federal Government. FLQ cells were being broken up by the police in Montreal. The de Gaulle speech incident during Expo 67, however, was a major turning point. Cabinet expressed serious concern that separatism was actively being supported by the de Gaulle regime.<sup>26</sup> As we have seen, the military was not part of the strategic equation.

It was clear to the Trudeau Cabinet in 1968 that attempts to resolve the situation through increased government spending in Quebec and francophone affirmative action programmes was not enough and, in any case, such efforts did not stop the political violence. These measures would, however, continue and eventually result in the bilingualism and biculturalism policies enmeshed in the 1970s.

A 1968 foreign policy review and its associated defence policy review conducted by the Trudeau Cabinet reflected the basis of Trudeau's strategic approach to Quebec separatism prior to 1970. Canada's future role in NATO was the primary focus of the review. While prompted by an anti-NATO, anti-nuclear weapons bias amongst some Cabinet members, including Trudeau himself, the reviews highlighted the foreign policy aspects of countering separatism. For example, Canada should strengthen the relationship with France so as to "ensure that the France and Quebec governments conduct their relationship within the Federal framework."<sup>27</sup> Canada should stay in NATO and use Alliance diplomatic contacts to pressure France from interfering in internal Canadian affairs. By embracing France in the economic and cultural areas, Canada could compete with Quebec for France's attention and head off attempts at bilateral relationships.<sup>28</sup>

There was little or no professional military input, however, regarding the Trudeau Government's early attempts to formulate a strategic policy towards separatism. It was only in late 1968 when Trudeau initiated a defence review that the issue of using military forces for IS operations in Canada was actually raised. There is no indication that the Defence Policy Review (DPR) was prompted by the possibility of revolutionary warfare in Canada: it was the result of Trudeau's view that Canada should be less involved militarily in Europe, and an attempt to examine the possibility of Canadian neutrality.<sup>29</sup> The matter did come up, however, during the review process.

Trudeau's views on the DPR noted that "Canada requires armed forces within Canada in order to carry out a wide range of activities supplementing and supporting the civil authorities and contributing to national



Canadian Forces Photo by: Duguay VL 70-176

A soldier stands guard outside the National Assembly in Québec City during Operation "Essay".

development."<sup>30</sup> An interdepartmental working group on the DPR did establish, as first priority, the "Defence of Canada and consideration of Canadian sovereignty, including internal security" and that "with the change of roles, it will be necessary to restructure the land forces to meet the new priorities."<sup>31</sup>

The DPR examination of internal security force requirements does provide some insight. IS was defined in the DPR as:

... including the protection against threats of insurrection, riot, sabotage or other large scale acts of violence by dissident elements within the population, seeking either to enforce their

will on Government authority or to obtain redress of grievance by extra-constitutional or illegal means.<sup>32</sup>

The “potential threat to Canada’s internal security is greater than in the past and...may continue to increase.” Primary threats, which all overlapped, were:

- Political dissidence and unrest in the Province of Quebec.
- The growing student unrest throughout Canadian universities.
- The presence in Canada of experienced agitators trained in Cuba, Algeria and elsewhere.
- A worldwide trend towards contempt for established order.
- Communist infiltration . . . in certain trade unions, the cultural and education field, government at the municipal level and some areas of the communications media. The level of this infiltration is increasing.
- The serious unrest and tendency to violence in US cities and the possibility that this unrest could spill over physically into Canada or inspire elements in Canada to resort to similar methods...<sup>33</sup>

It is interesting to note that this was written in 1969, and that the DPR process assumed that Mobile Command was not already structured to carry out this new priority. Sections of the DPR would eventually form the basis of the 1971 *White Paper on Defence*. This post-FLQ Crisis defence policy statement made no less than three mentions of internal security operations, and demonstrated that IS would now be integral to the national aims for defence policy, mainly “that Canada will continue secure as an independent political entity.”<sup>34</sup>

The overall strategic objectives which evolved during the early years of the Trudeau Government prior to October 1970 can be summed up thus:

- Ensure that Canada remains a unified and independent socio-economic entity.
- Intimidate and disrupt the separatist movement as a whole, moderates and radicals alike, to prevent them from dividing Canada.
- Deter and prevent external interference in Canadian internal affairs (interference from France, Cuba, the USSR, and the United States).

Strategic objectives, however, do not a strategy make.

A 1969 Cabinet analysis, “Current Threats to National Order: Quebec Separatism,” noted that the Federal Government was ill-prepared to counter separatism. Indeed, it was recognized that the government had to establish a “public and private position” on the

problem. Should, for example, “all revolutionary separatist organizations be regarded as subversive...are there serious risks to national order and unity in adopting a harder line on separatism, bearing in mind the faint rumblings of other kinds of separatism in Canada?” The analysis noted that there was not enough intelligence-gathering taking place, and that it was not well coordinated. Was there even a defined FLQ strategy? The study recommended that a serious examination be made of the role that Aid of the Civil Power could play in countering the threat, and that joint federal contingency planning commence.<sup>35</sup>

The analysis was aired in Cabinet on 5 January 1970. Trudeau stated that “no modern state would allow a threat of this magnitude to its unity and integrity without mounting a consistent and coordinated defence against it.” He thought the ‘same techniques’ used against Communism (infiltration, disruption, intelligence gathering) should be used against separatism, though the RCMP Commissioner balked at this unless he had explicit direction from the government. No mention was made of a military response to the situation in this meeting, beyond examining how Aid of the Civil Power statutes functioned.<sup>36</sup> In fact, the Minister of Justice was not sure how to handle Aid of the Civil Power and War Measures Act requests. Consequently, a member of the Directorate of Operations, Colonel “Kip” Kirby, was sent to brief Cabinet members on the procedure. They were ‘astonished’ to find out how it was done, as they had not given it much thought.<sup>37</sup>

The combination of these facts suggest that if there was a coherent counter-revolutionary war strategy in existence prior to 1970, the role of the military component in that strategy was embryonic, ill-defined or non-existent prior to October 1970.

### **A STRATEGY FORMULATED: JANUARY-SEPTEMBER 1970**

**T**he situation in 1970 gave every indication that the revolutionary movements in Quebec were progressing through a revolutionary warfare pattern. This pattern, however, would have been familiar only to revolutionary warfare theorists and commentators, of which there were none who held any sway in the formulation of strategic policy in the Trudeau Government.

That said, the bombs were larger and more sophisticated (including car bombs), the targets were more audacious (the FLQ bombed National Defence Headquarters in Ottawa), and an informer ‘blew’ two FLQ kidnap plots: one against the Israeli consul and one against an American diplomat. FLQ personnel training with the Palestine Liberation Organization announced

on Cuban radio that the FLQ would now engage in a campaign of selective assassination.<sup>38</sup>

The RCMP Security Service produced a threat estimate in July 1970. They concluded that the situation was “extremely confusing, complex and constantly changing.” The threat could be contained, but “the total of the activities carried out . . . clearly represents a threat to the unity of the country.” The real danger lay in the possibility that the vocal few could “win support from a larger body of disaffected Canadians and create conditions of anarchy and violence in many parts of the country.” The 3-to-5 man cells worked independently of each other, and “there is evidence also of cells being formed by a sort of spontaneous generation in that when needed, cells spring up that do not belong to any clearly structured or ascertained organization and which act quite unpredictably.”<sup>39</sup>

It was at this point that Trudeau had his advisors study what a counter-FLQ strategy might look like in the broadest sense in case the situation deteriorated. It was only presented to Cabinet on 19 October after the kidnappings had taken place. The degree of military input was minimal.

The Government’s response to the strategy was “the creation, through physical and psychological action (direct and indirect) of the situation wherein the moral disintegration of the target players will lead them to accept and take decisions which will produce the desired result.”<sup>40</sup> The enemy was to be attacked “by provoking fear, paralysis, surprise.”

The immediate objective (0 to 15 days) was to contain the situation and “create in the people confidence in legitimate governments [and] non-confidence in the FLQ.” Short term objectives (5 to 30 days) were to emphasize stability, predictability, and central control and thus “create in the people, particularly activists and

uncommitted multipliers, an understanding of the situations and reasons for actions taken,” whatever those may be. The medium term objectives (15 days to one year) were the Restoration of Evolutive Capacity, which amounted to having Canadians accept Quebec as an



Montreal: Troops practise crowd control drills during Operation “Essay”, October 1970.

equal member of Confederation and reconciling the separatist elements with the rest of the country. The long-term objective was nothing short of Canadian unity.<sup>41</sup>

The Army would be employed immediately and would be withdrawn in 30 days. Prisoners would be released in the reconciliation phase. Provincial power would be redistributed over the course of the next year. The emphasis on the strategy was to pre-empt and dislocate the FLQ at every turn and, most importantly, isolate it from the mainstream of provincial political discourse at all levels in Quebec. Uncommitted political forces were to be encouraged to remain uncommitted.<sup>42</sup>

On 5 October 1970, British Trade Commissioner James Cross was kidnapped by the ‘Liberation Cell’ of the FLQ. Two days later, the Quebec Provincial Police raided an FLQ training camp and turned over to Mobile Command’s intelligence unit a map and plan of attack scheduled by another FLQ cell against 34 Canadian Forces Ammunition Depot at Camp Bouchard near Montreal. A composite unit consisting of twelve Ferret scout cars, five M-113 APCs and an Assault Troop

(drawn from the 12e Régiment Blindé du Canada) covertly deployed to protect Camp Bouchard. The FLQ attack did not take place.<sup>43</sup>

One FLQ demand – that its manifesto be broadcast by the CBC – was permitted by the government to save Cross’s life. At the same time, however, the government announced that so-called political prisoners arrested for previous acts of violence would not be released. Quebec Labour and Immigration Affairs Minister Pierre Laporte was then kidnaped by the ‘Chenier Cell’ of the FLQ on 10 October 1970. While this operation was underway, another FLQ cell consisting of two men and a women stalked General Allard at his home outside of Montreal. After informing General Chouinard, Allard equipped himself with a ‘commando chain’ while a patrol was sent to assist. The FLQ unit withdrew before the patrol arrived.<sup>44</sup>

### **A STRATEGY IMPLEMENTED: OPERATIONS “GINGER” AND “ESSAY”**

**T**he Chief of the Defence Staff, General F.S. Sharp, was at a NATO conference when the crisis broke, which left the military reins in the hands of the Vice Chief of the Defence Staff (VCDS), Lieutenant-General

strategic deliberations in Cabinet over the previous two years. General Dare was, however, aware of other aspects which affected strategic policy.

These related to the existing force structure and posture. If he were called upon by the provincial and federal governments to deploy Mobile Command units to Quebec, he would have to inform them that these units were already committed to other wartime and peacetime tasks. For example, 1 Combat Group based in Western Canada was committed to the Canada-US Regional Planning Group for operations against Soviet intrusions in the Arctic and on either coast. In addition, 2 Combat Group had recently been committed to the Canada Air Sea Transportable (CAST) role and was to deploy to North Norway in the event of NATO-Warsaw Pact tension. The 5e Groupement du Combat, a new francophone formation in Valcartier, had multiple tasks, including reinforcing 4 Canadian Mechanized Brigade Group in Germany and providing rotational troops for UN peacekeeping operations in Cyprus.

The status of the reserve forces was poor at best. The Militia had been gutted between 1958 and 1964 when the Diefenbaker Government converted it into a force designed to re-enter cities after nuclear attack to

rescue citizens. Some initiatives had been made to shift the Militia back to its more conventional orientation, but little progress had been made, and there was not enough money in any case. In addition to this, there was some concern that Militia units in Quebec might not be ‘politically reliable’ given that the FLQ had successfully infiltrated several of them. This concern was solved by using Regular units to occupy Militia armouries in the area of operations, and by denying the Militia any operational role in Operation “Essay”.

The primary problem confronting General Dare in the formulation of the strategic objective and its

operational expression was: What will the duration of the operation be, and how extensively will the forces have to manoeuvre? He had to be able to conduct the operations while still having the flexibility to fulfill



A Voyageur helicopter over Montreal, 1 October 1970.

Michael Dare, and the Commander Mobile Command, Lieutenant-General Gilles Turcot. Both men were conversant with contingency planning (the Operation “Pegasus” deployment), but were not privy to the larger

Canada's international commitments with the same forces, as he could not expand the force structure. Should 4 Canadian Mechanized Brigade Group be brought home from Germany, for example?

The staff at 4 CMBG Headquarters followed events in Canada with enormous interest. The brigade had by then left its base area in Soest and re-located to new ones at Lahr and Baden in August-September, and the units were only just starting to get back to training. By mid-November the formation was receiving calls from Mobile Command to prepare for a 'what if' scenario. Detailed staff checks were done to plan for a 'reverse Fallex' to Canada to take over from units conducting VIP and Vital Point (VP) guard tasks. NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Europe watched developments with interest but refrained from official comment.<sup>45</sup>

Trudeau wanted a military deployment to send a message to the separatists, while at the same time other advisors recognized the long-term threat of the FLQ. General Dare agreed, and his Operations Order stated that:

The Canadian Armed Forces have been directed to participate in a symbolic show of force against the FLQ without antagonizing the rest of the province of Quebec....Commander Mobile Command will provide aid to the Quebec provincial authorities.<sup>46</sup>

Note the flexibility in the order. It does not state that the CF was to seek out and destroy the FLQ. The Forces were committed to supporting the police, and the level of support could be varied at will by the VCDS and the Commander Mobile Command. This allowed the VCDS to limit the duration and extent of the CF's involvement so that he could respond flexibly to other commitments. It was a compromise, and reflected the limitations of the force structure and the need to satisfy several strategic objectives.

Unstated, but important, was the concern that a troop deployment in support of the strategic objectives could stimulate more violence, perhaps even against the troops conducting the show of force operation. There was apparently no detailed thought given (exclusive of the rules of engagement) to the possibility that the operations could expand into a full-blown counterinsurgency effort on the part of the Canadian Forces. If in 1970 the FLQ had progressed further in the stages of revolutionary warfare that it espoused, the government's response by using Mobile Command was a calculated risk, since the force structure was not capable of conducting protracted counter-revolutionary warfare.

At 1228 hours on 11 October 1970, the Commander Mobile Command, the Quebec Attorney General and the VCDS met. At 1315 hours the next day Operation "Ginger" began. Within five hours the first of 1000 troops from 2 Combat Group in Petawawa were moved to Ottawa by helicopter to protect federal government buildings and officials. The 5e Groupement du Combat was then placed on alert, and advance units moved to Camp Bouchard to prepare to move into Montreal proper. Preparations were also made to dispatch elements from 12e Régiment Blindé to CFS Val d'Or, CFB Bagotville and CFS Lamacaza to protect the nuclear air defence weapons stored at those locations. The nuclear reactor at Gentilly was also included among the vital point protection tasks.<sup>47</sup>

On 14 October, the VCDS issued Operation Order No. 1. The next day, the Government of Quebec officially asked for Aid of the Civil Power at 1245 hours. Twenty minutes later 5e Groupement was ordered to deploy, and Operation "Essay" commenced. In ten minutes, 'B' Company 2 R22eR moved by helicopter to downtown Montreal, while other units deployed within Quebec to protect vital points like the hydro-electric system. The 1er Commando of the Canadian Airborne Regiment started to move from Edmonton. By 2250 hours, 5e Groupement was fully deployed throughout Quebec.<sup>48</sup>

Brigadier-General Chouinard instructed the helicopters supporting his brigade to conduct several low fly-pasts over Montreal and to simulate several landings before dropping off the embarked troops. This was part of a deception operation intended to reassure the population that the forces were present all over the island simultaneously, and to confuse the FLQ as to the exact nature of the deployment, since it would take some time for the rest of the troops to arrive by road. A platoon was also inserted into the Expo 67 site on Ile St Helene since this was thought to be a potential FLQ target of great symbolic value.<sup>49</sup>

The War Measures Act was implemented on 16 October, and units from CFB Gagetown and 1 Combat Group in Western Canada were airlifted both to the Ottawa region and to Quebec. In the meantime, on 19 October, Cabinet confirmed that there was a serious threat to Canada. They then approved the tentative strategy developed earlier in the year, emphasizing that "there appeared to be an FLQ strategy which must be contained and pre-empted by a federal strategy which would retain and reinforce the confidence in and support of all Canadians for their Government."<sup>50</sup>

The units deployed to Operation "Ginger" in Ottawa were not under the command of Mobile Command for

the duration of the operation, although other units from 2 Combat Group were. Operation "Ginger" units were by law engaged in assistance to the civil authority – in this case, the RCMP and the Ottawa police – while units committed to Operation "Essay" in Quebec were engaged in aid of the civil power operations on behalf of the provincial government of Quebec. The legal distinction between the two types of operations resulted in different rules of engagement, a split command structure, and different Standard Operating Procedures. The Commander Mobile Command was still responsible for providing logistics support to the Op "Ginger" forces, and for providing rotation units and, later on, a rapid-reaction airmobile force from formations not already committed. Other problems cropped up: some VIPs lived on the Quebec side of the Ottawa River and in theory the assistance to the civil authority mission was confined to the City of Ottawa. In effect, declaration of the War Measure Act resolved some of the ambiguity in this situation, but the Commander Mobile Command established a Memoranda of Understanding with the Quebec police forces to cover certain VIPs.<sup>51</sup>

The Vital Point (VP) protection tasks in Operation "Essay" had units and sub-units deployed to 107 locations from Val d'Or to Rimouski. In some cases two men with an Arctic tent guarded a hydro tower, while other missions involved the deployment of recce squadrons to cover groupings of vital points. This stretched logistics, communications and other support to the limit. There were, for example, serious problems because of inadequate theatre-level communications, and eventually 1 Canadian Signal Regiment was brought in from Kingston. The commercial telephone network was used extensively, particularly in outlying areas, while two Twin Otter aircraft were adapted for remote re-broadcast missions over the operational area.<sup>52</sup>

The widespread dispersion of the light armoured units (8 CH and 12e RBC) on vital point guard tasks severely limited Mobile Command's ability to gather timely information on developing situations, and thus the ability to respond rapidly. Coupled with the problems with the command, control, and communications system, this would have become a serious weakness if the situation had expanded beyond urban terrorism. CF-5 aircraft based at CFB Bagotville, equipped for photo recce, were employed in this role, but the information gathered this way was not immediate, which increased reaction time.<sup>53</sup>

Fortunately, the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources had borrowed two Tracker surveillance aircraft from Maritime Command and had equipped them with a US Army Infrared Line Scan System (IRLS) which was then in use in Vietnam. Eventually some per-

sonal favours were called in, and the US Army 'loaned' Mobile Command a Mohawk recce aircraft equipped with Sideways Looking Aperture Radar (SLAR) and IRLS. Conducting overflights from US bases, these systems were used for surveillance over the rural Laurentian area, where the FLQ maintained a number of safe houses and training camps. IRLS data was used to cue a Quebec Provincial Police response to targets of opportunity, which was in turn backed up with an airmobile response from the quick reaction force, the Canadian Airborne Regiment.<sup>54</sup>

The original VCDS mission statement maintained that Operations "Essay" and "Ginger" were shows of force. The request for aid of the civil power in Quebec and the later declaration of the War Measures Act broadened Mobile Command's mandate as the mission evolved. The 5e Groupement and 1 Combat Group units were dispersed to handle VIP and VP guard tasks, as well as being prepared for riot control in the urban areas. The expanded mandate now meant that Mobile Command units would support the police in cordon and search operations, both in rural and urban areas. There was also concern that an anti-separatist group called 'Black Guard' might attempt to assassinate Rene Levesque.<sup>55</sup>

These missions placed additional strains on the organization. Mobile Command, therefore, needed a theatre reserve. Consequently, 1er Commando from the Airborne Regiment re-located to a hanger at CFB St. Hubert to perform as an Immediate Reaction Force (IRF). It was provided with fourteen Huey helicopters from 403 Tactical Helicopter Squadron in Petawawa. The IRF was organized into four small battle groups, two from the Airborne Regiment Commandos and one each from the airborne engineers and gunners. Each group had a number of rather bewildered rural police officers attached.<sup>56</sup>

The Airborne Regiment, however, was at this time unaccustomed to airmobile operations as the Huey helicopters were still new to the force structure. Tactical employment training had to be conducted while Op "Essay" was in progress. In a number of cases, the IRF practiced rappelling and landing zone techniques while on actual cordon and search operations.<sup>57</sup> The 403 Squadron also modified some of its helicopters with infrared imaging equipment and 'Firefly' searchlight equipment. This intense, focused lighting system was borrowed from the US Navy.<sup>58</sup> Units conducting urban cordon and search missions also were provided with helicopter support to enhance their mobility.<sup>59</sup> Night observation devices for the ground troops were not made available to them until early November, when starlight scopes were acquired from a US manufacturer.<sup>60</sup>

IRF taskings usually resulted from a report from citizens, or from photo or infrared recce runs over the rural areas. The information would be fed to the Joint Intelligence Centre and an IRF response ordered. The Rules of Engagement were very tight. General Turcot told the IRF commanders that “the worst thing that we could do was shoot somebody” by accident. Weapons safety and good relationships with civilians were emphasized.<sup>61</sup>

In these operations, the military focus was almost exclusively on establishing the cordon, while the police conducted the actual search. Most operations turned up nothing. In one case, a police search missed an FLQ cell hiding behind a false wall.<sup>62</sup> The FLQ cells kept on the move, and the bulk of the reports that arrived were exaggerations, mis-identifications or hoaxes. The reaction forces, however, responded to almost every ‘sighting’, usually with a platoon from the Airborne Regiment in four helicopters.<sup>63</sup>

The lack of established procedures for dealing closely with municipal and provincial police and federal intelligence services produced considerable confusion in the transition from ‘peace’ to ‘war’. The Regional Direction Centre (RDC), previously established to coordinate police responses to the existing crisis in Quebec, now absorbed an increment from both the headquarters of both 5e Groupement and Mobile Command, and had to adapt to greatly accelerated procedures. Fortunately, the use of military intelligence assets earlier in the 1960s facilitated the flow and analysis of information from military sources to some extent. Problems did, however, arise in deciding how to react to that information.

The role of the Regional Direction Centre in the decision-making process was thus unclear. General Chouinard’s staff restructured the RDC so that it acted as the police liaison cell to Mobile Command and not the other way around. The Combat Group Commander then made the decisions on the employment of his units in consultation with the police, through both

Commander Mobile Command and the RDC. Further problems arose because both the headquarters of 5e Groupement and the RDC were co-located in the QPP HQ building, later also joined by the Canadian Airborne Regiment, which was responsible for planning and conducting special operations. The police did not understand the differences between these three



Canadian Forces Photo by: Cpl. S. Johnson IM 70-226

Members of le Commando, Canadian Airborne Regiment, practice quick deployment from a Voyageur helicopter during Operation Essay.

headquarters and often made requests to the wrong organization. This gave rise to situations such as the Airborne Regiment being asked to support a cordon and search operation without first going through Mobile Command.<sup>64</sup>

General Chouinard was somewhat hampered after the initial deployment. He had the authority to accept new VP and VIP guard tasks, but joint police/Mobile Command operations requests by the police had to be approved by Mobile Command. This situation changed constantly, since the federal government made requests for guards on their facilities sometimes to Mobile Command, and sometimes to 5e Groupement through the RDC.

Another problem encountered by the commanders were deficiencies in internal security doctrine at all levels. There was no Mobile Command-level contingency

plan for large-scale internal security operations in Quebec. The 5e Groupement did have valuable experience with Operation “Pegasus”, and there was a semblance of a contingency plan, but this was structured for a battalion-level operation. The other combat groups did not have this experience.

As noted earlier, Mobile Command units had greatly varying degrees of IS training. For example, the 8 CH was structured as a light armoured regiment to conduct recce tasks in a NATO Central Region context and UN interpositional surveillance operations. These skills were readily adaptable to the IS environment.<sup>65</sup> In the case of 2 R22eR, more attention had been given to IS training in 1969 because of previous taskings like Op “Pegasus”. The problem was one of transitioning from riot control to VP and VIP guard tasks. Guarding private homes in urban areas was not the same as protecting a pontoon bridge.<sup>66</sup>

On the other hand, the infantry units in 1 Combat Group had replicas of old British imperial policing manuals, which showed the use of rattan whips against demonstrators.<sup>67</sup> A partial solution was the issue of the second draft of CFP 302(8) “Specific Operations in Aid of the Civil Power” to 5e Groupement units. General Chouinard noted that if Mobile Command units had been confronted by an enraged population, the lack of clear riot control doctrine would probably have resulted in deaths, with a consequent propaganda and political victory for the FLQ.<sup>68</sup>

In the case of the VP/VIP security taskings, there were no established standards as to how many personnel were needed for the different types of sites. Similarly, rules of engagement had to be generated for the Op “Ginger” guards. Who was responsible for the Rules of Engagement generation: the CF Operations Centre (not an operational command) or Mobile Command Headquarters? Clear and unambiguous Rules of Engagement were very important in an internal security operation, given the presence of the media and the effects of the use of lethal force in the propaganda war. Eventually, ROEs were generated in Ottawa and passed through the chain of command to the two combat groups. They were ‘loose’ and relied on the training and discipline of the participating troops. It amounted to a ‘use your head’ philosophy.<sup>69</sup>

The pattern of non-VP/VIP protection operations conducted by Mobile Command units also reveals a fair amount of improvisation. For example, when a game warden spotted FLQ leader Paul Rose and an FLQ cell mounted in two vehicles headed for the hills with three weeks of supplies, the Airborne Regiment and Quebec police responded with Operation “Paupaul”, a cordon

and search near L’Acension. Air-ground coordination problems hampered search efforts, even after the IRLS system was brought in and the search was supported by two Huey helicopters. No results were obtained.<sup>70</sup> Similarly, the massive Operation “Epigram” cordon and search operation conducted by 2 RCR near Ste Jerome, Ste Therese, and St Eustache brought in two radios, 20 handguns, four boxes of TNT, 219 fuses, and a quantity of hashish, but no FLQ members. Intelligence coordination was minimal.<sup>71</sup>

The largest sub-operation conducted during “Essay” was Operation “Ragout” on 3 December 1970. Intelligence produced the approximate location of James Cross and the FLQ’s Liberation Cell in North Montreal. Practically the entire 3rd Battalion, R22eR was deployed shoulder to shoulder for the cordon, which encircled the block in which Cross was held. After negotiations, members of the ‘Liberation Cell’ were flown to Cuba aboard a Yukon transport aircraft and Cross was freed.<sup>72</sup>

Units deployed to the operations were withdrawn in early 1971, but a battalion, and later just a company group, were kept on standby in Montreal in case the situation deteriorated again. Everyone was withdrawn by the end of February 1971.

## ASSESSMENT

What are we to make of Operations “Essay” and “Ginger”?

We can conclude that there was a larger government strategy to deal with political violence in Quebec. This strategy was formulated in 1970, but its military component was either embryonic or not fully thought out. The lack of understanding as to how to call out the military is a compelling piece of evidence here, as is the lack of detail in the written strategy documents.

Mobile Command was not specifically structured for counter-revolutionary warfare in Quebec at the operational level, and barely equipped to handle traditional internal security operations such as riot control at the tactical level. Op “Essay” relied heavily on improvisation, for example, the theatre-wide communications system, theatre-level intelligence acquisition, airmobile operations, and intelligence coordination at the RDC. Mobile Command did well, and achieved the aims laid out for it under the strategy, but its ability to handle a sustained counter-revolutionary warfare campaign was doubted even by its commanders.

These facts indicate that Mobile Command was either not part of long-term larger government strategy

or that Mobile Command was incompetent or disobeying orders to prepare for counter-revolutionary warfare. The former case is the most likely one. If the military intervention was a conspiracy as portrayed by Vallieres, why was it not better planned and executed, and targeted at the FLQ directly? If one wants to examine the restructuring of Mobile Command to handle Quebec separatism, he/she should look at the 1970s and examine in more detail the acquisition of vast numbers of wheeled armoured vehicles and plans to station the Airborne Regiment to Ottawa, not long after Defence in the 70s placed internal security at the top of the defence priority list in 1971.

The question over whether Mobile Command should have been employed in Quebec or not is moot. There was a threat to Canadian institutions, and there was serious potential for that threat to increase with time. The

level of political violence was escalating and it was not merely a matter of a “few kids making a revolution.” Unit commanders deployed to Montreal noted that the police were extremely frightened and were incapable of doing their day-to-day jobs without support. The atmosphere, one of those intangible unmeasurable things, was bad and getting worse. The Operation “Essay” deployment fostered a positive change in the atmosphere which gave a psychological boost to the police and the provincial government and which provided critical backbone for facing up to the threat.<sup>73</sup> NDP leader Tommy Douglas noted in an interview that the October Crisis amounted to crushing a walnut with a sledgehammer. The more apt analogy would have been crushing a mustard seed before it could flourish.



Canadian Forces Photo by: Duguay VL 70-177

Troops at La Citadelle in Quebec City, early November 1970.

## NOTES

1. As quoted on page 8 of John Oliver Dendy, “Aid to the Civil Power: Directorate of History Report CFHQ 19,” 23 Feb 78.

2. See BGen Terry Liston’s analysis of ‘Not Much Glory’ in *Canadian Defence Quarterly* Spring

1986, p. 52.

3. See Pierre Vallieres, *The Assassination of Pierre Laporte: Behind the '70 October Scenario* (Toronto: James Lorimer Publishers, 1977) Ch. 2.

4. Louis Fournier, *FLQ: Anatomy of an*

*Underground Movement* (Toronto: NC Press, Ltd., 1984) pp. 35-37; Anthony Kellett, et al, “Terrorism In Canada 1960-1989”, Solicitor General of Canada Ministry Secretariat User Report No. 1990-16, pp. 55-56.

5. "Protracted Revolutionary Warfare", *Readings in Revolutionary Warfare*, CFB Gagetown Combat Arms School Publication, 1970; Loomis, *Not Much Glory* pp. 13-21.
6. Dan Loomis, *Not Much Glory: Quelling the FLQ* (Toronto: Deneau Publishers, 1984) p. 29.
7. Fournier, *FLQ: Anatomy of an Underground Movement*; "FLQ Activities, 1963-1970," *Readings in Revolutionary Warfare* CFB Gagetown Combat Arms School Publication, 1970.
8. See Kellett, Anthony et al. *User Report No. 1990-16: Terrorism in Canada 1960-1989* Ottawa: Solicitor General Canada, 1991.
9. "FLQ Activities, 1963-1970", *Readings in Revolutionary Warfare*, CFB Gagetown Combat Arms School Publication, 1970.
10. Directorate of History and Heritage, file 112.1.009 (D39), (23 May 63) letter CGS to Minister of National Defence, "FLQ Activities: Province of Quebec"; (22 May 63) memo Adjutant General to CGS, "Bombing Incidents in Quebec."
11. National Archives of Canada (NAC), RG 2, Cabinet Conclusions, 20 May 1963; Paul Hellyer, *Damn The Torpedoes: My Fight to Unify Canada's Armed Forces* (Toronto: Maclelland and Stewart, 1990) pp. 63-64.
12. Interview with General Jean V. Allard, CF-Ret'd, Lahr, Germany, 16 April 1993.
13. John Sheltus, "Can We Defend Our Own Country?," *Weekend Magazine*, 7 March 1970, pp. 5-7.
14. Directorate of History and Heritage (DH&H) file 112.1.009(D39) letter CGS to Minister of National Defence, "FLQ Activities: Province of Quebec," 23 May 63; memo Adjutant General to CGS, "Bombing Incidents in Quebec," 22 May 63.
15. "Internal Security Training," *The Canadian Guardsman*, 1965 Edition, pp. 79-50; "The Night Train," *The Powder Horn* 1968 Edition, pp. 40-41.
16. "Stalking the Terrorists," *Sentinel* May 1968, pp. 20-21; "Anti-Guerilla Warfare Training," *The Canadian Guardsman* 1964 Edition, pp. 81-82; "Exercise PARK BANDIT," *The Canadian Guardsman* 1966 Edition, pp. 86-88; "Fightin' Charlie on Exercise VOL OUEST," *The Powder Hord* 1963 Edition, pp. 68-70; "Exercise NEW CRUSADER," *The Canadian Guardsman* 1966 Edition, pp. 59-60; "Exercise WHITE ELK," *The Powder Horn* 1965 Edition, pp. 66-70.
17. "Ex PONCHO IV, 15-30 Oct 67," *The Connecting File* 1967 Edition, p. 19.
18. J.V. Allard with Serge Bernier, *The Memoirs of General Jean V. Allard* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1988), p. 231.
19. DHH file 80/238 (5 Apr 65), "Appreciation and Proposed Options for the Structure of the Canadian Army Field Force 1965-70 Period."
20. DHH file 81/83 (30 Sep 66), "Mobile Command Force Structure Study."
21. NAC, RG 24 acc 83-84/167 Vol. 7407 DRBS 173-2 pt. 3, "Address by General J.V. Allard Chief of the Defence Staff to the Joint Session Defence research Board and Defence Research Council, 19 June 1969.
22. What we know doctrinally as 'brigade groups' were called 'combat groups' between 1970 and 1976.
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24. Dendy, John Oliver. "Aid to the Civil Power: Directorate of History Report CFHQ 19," 23 Feb 78.
25. Telephone interview with BGen C de L Kip Kirby, CF Ret'd, 17 May 1997.
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28. *ibid.*
29. Sean M. Maloney, *War Without Battles: Canada's NATO Brigade in Germany, 1951-1993* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1997), pp. 234-235. It would be easy to assume that the force reductions in Germany were meant to bring Canadian troops home so that there would be more of them for IS operations. This, however, was not the agenda and was not even brought up during the stormy Trudeau Cabinet debate over pulling out of NATO. See Mitchell Sharp, *Which Reminds Me: A Memoir* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994) Ch. 7; and J.L. Granatstein and Robert Bothwell, *Pirouette: Pierre Trudeau and Canadian Foreign Policy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990) Ch. 1.
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39. ATI PCO (30 Oct 70) memo to Cabinet, "Appreciation of Recent Events in Quebec."
40. ATI PCO (19 Oct 70), memo to Cabinet, "A Strategy for Dealing with the FLQ."
41. *ibid.*
42. *ibid.*
43. Dendy, John Oliver. "Aid to the Civil Power: Directorate of History Report CFHQ 19," 23 Feb 78.
44. Allard interview.
45. Interview with a former 4 CMBG staff officer.
46. Dendy, John Oliver. "Aid to the Civil Power: Directorate of History Report CFHQ 19," 23 Feb 78.
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48. *ibid.*
49. Telephone interviews with LGen Jacques Chouinard, CF Ret'd, 9 and 13 August 1998.
50. ATI PCO, 19 and 21 October 1970, memo to Cabinet: A Strategy for Dealing with the FLQ."
51. Dendy, John Oliver. "Aid to the Civil Power: Directorate of History Report CFHQ 19," 23 Feb 78
52. BGen J. Chouinard, "Operation ESSAY: Final Report (29 Jan 71)."
53. Dendy, John Oliver. "Aid to the Civil Power: Directorate of History Report CFHQ 19," 23 Feb 78
54. Confidential interviews.
55. DHH, Raymont Collection, October Crisis file, (19 Oct 70) FMC HQ to CFHQ, SITREP No. 6.
56. Telephone interview with LCol Bud Taylor, CF Ret'd, 27 August 1998.
57. *ibid.*
58. Telephone interview with Col Albert K. Casselman, CF Ret'd, 2 September 1998.
59. BGen J. Chouinard, "Operation ESSAY: Final Report (29 Jan 71)."
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61. Telephone interview with LCol Bud Taylor, CF Ret'd, 27 August 1998.
62. Telephone interview with LGen Jacques Chouinard, CF Ret'd, 13 August 1998.
63. Telephone interview with Col Albert K. Casselman, CF Ret'd, 2 September 1998.
64. BGen J. Chouinard, "Operation ESSAY: Final Report (29 Jan 71)."
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71. DHH, Raymont Collection, file 911, (24 Nov-1 Dec 70) FMC HQ SITREPs to CFHQ.
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73. See Morrow, Lessrad, and Chouinard interviews.