

DND Photo KA2004-A010D by Master Corporal Brian Walsh



Members of 3rd Battalion, The Royal Canadian Regiment monitoring heavy weapons belonging to Afghan militia forces as they are delivered to a cantonment site outside Kabul, Afghanistan, 15 January 2004.

FINDING NATIONAL DEFENCE POLICY IN 2004

by Douglas L. Bland

DEFINING THE NATIONAL DEFENCE PROBLEM

National defence policies can never be sustained if they are simply declarations made by governments. Rather, if policy is to have a lasting effect, it must be developed through a formal and informal bargaining process among people with authority to decide and to implement policy. In reality, ministers, senior military officers and officials (from inside and outside the Department of National Defence) are continuously engaged in a consensus-building process aimed at establishing agreement on answers to the essential questions of national defence: What must be done? Who gets what from the scarce pool of defence resources? Who selects and decides what from among the many choices in matters of defence policy and management that confront the establishment every day? Successful defence reviews that led to coherent, lasting policies have invariably followed this incremental bargaining concept.¹

No defence review is ever policy neutral. Skilled bureaucrats in or out of uniform know that whoever defines 'the policy problem' during any bargaining process also controls the range of possible solutions and policies that might be adopted. Thus, framing and controlling the central defence policy problem — not necessarily overtly — always precedes consideration of the technical questions of national defence. This pre-review dynamic in fact usually sets the parameters of future defence policy well before any public review begins.

This defining phase in the current defence review began early in 2003 when candidates for the Liberal Party leadership announced their positions on national defence and foreign policy, and it continued when other political parties issued statements on national defence, and as various academic and non-governmental organizations joined the debate. But 'the problem' — the essence of the 2004 defence review — has yet to be settled. Therefore, those who still might wish to influence the outcome of the impending review should quickly join the debate about just which 'problem' from among many possible contenders the review will address.

This paper argues that the central policy problem that ought to guide the defence review (and much of the foreign policy review as well) is 'the crisis of the future force'. Specifically, how will the next government manage its defence and foreign policies, and relations with the United States, in the absence of credible and capable armed forces, even as (presumably) it begins the necessarily long program of rebuilding Canada's military capabilities? These inter-related problems of ends and means first must be defined clearly in terms of capabilities, technical characteristics and dollars. The defence review must then search out innovative ways to think about the problem as well as possible solutions to it before making recommendations

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The pilot and flight engineer waiting in the cockpit of their CC-130 Hercules as it is unloaded in Bunia, Democratic Republic of Congo, 11 June 2003.

to the government on how it should proceed. In other words, defining the policy problem as redressing the collapse of Canadian Armed Forces (CF) capabilities is the critical decision the cabinet must take if the impending review is to be coherent and relevant to the national defence situation the government faces in 2004 and beyond.

Informed Canadians are well aware of the precarious state of the CF on active service today. Numerous studies, both public and private, have pointed to the stresses on members of the armed forces and on military capabilities caused by an unprecedented operational tempo and by policies which have demanded for a decade that members of the Canadian Forces “do more with less.” This set of difficulties is the crisis of ‘the present force’ — a commitment-capabilities crisis brought on by the unbridgeable gap between the quantity and quality of people, equipment, logistical support and funding available, and the demands of today’s defence policies.

What is not as well understood by Canadians and Canada’s political community is the national crisis of ‘the future force’. This is a burgeoning crisis caused by insufficient attention to, and funding support for, the people, equipment, training establishments and logistical support facilities, among other things, that will provide credible military capabilities tomorrow. Yet, as serious as this problem is, it is but a symptom of a wider political, and essentially intractable, conundrum that will confront the next government of Canada.

Insofar as military assets are necessary for the pursuit of foreign policy, and especially Canada–United States relations after 11 September 2001, the continuing loss of military capabilities heralds a future foreign policy crisis for the government. But even this crippling fact is not at the heart of the Martin government’s policy problem. The real national security and defence crisis is revealed by the fact that there is not much the new government will be able to do to solve

the military capabilities crisis and consequent foreign policy crisis. Trying to manage future national defence and foreign policies and Canada–United States relations without core military capabilities is, therefore, the real crisis sitting on the doorstep as the new government takes office.

The Claxton Paper, *Canada Without Armed Forces*, sought to answer the following question: “If current policies remain essentially unchanged over the next few years, then what will be the state of core military capabilities in five, ten and fifteen years?” The study revealed a future force undeserving of this title. Rather, rapidly and then inevitably in five to ten years, Canada’s major military equipment will succumb to the combined effects of overuse and technical obsolescence², making them nearly operationally irrelevant. People — “our most valuable asset” according to official Canadian defence literature — with the right balance of age, experience and training, will not be available to replace those who will leave the armed forces over the

next several years. Support for equipment and operations is disintegrating, and little can be done to stop it, in some case, because spare parts and technicians are not available and will not be available in the years to come.³

Canada is heading for a long period when governments will be without effective military means even for domestic defence and territorial surveillance. Even if the Martin government were to provide nearly unlimited funds in an attempt to overcome this deficit, little can be done before the apprehended crisis becomes fact. The downward slope of the capabilities curve is too steep, and the slide is too fast. Many core capabilities, or essential elements of them, will collapse before operationally effective units can replace them. Canada, in a few years, will be effectively disarmed. This then is the situation the new government must begin to correct, and which the defence review should point in the right direction to do so.

THINKING CONCEPTUALLY

Any defence review, and especially one concentrated on the problem of rebuilding and transforming the Canadian Forces, ought to begin with some agreement on the terms used to define the problem and the remedial policies. Three central issues define the deficiencies of current policies. The first is the lack of capital investment. The second is the contest between institutional preferences (generally army, navy, and air force) and the logic of the capability-based concept of defence planning and management. The third concerns the tendency to regard members of the CF as merely de-humanized “human resources” rather than as a military population. A closely focused defence review, therefore, should plainly classify and examine these issues and provide recommendations for an “actionable policy”⁴ and not simply prosy rhetoric for a White Paper constructed around undefined terms such as “balanced multi-purpose combat-capable armed forces”.

The Present Force and the Future Force. Senior military officers and defence officials are routinely concerned with both the present force and its activities and the future force intended to replace it. A coherent defence policy and management system would provide funds for a continuous flow of new concepts, doctrines, equipment, technologies and people into the present force to maintain core military capabilities. This continuous interaction does not suggest that particular military elements would be mindlessly reproduced year after year. Rather, the ‘force development process’ ought to assess requirements, looking always for ‘force multipliers’ to improve military effectiveness economically and efficiently.

Canada has rarely had such a coherent force development system. Although eager defence planners have designed rational management processes for national defence policy, the real process is more commonly random and sporadic. Governments periodically acquire fleets of ships, aircraft and combat vehicles, and then close off production and future purchases until the next capabilities crisis occurs. The present force works with increasingly antiquated equipment until some circumstance, for instance operational failures or allied pressures, brings the acquisition process briefly back to life. Defence documents and the public record, set before Parliament and elsewhere, clearly demonstrate the consequences of this national habit on the Canadian Forces of tomorrow.

The present force and the future force can compete with each other for attention and funding, sometimes so intensely that one becomes the enemy of the other. This unfortunate dynamic is especially evident whenever the CF are placed on a fixed budget, which is the usual situation. The present force consumes most of the budget simply to pay people and the housekeeping costs of military activities. The capital investment account gets only what might be left over after this overhead has been paid.

Real operations, such as those the Canadian Forces have been conducting since 1990, increase overhead costs, and, in a Department with a fixed budget, the only source of funds to pay these bills is the capital account. Such increases as the government has made to the defence budget in the last few years have been unavoidable contributions to the present force and ongoing operations. But even these additions have not been enough to pay for complex operations, as in Afghanistan. Thus, the Chief of the Defence Staff and departmental officials are forced, as the former Minister of National Defence, John McCallum, complained in 2003, to finance current operations “by raiding the capital budget.”⁵

Over the last ten or twelve years the present force has become the unwitting enemy of the future force, drawing money and attention from projects and programs meant to sustain Canada’s core military capabilities. The effect of this dynamic has been so severe and prolonged that the bill to recover the future force is far beyond the means available in existing and predicted defence budgets. A coherent defence policy would pay close attention to this dynamic relationship and rectify contradictions between policy and funding allocations long before they get out of hand. Indeed, the problem is so serious today that suggesting ways to prevent it from occurring in the future — and not just by adding more money to the pot — should be a major issue for the defence review.

A Focus on Capabilities. The 2004 defence review should not be much concerned with the effects of defence policy on the future of existing components of the CF. After all, the primary purposes of defence policy are — or should be — to produce military capabilities and put them to proper use. A defence review, therefore, should avoid framing its agenda and conclusions around the institutional interests of the navy, army or air force, or any other component. It should look instead at the state of core military capabilities that nearly always consist of elements from every branch of the CF.

Core capabilities are, in fact, composed of several inter-twined elements — mainly trained people, equipment, command and control systems, training establishments, and logistical resources and units. These elements, however, provide little capability if they are simply piled on a jetty. Usable capabilities are created when experienced commanders and trainers meld the elements into operational units. If any one of the requisite elements is missing, or time is not provided for operational training, then the supposed capability is defective to some degree. The defence review should pay particular attention to the interaction of the parts — the system of systems — noting where they are discordant and/or incoherent.

Thinking from a capabilities — and not an institutional — perspective is important for other reasons. First, the operation of modern armed forces can hardly ever be divided into service packages. Although the navy, army or air force may predominate in certain missions, it is rare to find any recent operation that was completely owned by one service, if only because logistical support in the CF is a common function provided by a unified military system. Second, people who suggest that Canada might develop ‘niche roles’ based on a small range of capabilities, or purposefully abandon one capability for another, discount the negative effects such a policy would have not only on foreign policy, but also on domestic security.

The maintenance of multi-faceted core capabilities provides governments with the most usable assets to support national security, defence and foreign policies. The evidence from the missions the CF have undertaken in the last ten years convincingly supports this conclusion. Unfortunately, there is little indication that a range of capabilities can be produced or maintained in the future, mainly because funds are not available to allow for systematic force development, no matter the grandeur of plans on paper. Canada’s future force will likely evolve into a small, less-than-coherent mix of parts of core capabilities — something old, something new, much that is borrowed, and less that is blue.

The Military Population. Many members of the defence community and academia tend to think of military ‘capabilities’ as equipment. It follows from this assumption that the ‘rust out’ of machines caused by age or technological obsolescence would define the crisis of the future force. This is not a trivial problem, but to the

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surprise of some, the more serious problem for the future force may well arise from the personnel factor.

During the Cold War, the Canadian Forces developed an industrial model for managing people. Citizens were recruited, assigned to functions, progressed (or not) for 30 years and then retired. Few operational surprises interfered with this pattern, which was established to suit the conditions of the Cold War — “a war without battles”. In the new era, things are very different. People are being ‘used up’ in operations — much as in any past war — and the Cold War model for human resources management does not fit these circumstances. Thus, the comfortable profile of the military population in that earlier age is no longer a reliable guide for force planning. Indeed, experienced officers acknowledge that the profile is seriously skewed, with an alarming imbalance between young, barely trained recruits and highly skilled, experienced people. The worrisome fact is that this problem cannot be readily overcome, and trying to do so — by rapid recruitment, for example — seems only to aggravate the situation.

Taking Charge of Remedial Action. It has been common practice for Canadian governments to provide funding for defence only after domestic policies have been satisfied. The duty to make something useful from whatever is offered by the government falls to leaders within the defence establishment; members of Cabinet hardly ever join in the effort. In the best of times, ‘just enough’ allows the NDHQ hierarchy to cobble together some type of defence program. If planners are lucky, they may find an attentive defence minister who is able to wrestle a bit more from the prime minister. But hoping for such a lucky break is not a sound basis for defence management.

The problems of the future force are so serious, however, that leaving its management to the usual routine will no longer suffice. The Chief of the Defence Staff and the Deputy

Minister, even with the aid of a sympathetic defence minister, simply do not have the resources or the power to solve the gathering crisis by themselves.

Canada and the government are about to enter a period where there will be few credible resources to ensure Canada’s national defence or to pursue an independent foreign policy. This is a matter that requires the urgent attention of the new Prime Minister, for only he can redirect resources to begin the long recover of military capabilities, and only he can redirect the governing party and the federal bureaucracy towards this task.

No responsible political leader would want to leave this national priority in the hands of officers and officials — not that they are not competent and trustworthy. Canada’s national defence is the responsibility of every Canadian, and politicians, through their decisions, actions, and the oversight of the machinery of government, must provide direction to this fundamental national policy.

WHAT MIGHT BE DONE TO ALTER THIS PREDICTED FUTURE?

Political futures are rarely inevitable. Policy is not self-enforcing. Therefore, outcomes — in other words actual policy — can be manipulated by decisions and choices. Nevertheless, both politics and policy are subject to “the tyranny of past decisions”, and as the new government attempts to formulate a national security and defence policy of its own making, it will find that many doors have been closed by decisions taken by previous Cabinets.

The Prime Minister, of course, is not powerless, and he could take steps to reorder the fundamentals of defence policy. He will not, however, be able to reverse past decisions easily or quickly. Thus, as the Prime Minister works to overcome the legacy of the Mulroney and Chrétien years, he will have to address, day by day, the unavoidable crisis brought on by the inadequacies of the present Canadian Armed Forces. Which policy doors are open, and which are closed? What could the Prime Minister do to avoid this gathering national crisis?

A defence review might suggest that the government could stop sending all but token forces overseas, but this would only confirm Canada’s impotence. The review might recommend that the government cut some military capabilities to bolster others. However, past policies have nearly eliminated any reserve, and a new round of reductions would cut into sparse ‘core capabilities’. One fact is plain: the looming foreign policy crisis produced by the lack of military capabilities cannot be solved by cutting the few capabilities that remain. Canada, some suggest, could select ‘niche roles’ for the armed forces and reinforce these. But too often the things such advocates



Canadian Forces Combat Camera photo by Master Corporal Frank Hudec

Members of HMCS *Regina*’s naval boarding party enroute to a suspect vessel in the Gulf of Oman, 6 April 2003.

usually want to do are not things the world wants done. What, then, should the Canadian Forces be prepared to do? Prudence and experience suggest that over the next ten years the CF must be developed and prepared to do the same types of things that they have done in the past ten years. This means they must be prepared to provide small and medium-sized land, sea and air combat units to use coercive means to help stabilize unruly parts of the world.

The government might try to spend it way out of the crisis. In the early 1950s, it took several years to satisfy the Cold War demand for a credible force of some 120,000 people equipped with modern arms, even though the government committed vast resources to this mobilization and increased the defence budget by 135 percent in just a few years. Overcoming today's problem could take a comparable effort, but even then it would not redress the immediate foreign policy crisis.

Time, not money, is the master of this situation. It takes time — in many cases years — to change policy goals into military fact: to train leaders, build ships, acquire equipment and fashion operational capabilities from the separate pieces. Thus, the Prime Minister will have to live with a diminished role in international security affairs, and diplomats will have to manage the consequences.

Constructing future policy on the foundations of the present policy would weaken Canada's national security and defence, thus disabling foreign policy in many important respects. This end will arrive sooner rather than later if the sinking capability trend is allowed to continue, and it will be increasingly expensive, time-consuming and difficult to overturn as each month passes. This then is the predicted future — national security, defence and foreign policies essentially disarmed, with only a faint hope that they can be rescued during the life of the next government.

“ACTIONABLE” DEFENCE POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

An alternative future ought to provide military capabilities adequately structured to meet the foreseeable defence, foreign policy, and domestic security needs. A future policy must provide for the present force and must acknowledge the need for sufficient flexibility — mostly in terms of funding — to meet the volatile circumstances of the world-order era.⁶ It must concurrently, but separately, address the needs of the future force by confirming and supporting a predictable capital program well into the future if governments are to avoid the type of cyclical disarmament that has characterized Canadian defence policy over many decades. The most important and distinctive feature in an alternative future must be the dedication of Canada's political elite to the vigorous and vigilant oversight of national security and defence as the first responsibilities of government. A blueprint for such an alternative future might include several related elements.

“...There is not much the new government will be able to do to solve the military capabilities crisis and consequent foreign policy crisis.”

A Vigilant Parliament. Canadians alone are responsible for Canada's national defence, and that responsibility is the dominant obligation of Parliament. These two ideas are traditional rhetoric in the Canadian political community, in government policy papers, and in public discourse, but rarely do they guide policy in fact. As the 1994 Special Joint Committee of the Senate and the House of Commons reported to Parliament, “...the members of the Special Joint Committee shared from the beginning [of their review] one important conviction — that Canada's defence policy is not simply a matter for the minister or for the thousands of dedicated men and women of the Canadian Forces. It requires the attention of Parliament and the Canadian people.”⁷ Ironically, the *Inquiry Into the Deployment of the Canadian Forces to Somalia* reached much the same conclusion, but on evidence that Parliament had not heeded well enough the warning of its own Special Joint Committee. The Commissioners, therefore, warned Parliament again: “Civil control of the military may be a defining characteristic of liberal democracies, but it does not occur invariably. Civil control of the military in Canada and abroad should come from attentive citizens acting through an informed, concerned and vigilant Parliament.”⁸

Parliament of late has become more attentive, as the convening of a Senate committee on national security and defence attests, but this increased attention by itself has not prompted a comprehensive review of national security or defence policy. As the Martin government begins the next round of policy reviews, a major theme within that process ought to address how a “vigilant Parliament” could more effectively oversee security and defence policy, defence management, and operations. The quest is not simply for passive observers, but for senators and members of parliament to become full and inquisitive partners in decisions aimed at ensuring that Canada is adequately and properly defended.

Consensus Building. Federal government ministers, and principally the Prime Minister, have absolute control over defence policy and the direction and control of the CF. If they are wise, however, they will acknowledge the expertise of professional officers and the advice offered to them by the Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS). Government ministers, moreover, must depend on the CDS and his subordinates if they are to achieve the government's defence and military objectives. This sharing of responsibility for national defence cannot be avoided, but it need not be a cause of friction. It can, in fact, be a boon to a government trying to build and direct an effective and efficient national defence.

Defence policies are most successful, and military leaders most helpful to government, when political and military leaders construct together a consensus on critical issues of defence policy. The way forward depends on the ability of the Prime Minister and the Ministers of National Defence, Foreign Affairs and Finance, in committee with Canada's military leaders, to reach agreement on a number of issues. These include the objectives of national defence, the range and size of military

capabilities to be supported, the funds that will be allocated to the main segments of the defence budget, and the general conditions under which the armed forces will be deployed and employed.

This type of consensus is best developed through direct discussions that provide opportunities for the government to describe its defence goals to the CDS. Then, he and his staff can assess the objectives from a technical point of view and offer detailed proposals to meet them. Differences that may arise can then be resolved directly in subsequent consultations. The gathering crisis is now so serious that the Prime Minister must lead this consensus-building process. He must also oversee follow-on decisions to ensure they are consistent with the intent of the consensus and have the full support of the Ministers of National Defence, Foreign Affairs and Finance and of the CDS.

Sustaining Core Capabilities. Canadian security, defence, and foreign policies require effective, well-armed military forces that can be deployed in domestic land, sea and air spaces, as well as overseas. Core capabilities are designed to meet these demands. They are themselves composed of a few critical, basic elements including people; combat ships and aircraft; combat units of various types; long range air and sea transportation units; communications and surveillance assets; support resources and units; and training establishments. Although the balance between these elements and their technical composition may vary over time, it is unlikely that the CF could meet future domestic or foreign missions without them. Today, these capabilities cannot be sustained, and they must be reinvented as they age. Furthermore, there are few national industries or international agreements to sustain these capabilities. The alternative future would ensure that core capabilities are continuously renewed, either by national industries or through standing contracts with foreign suppliers.

Making the Sharp End Sharper. Many people, in good faith but with little practical experience, when asked how they might 'fix' defence policy at no cost, often suggest ways to cut core operational capabilities. "Get rid of the tanks" is a typical response. But if the defence problem is a shortfall in core capabilities, how then can it be solved by cutting into them?

Determining the true cost of the CF is a challenge. The 2002/03 Main Estimates indicate that about 44 percent of the defence budget goes to those who are charged with generating sea, land and air capabilities. From another perspective, about half of the defence budget is spent on military capability related to operations, and the remainder on various managerial activities. Researchers note, for example, that even though the Canadian Forces has been reduced by 50 percent over the last 40 years, overhead (measured as the increase in supervisory groups) has increased in the same time period by 300 percent. This despite repeated staff efforts and government orders to prevent it.⁹ If a significant portion of

these managerial funds could be transferred to force generation and operational accounts, then a corresponding portion of the annual \$5 billion shortfall identified in the Queen's University study might be found from within the current defence budget.

Rather than cutting into core military capabilities, the better alternative is to decide that, henceforth, creating and sustaining these core capabilities effectively and economically at the expense of managerial activities will be at the centre of defence policy. This goal would require a huge redistribution of the resources allocated to national defence and the Canadian Forces, and a re-ordering of attitudes as well. In a word, policy must be geared to reallocation, a process aimed at getting the optimum core capability from each defence dollar. No one should assume, however, that this process might turn away the gathering crisis, because, even in the best of circumstances, it might take many years before this reallocation is fully effective.

Defence Funding Reform. National defence ought to be allocated funding that is commensurate with the demands of policy. Meeting this objective will require careful assessment of those policy demands before policies are announced. In other words, future White Papers on national defence might include two main sections: one to define defence objectives in terms of military capabilities and missions, and another to provide, in detail, cost projections indicating how those objectives would be met.

An alternative future might see defence funds voted upon in two distinct segments. The first would cover personnel and O&M costs with built-in 'threshold funds' to provide for unexpected expenditures during any fiscal year. These might be caused, for example, by unforecasted deployments and support to the provinces. Historically, defence has been able to absorb incremental costs — net of revenues — in the order of 1.25 percent of annual defence funding. Federal central agencies should anticipate these demands, hold a special defence and security fund to meet them, and make arrangements to distribute them without the usual bureaucratic hassle.

The second distinct segment of defence allocations should go to the capital account. The establishment of individual capital accounts for specific core capabilities would greatly assist in smoothing out annual resource demands. Under this funding mechanism, an ongoing level of investment would be allocated to the capital account. During years where funding requirements are low, funds would accumulate and then be spent during peak expenditure years. Such capital accounts would benefit ongoing funding for a capability that could be drawn upon when needed.

This policy idea would require an annual funding allocation to each core capability that would accumulate in that specific account to sustain it and its critical elements, as required. Capital accounts could be established for major weapons systems such as naval surface combatants, air force long-range patrol aircraft and army combat vehicle fleets. These specific capital accounts would be, to some extent, a reallocation of funding from other, lesser capital priorities, unless incremental funding were allocated for this purpose from the central agencies. Nevertheless, if the capabilities were established

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DND Photo IVD2003-083 by Sergeant David Smashall



A CH-149 Search and Rescue Cormorant helicopter from 442 Squadron in Comox, British Columbia participating in a demonstration in Vancouver, 10 May 2003

as organizational priorities, then their funding would seem assured. Specific capital accounts also provide governments the flexibility to direct funds to enhance particular defence capabilities during periods of budgetary surplus.

The aim of these alternative policies is to ensure that the CDS and officials are not forced to raid the capital account to pay overhead. It is also aimed, not too subtly, at preventing any officer or official — even the Minister of National Defence — from arbitrarily shifting funds within the general pot of defence money. Achieving this end, however, demands careful, policy-oriented auditing of the fund. The most appropriate body for this purpose is Parliament or, more specifically, a standing committee of the House of Commons charged with oversight of both the defence capital program and that segment of the defence fund that is allocated to the capital account.

DEFENCE REVIEW 2004

The fundamentals of Canada's national defence policy, set in 1994, are not sound in 2004. Military capabilities are eroding quickly from age, use and obsolescence, among other factors. The effect of this decay, now obvious in the CF, will soon become as obvious in foreign policy and may have a serious negative influence on Canada's ability to protect its national sovereignty. Members of the CF are on near-continuous duty in dangerous circumstances, and, in too many cases, they are being asked to "do more with less". Facilities to train replacement personnel are overloaded and under stress, as are the instructors who are double-tasked to serve in operational units and to instruct new recruits.

The story of the travails of the present CF may not be new, but what is increasingly evident is that the future force intended to replace it may be in even worse condition. The lack of follow-on equipment is a serious impediment to policy goals,

but the disappearance of an entire cohort of younger personnel meant to provide leaders for the future is of an even more immediate concern. The problems of the present force can, perhaps, be managed for a few more years through emergency funding, the use of reserve forces, expensive maintenance on 'clapped out, operational junk', and a reliance on the skill and dedication of members of the CF.

The future force, however, cannot be plucked out of thin air — and thinner budgets. Even if the government were to grasp the problem and provide unlimited funds, it might not be possible to save some capabilities, simply because new equipment is not immediately available. In every case, time will be needed to acquire military assets, to recruit and train new people, and to weld these two elements into usable military capabilities. In the mean-

time, the government will have to find ways to manage its national security, defence, and foreign policies with few credible military means.

The promised national defence policy review is clearly underway, if not yet in the public domain. If experience is a true guide, then the new review might soon take off in many directions and become scattered among numerous defence issues. This harmful effect can only be averted if the Prime Minister himself takes control of the process (as Pierre Trudeau did during the 1968-70 review) and points it in a specific direction.

The defence policy review should not begin on a blank piece of paper. Parliamentary studies, particularly those prepared by the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs (SCONDVA) and by the Senate Committee on National Security and Defence, other studies prepared by non-governmental organizations such as the Conference of Defence Associations, and internal reports of the Department of National Defence, provide a rich cache of information and opinion on the defence issues of the day. A careful assessment of these documents, and conversations with their authors, ought to be the first business of any defence review.

The range of defence policy options open to the next government is perhaps more limited than some might suspect. It is unlikely that a review would recommend, for instance, that Canada withdraw from its traditional alliances or, on the other hand, throw itself completely into the grasp of the United States or the United Nations. Defence reviews that begin with the assumption that all options are open inevitably produce a set of very general recommendations that prove to be of little practical use to defence ministers and senior defence planners. The defence review must concentrate on the gathering crisis of the future force and the serious consequences this crisis will have on Canada-United States relations, as well as on foreign policy generally.

The review, therefore, should have two immediate objectives. First, it ought to provide advice to the government on how Canada can manage domestic and foreign policy with ever decreasing military capabilities. The review committee might recommend ways in which present force capabilities can be stretched and preserved until replacements come on line.

Second, the committee must construct a future force defence program which would, first of all, identify high-priority projects and their costs. It should also suggest ways of reforming the acquisition system to provide a speedy recovery of failing capabilities. In addition, it should initiate a full review of CF personnel policies aimed at bringing them into line with current realities. And, finally, it should outline a Parliamentary process for overseeing the recovery of armed forces capabilities over the long term.

The chief recommendation for members of the 2004 defence policy review is that they begin with a sound agenda. The review committee must first illustrate to the government and the public the very serious nature of the future force crisis — expanding on existing research through the advantages the committee will have in staff and access to classified information from government sources. Second, the committee must deliver to the government specific findings concerning the life expectancy of core capabilities, and major components within those capabilities. This section of the committee's report must include recommendations on how the government might rectify or forestall the most serious deficiencies, at least temporarily. Finally, and crucial to the review process if it is to have any relevance at all, the committee must make recommendations to guide the government out of the precipitous decline in military capabilities it is now facing.



Canadian Forces Combat Camera photo. IS2003-2332aby Master Corporal Frank Hudec

Clearance divers from Fleet Diving Unit Pacific, embarked on HMCS *Regina*, preparing demolition charges to destroy a simulated mine during operations in the Gulf of Oman, 15 April 2003.

This type of targeted defence review is without question of utmost importance, and it is the only sure way to inform the government and the public about the seriousness of the defects in defence policy. The degree to which the Prime Minister personally directs this review and supervises the recovery of military capabilities will signal to Canadians, the federal bureaucracy, and Canada's allies that the country is back in the game. A widespread review that is merely a device for avoiding hard choices or evading the crisis at hand will provide a clear signal that Canada is withdrawing willy-nilly from its national and international responsibilities. If the future force is allowed to fall further into disrepair, then Canada cannot help but become the first major nation to disarm itself. The government's new defence policy ought to be directed towards saving Canada from this preventable outcome.

These are very demanding and difficult assignments. If they are to be met, they require the earnest dedication of a committee of the best civilian and military talent in the country. The arrival of a new government in Ottawa, whose leader has already announced that he will convene some form of defence policy review aimed at improving Canada's national defence capabilities, provides an opportunity that must not be squandered. It would be a great waste if the review committee and the process turned its sights and attention to the wrong objectives. The inadequacy of policies to sustain and continually reconstitute Canada's armed forces is the source of the gathering crisis in national security, defence, and foreign policy. If the crisis of the future force is not resolved within the next few years, then Canada will be truly disarmed, and the consequences of that fact may be too stressful for the nation to bear in an increasingly dangerous and interconnected world.



NOTES

This article was prepared in part from the publication *Canada Without Armed Forces?*, edited by Douglas L. Bland, The Claxton Papers, No. 4, Kingston: School of Policy Studies, Queen's University, 2003.

1. See for example, Douglas L. Bland, "Controlling the Defence Policy Process in Canada: White Papers on Defence and Bureaucratic Politics in the Department of National Defence," *Defence Analysis*, Vol., 5, No. 1, 1989, pp. 3-17.
2. "Technical obsolescence" refers to the decline in a capability or machine caused not by age or the failure of mechanical parts, but by the fact that its has been superseded by new technology or concepts.
3. Douglas L. Bland, ed., *Canada Without Armed Forces?*, The Claxton Papers, No. 4, (Kingston: School of Policy Studies, Queen's University, 2003).
4. The term "actionable" literally means "giving cause for legal action." Here the term is adapted (from William Jenkins) to mean making "a set of interrelated decision ... concerning goals and means ... [which] should, in principle be within the power of [officers and officials] to achieve."
5. Canada, DND, "Speaking notes for the Minister of National Defence to the Toronto Board of Trade", (Toronto, Ontario, 25 October 2003).
6. See Douglas L. Bland and Sean Maloney, *Campaigns for International Security*, (Kingston: McGill-Queen's Press, forthcoming, January 2004.)
7. Canada, Senate of Canada, *Report of the Special Joint Committee on Canada's Defence Policy: Security In a changing World*, Ottawa, 1994, p.1.
8. Canada, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Deployment of Canadian Forces to Somalia*, (Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services, 1997) Volume 5, pp. 1453-1461.
9. See, for example, Canada, DND, *Report on the Minister's Committee on Administrative Efficiency*, (Ottawa: 2003).