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Northern lights.

RENAISSANCE IN CANADIAN ARCTIC SECURITY?

by Doctor Rob Huebert

Introduction

In the summer of 2002, the Canadian Forces (CF) held their first joint exercise in the Canadian Arctic in over 20 years. Three years later, in August 2005, two Canadian warships entered Hudson Bay for the first time in more than 30 years. The CF are eagerly waiting for the launch of *RadarSat II* in 2006, which will give Canada a first-ever capability of knowing what surface vessels are in Canadian northern waters. Additionally, the Canadian government has acknowledged the need for better Arctic security in its recently released *International Policy Statement for Defence and Foreign Affairs*. Further fuelling this renaissance in Canadian Arctic security has been interest generated by the national media over several issues involving Canadian Arctic sovereignty and security, such as the dispute with Denmark over Hans Island. All of this has suggested that Canada is rediscovering the need to improve its ability to defend the north.

The security of the Canadian north has been a perpetual problem for Canadian policy-makers and for the Canadian military. The challenges of operating over the vast distances of the north, combined with the complex nature of security threats in the face of the extreme weather conditions, have created a security requirement that often

appears insurmountable. As such, it frequently seems that Canadian political leaders and defence planners have preferred to ignore these challenges in the hope that nothing will happen. When decisions have been made, they usually have been in response to the specific actions of one of Canada's northern neighbours, such as the United States or the Former Soviet Union (FSU). Furthermore, even when the Government of Canada has decided to act, it has generally proven unwilling to commit the resources required to meet the needs of those decisions.

However, despite its weak past record, there are signs that the Canadian government and the Canadian Forces are now beginning to take the security of the Arctic seriously. In order to understand what the Canadian government is now doing, the following questions need to be answered: What is the history of Canadian Arctic security? How well has Canada met its needs to protect its Arctic region? Is Canada improving the manner in which it provides for its Arctic security? If so, why is this the case, and is this effort likely to be sustained?

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The Canadian north, a polar view.

Historical Background

There is little known about Arctic security issues before the arrival of the Europeans, although there are some suggestions that there may have been some low level conflict between the Inuit and Dene peoples. Likewise, there are limited observations of some conflict between the Inuit and early European explorers, such as Martin Frobisher and Henry Hudson.¹

The modern record of Canadian Arctic security began with the Japanese attack on the American naval base at Pearl Harbor in 1941. Following their failure to catch and sink the American aircraft carriers stationed there, the Japanese tried again to engage the American fleet during the early summer of 1942. Their strategy at the Battle of Midway was to capture that American island, thereby forcing the Americans to respond with their numerically smaller carrier force. The Japanese then hoped to overwhelm and sink the American carrier fleet in battle. In order to confuse the Americans, they also launched a diversionary attack on the Aleutian Islands of Attu, Agattu and Kiska. While the Japanese were decisively defeated at Midway, their attacks on the Aleutian Islands were successful. They held these

islands until they were defeated by a joint American-Canadian invasion of the archipelago during the summer of 1943.² At the time of the Japanese occupation, both the American and Canadian governments feared that the Japanese might use the islands as a staging point for further advances into North America. The decision was then made to construct a highway that would connect the existing North American road system with Alaska. This would permit the transfer of personnel, ammunition and other goods to defend against any further Japanese advances. The highway was to begin at Dawson Creek, British Columbia and stretch all the way to Fairbanks, Alaska, a distance of 2288 kilometres.³ Started in March 1942, it was duly completed eight months later.⁴

In many ways, construction of the Alaska Highway set the stage for future Canadian security operations in the region. Canada contributed the bulk of the territory over which the road was constructed (1964 kilometres in Canada, versus 324 kilometres in Alaska), but the majority of the personnel building the highway were American, and it was also primarily paid for by the Americans. No surprise, then, that it was named the Alaska Highway, and not the Yukon or Northern Canadian Highway.

When the Second World War ended, the Soviet threat quickly replaced that of the Japanese in the Canadian north. As the Soviets acquired nuclear weapons, then long-range bombers, and then ballistic missiles, the Canadian Arctic became one of the Cold War's main areas of interest. While there was little fear of a Soviet ground invasion, the polar route became the direct means of attack on North American cities for the Soviet bomber and strategic missile forces. In order to defend against a bomber attack or to deter a missile attack, the Governments of Canada and the United States entered into a number of agreements that provided for the surveillance and protection of North America's aerospace. These included the construction of the Distant Early Warning (DEW) Line of radar sites, and the establishment of North American Air Defence Command (NORAD), later to become North American Aerospace Defence Command. The DEW Line was erected across the entire northernmost land boundary of North America, commencing in western Alaska, and stretching completely across northern Canada, ending at Greenland. It was augmented by other radar warning tiers in the ensuing years, modernized in Canada in 1985, and is now known as the North Warning System. In May 1958, Canada and the United States agreed to the establishment of NORAD. This bi-lateral union established the joint command that provides for the surveillance and bi-national control of North American airspace. It remains in force as one of the key security arrangements between our two nations.

In the case of both the DEW line and NORAD, Canada and the United States have acted as political equals. However, the United States has provided the bulk of the financing and technology required for construction and maintenance. Nevertheless, the general consensus is that both entities have served Canadian northern security requirements well. There were inevitably some minor disputes during their development, but no significant difficulties arose regarding their ultimate impact upon Canadian-American security requirements.⁵ The fact that a state of deterrence was maintained between the Warsaw Pact countries and NATO throughout the entire Cold War period can be attributed partly to the success of both the DEW Line and NORAD.

However, when examining Canada's actions in defending its northern security without American assistance, it becomes apparent that the Canadian government has historically preferred to minimize its presence. The largest force maintained in this region is the Rangers. This is a volunteer militia force, whose purpose is

“The security of the Canadian north has been a perpetual problem for Canadian policymakers and for the Canadian military.”

to protect Canadian Arctic sovereignty through its presence, and also to provide a means of surveillance. These units are primarily made up of northern Canadian Aboriginal peoples, who bring with them their outstanding skills in navigating and surviving in the north. However, these forces are not heavily armed, and they have not been employed on patrols very far from their home communities until recently.⁶

Further, the permanent deployment of members of the Regular Forces in the north has been historically small, and, from the 1970s onward, normally has not exceeded 500 personnel stationed there at any given time. This includes both the electronic listening post in Alert, and Northern Area Command Headquarters in Yellowknife.⁷ The Canadian Forces did engage in large-scale northern exercises throughout the 1960s and 1970s, but these declined in importance and size towards the end of the 1980s with the end of the Cold War.

Likewise, the roles of both the air force and the navy generally decreased as the Cold War progressed. The navy did not possess an icebreaker until 1954. However, it quickly made the decision to transfer the craft to the coast guard. The navy was then reduced to sending an occasional warship into the Arctic during the short open water period in the summer. However, these deployments ceased in 1989. When the USSR developed its nuclear powered submarine force and began to deploy these vessels into Arctic waters, there was no tangible effort by the Canadian government to meet this threat. Periodically, the Government toyed with the idea of



The sheer size of Canada's north is readily apparent in this Central Europe overlay.



DND photo 8544

The logistics involved in Canada's North is a challenge. Snowmobiles are the transport of choice for northern operations, but this 440 Squadron CC-138 *Twin Otter* provides yeoman support as well.

costs, the nuclear submarine acquisition program was abandoned, just as a design decision was about to be made.

The air force presence, and its concomitant ability to operate in the north, had also been continually pared back throughout the 1970s and 1980s. At present, 440 (Transport) Squadron is the only *permanently* based air asset, comprised of four de Havilland CC-138 *Twin Otters*. These aircraft were built in the 1960s and 1970s, and they are only now being given serious consideration for replacement. There are also four designated Forward Operating Locations (FOLs), constructed at Inuvik, Iqaluit, Yellowknife and Rankin Inlet to accommodate Canadian and NORAD fighters, but they are seldom operationally activated. With the exception of the *Twin Otters*, there are no other Search and Rescue (SAR) aircraft or helicopters permanently stationed in the north. The northern sovereignty overflights of the region by long-range patrol aircraft (first the Canadair *Argus*, later the CP-140 *Aurora*) reached a high of 22 flights per year in 1990. However, in keeping with the perceived threat reduction, they were then decreased drastically in frequency, such that, by 1995, only one or two flights a year were being conducted.¹⁰

The ability of the Canadian armed forces to respond to security threats in the north has never been very significant. At its zenith, the Canadian military cooperated with that of the United States to honour, first, the Japanese threat, then, the Soviet threat. However, there was little effort to develop a Canadian ability to act on its own, and there are several reasons for this. First, the costs associated with any independent effort have always been formidable. During the 1950s, Canada might have had the resources to build up its northern military capabilities, but that would have come at a cost to its other defence capabilities. Since the Americans were willing to pay for the vast majority of the costs, there seemed little reason to spend more Canadian funds on defence of the region. Second, the threats posed by the Japanese, then the Soviets, to the north, were always overshadowed by other elements of the overall security threat at the time. Thus, the war in Europe completely dominated the focus of Canadian decision-makers as the Japanese moved into Alaska. The strategic assessment (a correct one) was that the German military threat was the most dangerous to Canada. Likewise, during the 1950s and 1960s, the action of the Soviets in Europe and Asia tended to divert attention from the growing Soviet aerospace and maritime threats to the Canadian Arctic. Third, the threat perception of the time was shared by the United States. With their much more significant military capabilities, they were in a better position to provide the necessary resources to ensure that North America's northern security needs were met. Thus, Canada

purchasing nuclear powered submarines. In 1965, the possibility was raised of buying a small number of American *Skipjack*-class submarines, but this initiative was soon dropped.⁸ The most serious consideration was generated in the mid-1980s, when the government stated in its *1987 White Paper* its intention to buy/build up to 12 nuclear-powered submarines.⁹ This would have given our navy the ability to go anywhere in Canadian Arctic waters, with the concomitant ability to deter Soviet submarines from entering those waters. Canadian nuclear powered submarines also would have forced Allied navies to establish an underwater management scheme when operating in Canadian waters, in order to avoid collision. Thus, Canada would have gained an excellent picture of all submarine activity in its Arctic waters. However, due to the ending of the Cold War and the associated

was willing to entrust the North American undersea Arctic security entirely to the United States Navy (USN). Fourth, once the Alaska Highway, the DEW Line and NORAD were established, the Canadian decision-makers tended to believe that there was little more that needed doing, and they felt free to focus on other needs. Finally, and perhaps most significantly, the Canadian security needs in the Arctic since the 1970s have become increasingly dominated by a false dilemma generated by sovereignty and security issues.

The Arctic Sovereignty/Security False Dichotomy

Much of the debate with respect to Canadian Arctic security has tended to conceptualize the issues surrounding sovereignty and security as an “either/or” proposition, suggesting that policies directed at protecting Canadian security have come at a cost to its sovereignty, and vice versa. This is predicated upon the assumption, first articulated during the Cold War era, that the security threat was posed by the USSR, while a sovereignty threat existed from the United States. Thus, the implication was that to work with the United States towards protecting Canadian Arctic security meant that some sovereignty over the north would have to be surrendered to the United States. Conversely, if Canada made efforts to protect its Arctic sovereignty against the Americans, it would come at the cost of cooperating with them in preparation of a defence against possible Soviet aggression.

The reality is that the two are not mutually exclusive concepts, but are different terms for the same requirement – regional *control*. While there have been extensive discussions as to the meaning of sovereignty, in effect it is all about the ability of a state to be able to make and enforce laws and regulations within a given geographic area. A state makes and enforces these laws and regulations for the well-being, prosperity and security of its citizens. In the case of the Arctic, Canada has historically wanted the right to make and enforce the rules and regulations governing all its Arctic regions – land, water and ice – in order to offer its citizens security from outside threats. However, to do so is expensive. Due to the willingness of the United States in the past to provide the bulk of the funding required to defend the security of North America’s Arctic region against the threats of Japan and then the USSR, Canadian policy-makers have not been forced to deal unilaterally with the security threat in the north. At the same time, the very public disputes with the United States regarding Canadian Arctic sovereignty in 1969/70 (the *Manhattan* crisis) and 1985 (the *Polar Sea* crisis) have created the illusion that, somehow, there is a fundamental difference between Canadian *sovereignty* requirements and *security* requirements. This has been true only because Canada has not been willing to provide adequate resources to establish control.

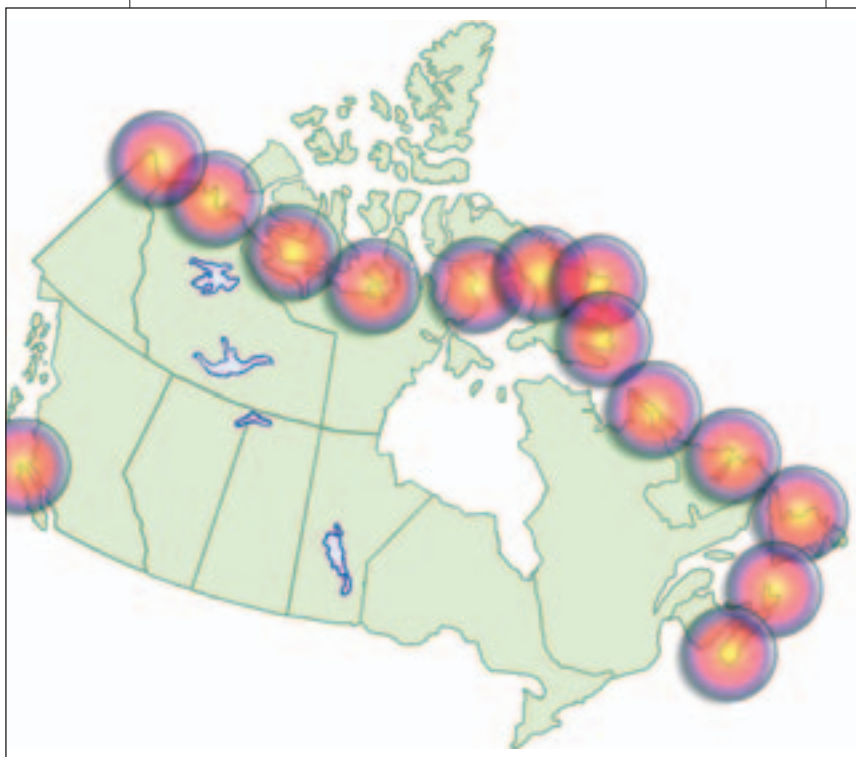
The End of the Cold War

With the end of the Cold War, almost all activities that the Canadian Department of National Defence (DND) conducted in the north were either stopped or substantially reduced. The predominating view was that the danger to the north was now over and nothing more needed to be done.

The Canadian Navy ceased its northern deployments (NORPLOYS) in 1989. It had been sending from one to three of its vessels into the eastern Arctic since 1971. Initially, Canadian destroyers and replenishment vessels were deployed, but by 1986, only smaller support or ancillary vessels were being sent.

The Canadian Forces also had the opportunity to purchase, from the United States, underwater listening devices for use in the Arctic. Consideration was given to buying three units that would allow for a complete coverage of the choke points leading into the Canadian Arctic Archipelago. While a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was reached to allow Canada access to this very advanced technology, the Canadian Government ultimately decided that the expected cost of C\$100 million was too expensive. Declassified documents suggest that the decision not to proceed was made during the early 1990s. Had the system been deployed, Canada would have had its first *independent* means of knowing if foreign submarines were entering Canadian Arctic waters.

The Canadian Air Force also cut back on its northern commitments. Throughout the 1990s, 440 Squadron continued to use the *Twin Otter* light transports in-theatre,



The long range radars of the NORAD North Warning System (NWS).



Sea ice.

with no replacement decision for these aging aircraft on the horizon. The CP-140 *Auroras* and the three CP-140A *Arcturus* aircraft had their northern sovereignty overflights (NORPATS) reduced, from a high of 22 sorties in 1990, to just one in 1995. After 1995, seldom more than one or two northern sovereignty flights per year were generated. Likewise, Canadian CF-18 *Hornets* were rarely exercised at the four Forward Operating Locations.

The DEW Line was modernized into the North Warning System, starting in the mid-1980s. This included an updating of some of the radar systems, but a large-scale reduction of personnel manning the systems was made possible through the automation of many of the smaller sites. However, as the 1990s progressed, less attention was given to maintaining these systems. Concurrently, the Canadian post at Alert was modernized, allowing for a decrease in personnel from over 200 to about 75 all ranks.¹¹

The one area of Arctic security that was increased in the immediate post-Cold War period was that pertaining to the Rangers. The overall number of Ranger patrols was increased, from 25 in the 1980s to 58 by 2000. However, funding limitations allowed for only 30 of the 58 Ranger units to actually perform sovereignty patrols in 2000.

It is clear that the Arctic simply ceased being an area of significant concern for Canadian security during the 1990s. Indeed, when the Government did give any consideration to the role of the Canadian north in the emerging new international system, it was in the context of new multi-lateral institutions, the most important of which was the Arctic Council. While this Council has done important work in the determination of environmental and social threats facing the Arctic, its founding document specifically forbids it

“In 1965, the possibility was raised of buying a small number of American Skipjack-class submarines, but this initiative was soon dropped.”

from addressing security related issues. This clause was inserted at the insistence of American officials, who still considered their Arctic security to be of a high priority, and did not want an international organization limiting their freedom of action in the region.¹²

The 1990s were a time of substantial cuts for the Canadian Forces, with both personnel and budgets being substantially reduced as a result of the end of the Cold War. This required the Canadian Forces to make hard decisions that ultimately reflected its core priorities. It became clear that Arctic security was not a high priority. However, during the last decade of the 20th Century, a limited renewed interest began to develop.

The Beginning of a Canadian Arctic Security Renaissance?

It was not until the end of the 1990s that the Canadian government began to reconsider its neglect of the security of the Canadian Arctic. A new policy framework addressing the needs of Canada originated from a relatively small number of officials who had become alarmed by Canadian inaction. To a large degree, this was the result of initiatives taken by select government officials, particularly, by members of the Canadian Forces. Much of the initial recasting of Canadian Arctic security commenced at an organization known as the Arctic Security Interdepartmental Working Group.

Arctic Security Interdepartmental Working Group (ASIWG)

The Arctic Security Interdepartmental Working Group has become one of the most important instruments available to the Canadian government to examine and coordinate Canadian Arctic security policy. Created in the spring of 1999, it is a bi-annual forum at which Canadian federal and territorial government officials meet to discuss and coordinate activities relating to Canadian Arctic security. Its membership includes academics and representatives of various northern Aboriginal groups in meetings that are held on a rotating basis among the three territorial governments. The ASIWG allows for each department to educate the other members about security issues that they have experienced. In this manner, it has also proved beneficial in providing for the coordination of policy and planning activities.

A first-time meeting at Yellowknife in May 1999 was attended by officials from the Canadian Forces, the RCMP, Coast Guard, Revenue Canada, Citizenship and Immigration, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) and Foreign Affairs and International Trade. In his opening comments, Colonel Pierre Leblanc, then the Commander of the Canadian Forces Northern Area (CFNA), explained his rationale for hosting this symposium.

As you may have realized, the geo-strategic situation of the Arctic has changed significantly over the last 5 to 10 years, and it appears that the pace of change is on the increase...

As many of us here will know, most departments, and airlines judging from the seat sales, think of Canada in a very linear way from St. John's to Victoria. Too often the north is forgotten or not given the prominence that it should have.

The North is a vast and beautiful part of our country. It contains enormous natural resources but it is also a very fragile ecosystem. It behoves all of us to look after it properly. Ultimately that is the aim of this symposium: to provide a better coverage of northern Canada from a security point of view.¹³

Following a series of presentations on potential threats and challenges to Canadian Arctic security, including issues surrounding sovereignty, the impacts of global warming, and control of natural resources, it was decided that these meetings had tremendous utility, and that there was a need to hold them on an ongoing basis. By the time the third meeting was held in Iqaluit in October 2000, the membership had expanded to include federal officials from Natural Resource Canada, Environment Canada, Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Transport Canada and Health Canada. Officials from the territorial governments of the Yukon, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut were also by then in regular attendance. By 2005, ASIWG membership has become so large that organizers are beginning to think it is necessary to contain its size.

The strength of ASIWG has also been demonstrated by the continued strong support that the three succeeding commanders of Canadian Forces Northern Area have given the working group. And while space does not allow for a comprehensive examination of the issues that have been covered by this body, they have included problems associated with organized crime and the diamond industry, the security of oil and gas pipelines, security issues associated with a receding ice cover of the Arctic waters, and the spread of pandemic diseases.

These meetings have had three major impacts on the renaissance of Canadian Arctic security policy. First, they have provided a means of developing relationships among the Group's membership. Many of the officials were previously unaware of their colleagues' activities and concerns. Second, the meetings have provided a way to improve coordination between these same officials. CFNA has used ASIWG to coordinate exercises with other departments. When DND re-introduced joint northern exercises (such as the *Operation Narwhal* series), it was able to include the RCMP, the Coast Guard, and the Canadian

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Space Agency. While such coordination might have occurred in the absence of ASWIG, it was at the regular meetings that the invitation for the other departments to join was made. The ASIWG model of interdepartmental cooperation at multiple levels of government pre-dated the current efforts of the Canadian government to coordinate its security policy. The events of 9/11 caused a major re-thinking as to how North American governments provided for the security of their citizens. One major “new”

initiative has been the creation of numerous interdepartmental security working groups. However, since ASIWG was created in the fall of 1999, preceding them all, it is not surprising that many of the officials involved with ASIWG in its early days now find themselves playing important roles within these new security bodies. Even the territorial governments have used ASIWG as a means of coordinating their own security and sovereignty policies. Territorial officials attending ASIWG sessions soon began working together to develop their own joint territorial policy paper on Canadian Arctic sovereignty and security.¹⁴

The meetings have also given departments the opportunities to discuss and debate policy differences amongst themselves. Even though ASIWG meetings are not classified, officials tend to be frank and open in the defence and criticism of their own policies. For example, a recurring point of debate surrounds the northern vessel reporting system (NORDREG). Currently, foreign vessels operating in Canadian Arctic waters are not required to report their presence. There are some departments that have defended this policy, while others have pushed for NORDREG to be made a mandatory system. This debate has forced the departments involved to consider their positions carefully.

A third benefit of the meetings is that they have provided an open forum for member education. Presentations by experts from academia, business, foreign countries, NGOs, and other government departments dealing with new and emerging threats, as well as security challenges in the north, are frequent. In this manner, all members have an opportunity to discuss and debate the issues as they are put forward, and the membership is becoming increasingly sophisticated about the threats posed by climate change, the resource industry, and so on.

Beyond its direct benefits, ASIWG has also provided the successive commanders of CFNA with a forum from which to advance the case on the need to improve Canadian Arctic security to the senior leadership of DND. Their efforts have resulted in several important initiatives. The first was the Arctic Capabilities Study (ACS),¹⁵ and the second was the re-commencement of joint Canadian Forces exercises in the north.

Arctic Capabilities Study

The aim of the ACS was “to provide information, analysis and recommendations with regard to the need for and the feasibility of an increased CF presence in and surveillance of the Arctic region.”¹⁶ The downstream ACS Report stated that it was undertaken on the assumption that the strategic situation in the Arctic was changing. It went on to acknowledge the role played by Colonel Leblanc, as the Commander CFNA, in making the argument with respect to that changing Arctic security environment:

With the passing of the Cold War, the nature of security issues is evolving, with an increasing focus on environmental, social and economic aspects. In the Arctic region, these issues are assuming growing importance. In the coming decades, environmental protection, climate change leading to potential increases in shipping, increases of air transport activities as well as concerns regarding trans-national criminal activity are but a few of the new challenges the CF may be called upon to assist in confronting in Canada’s Arctic regions.

Commander CFNA argued that these evolving issues rendered the North increasingly vulnerable to asymmetric challenges at a time when the CF is reducing its activities in the region. Consequently, the Deputy Minister requested a study to determine whether increased CF efforts in the North are warranted and to assess achievability in the near term.¹⁷

The ACS Report was divided into four sections. Part 1 provided an overview of DND Arctic policy, Part 2 reviewed the activities of other departments with respect to Arctic security, Part 3 reviewed general DND activities in the Arctic, and Part 4 examined options for increasing DND/CF capabilities in the Arctic.

Part 1 posited that there was only limited mention of the Canadian north in the main federal security policy documents. The *1994 White Paper* makes only one direct reference to Arctic security, when it states that the Canadian Forces will be capable of “...mounting effective responses to emerging situations in our maritime areas of jurisdiction, our airspace, or within our territory, *including the North*. [italics added].”¹⁸ Furthermore, Part 3 – the review of DND actions and capabilities in the north – found that, “...CF activities in the North have decreased over the years and our ability to monitor activity and to respond in an appropriate manner remains limited. This shortcoming is likely to become more significant as activity in the Arctic increases.”¹⁹

Thus, the ACS acknowledges the weakened capability of the Department of National Defence to provide for Canadian Arctic security. The report then went on to make the following short/medium and long-term recommendations.

Short/Medium Term Recommendations

- 1) Strengthen inter-departmental cooperation through:
 - i) continued DND participation in ASIWG;
 - ii) participation in the inter-departmental group in Privy Council/Intelligence Assessment Secretariat with the view to producing an Arctic intelligence assessment;²⁰
 - iii) continued participation of DND in the northern science and technology committee; and
 - iv) continued exchange of information with other government departments.
- 2) Enhance the connectivity of CFNA to relevant DND/CF operations and intelligence systems.
- 3) Enhance the analysis and planning capabilities of CFNA.
- 4) Increase Ranger capabilities and activity levels.
- 5) Exercise the northern reaction capabilities of the land forces.
- 6) Assess options for providing CFNA with necessary levels of air support.

Long Term Recommendations

- 1) Include the Arctic dimension in the development of future Canadian Forces planning frameworks.
- 2) Include the northern requirement in development of an enhanced global deployability for the Canadian Forces.²¹

The Report also provided a review of options to improve the ability to provide better surveillance of the north. These included the use of space-based sensors, high altitude, long endurance unmanned aerial vehicles, high frequency surface wave radar, and the establishment of a joint maritime intelligence system, based upon networked surface surveillance capability, as well as a remotely deployable undersea detection capability.²²

In total, the Report represents an excellent summary of Canadian efforts to provide for Arctic security up to the year 2000. It also found that while there were signs of developing threats, those threats remained vague.

While the Report called for improved utilization of the Canadian land and air forces in the north, the commanders of CFNA have actually been successful in initiating a new series of large-scale joint exercises involving the land (including Rangers), maritime and air forces, known as *Operation Narwhal*. There have been two such exercises, in 2002 and 2004, and planning is now

underway for the third iteration. There has also been an additional exercise centred upon a Canadian Forces return to Hudson Bay, entitled *Operation Hudson Sentinel*.

Operations Narwhal and Hudson Sentinel

In August 2002, *Narwhal I* focused upon the deployment of two Canadian Maritime Coastal Defence Vessels (MCDVs), sent to the eastern arctic to exercise with land and air units of the Canadian Forces. This was the first time that the navy had deployed a warship of *any size* or class to the region since 1989, and *the first time such a large joint exercise was held in the north since the end of the 1970s*. Two years later, in August 2004, an even larger exercise (*Narwhal II*) was held in the Pangnirtung region. This time, a Canadian frigate, HMCS *Montreal*, was utilized, along with other land and air elements, including the Rangers. It was the first time since the 1982 deployment of HMCS *Saguenay* that a Canadian destroyer or frigate had sailed into Canadian Arctic waters. The Canadian Coast Guard and the RCMP also participated in the exercise. In 2007, *Narwhal III* will be held in the Tuktoyaktuk/McKenzie Delta area, marking the first time that Canadian Forces have jointly exercised in the western Arctic region.

In the summer of 2005, two Canadian MCDVs, HMCS *Glace Bay* and HMCS *Shawinigan*, circumnavigated Hudson Bay in an operation entitled *Hudson Sentinel*.²³ The last time that any Canadian warship had sailed these waters was 1975, when HMCS *Protecteur* deployed there. At the same time that the MCDV vessels were in Hudson Bay, the frigate HMCS *Fredericton* was engaged in a northern fishery patrol off the east coast of Baffin Island. Thus, there has been a renewed effort on the part of the Canadian Forces to re-acquire the skills necessary to operate in the north. However, as significant as these new efforts are, they are occurring only in the most benign environmental conditions. There has not yet been any effort to conduct large-scale exercises during the winter months, with the exception of several expanded Ranger patrols. The Canadian Forces are re-discovering that operating in the Canadian north is just as challenging as deployments to regions such as Afghanistan or East Timor, possibly even more so.

Canada's International Policy Statement (IPS)

Perhaps the clearest indication that the senior political and military leaders of Canada have come to accept the need for a re-examination of Canadian Arctic security can be found in the *International Policy Statement (IPS)*. Released in the spring of 2005, this document brought together Canadian foreign, defence, international aid and international trade policy into one package. In the overview document,

“Currently, foreign vessels operating in Canadian Arctic waters are not required to report their presence.”

and in the Defence and Diplomacy sub-documents, the government accepted that it had neglected Canadian Arctic security, and that it now needed to concentrate upon it, due to a number of predicted emerging changes to Canada's North during the next two decades.

In addition to growing economic activity in the Arctic region, the effects of climate change are expected to open up our Arctic waters to commercial traffic by as early as 2015. These developments reinforce the need for Canada to monitor and control events in its sovereign territory, through new funding and tools.²⁴

This theme is brought out even more clearly in the Diplomacy and Defence sub-documents, where the need for Arctic security figures prominently in the sections dealing with the protection of North America. The Defence IPS states: “The demands of sovereignty and security for the Government could become even more pressing as activity in the North continues to rise.”²⁵ Echoing the findings of the ACS Report, the policy acknowledges that these new challenges will not follow the pattern of traditional security threats. But the government will need to respond to these new challenges with the capabilities that only DND can provide.

Although the primary responsibility for dealing with issues such as sovereignty and environmental protection, organized crime, and people and drug smuggling rests with other departments, the Canadian Forces will be affected in a number of ways. There will, for example, be a greater requirement for surveillance and control, as well as for search and rescue. Adversaries could be tempted to take advantage of new opportunities unless we are prepared to deal with asymmetric threats that are staged through the North.²⁶



Canada's four Forward Operating Locations (FOLs), used for fighter sovereignty operations in the far north.

CMJ map by Monica Muller



The majestic stark beauty of Lancaster Sound.

The Defence Paper then makes it clear that there is a need to move beyond mere words, and it lists specific improvements that must be carried out by Canada's maritime, air and land forces. The maritime forces are to "enhance their surveillance of and presence in Canadian areas of maritime jurisdiction, including the near-ice and ice-free waters of the Arctic."²⁷ The air force is to "increase the surveillance and control of Canadian waters and the Arctic with modernized *Aurora* long-range maritime patrol aircraft, unmanned aerial vehicles and satellites."²⁸ Additionally, the air force will need a replacement for the *Twin Otters*, and consideration will be given to basing search and rescue aircraft in a northern location. The land forces have been tasked to improve the communication capabilities of the Rangers, and to increase the commitment to Regular Forces sovereignty patrols.²⁹

The government commitment to improving its Arctic sovereignty and security can also be found in domestic policy initiatives. The most important of these, entitled *Arctic*

Strategy, is currently being led by officials from the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, and it includes various members of the federal government and three territorial governments, most of whom have some association with the ASIWG.³⁰ While it is still being developed, it will have six main goals and objectives. One of these is "Reinforcing Sovereignty, National Security and Circumpolar Cooperation." While it is too soon to know for certain what this policy will contain, it is striking that the *International Policy Statement* and *Arctic Strategy* have both acknowledged the need to re-examine Canadian Arctic security.

Implementation of the New Arctic Security Capabilities

Is the talk by the government on the need to improve Canada's ability to protect its Arctic security serious? Unfortunately, it is difficult to evaluate whether this is just rhetoric, or if the government is serious enough

to allocate resources to meet these newly stated needs. Owing to the very recent release of the main documents, there has not been enough time to witness new spending on the part of the Government. Nevertheless, there are programs that pre-date both the IPS and ACS documents, and they do support the seriousness of the government's intention with respect to improving Canadian Northern security capabilities.

“The Canadian Forces are re-discovering that operating in the Canadian north is just as challenging as deployments to regions such as Afghanistan or East Timor...”

RadarSat II is a Canadian designed and built satellite that uses radar for earth's surveillance. Its Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) allows it to 'see' through cloud and darkness, making it an ideal technology for use over the Arctic.³¹ It will be used, along with other duties, to monitor surface vessels in Arctic waters. The utilization of *RadarSat II* for this specific endeavour is called *Project Epsilon*. Assuming that the satellite can be launched successfully, this will be the first time that Canada will be able to maintain vessel surveillance in its Arctic waters 24 hours a day/seven days a week in almost-real-time terms.³²

Another area where there is intent to improve the Canadian northern capabilities is being demonstrated in the specifications being established for new maritime forces ship construction. Both the proposed Joint Support Vessels, designated to replace the current Auxiliary Oil and Replenishment (AOR) vessels, and the intended replacements for our present destroyers and frigates, are being designed with a capability to operate in limited ice conditions. While this will not mean that these ships will be considered icebreakers, it will give the Canadian Navy the ability to patrol Arctic waters, both earlier and later in the season than is currently the case. But a note of caution needs to be injected in that the decision on the design of either class vessel has not yet been finalized, and so, it is not confirmed that they will actually be given this limited ice capability.

Efforts are now being made to reach a decision on the type of aircraft that will replace the *Twin Otters*. Likewise, the modernization of the CP-140 *Aurora* fleet is continuing, but the three CP-140A *Arcturus* aircraft are in the process of being removed from service. Thus, while the individually remaining long-range aircraft will be more capable, the overall fleet size will be smaller, suggesting that it will become problematic for the government to increase the number of sovereignty overflights that now occur.

While there are optimistic notes within DND, other key departments are not doing as well. Most notable is the continued inability of the Coast Guard to have its ice-breaking fleet re-vitalized. It has one heavy ice-breaker, *Louis St. Laurent* – commissioned in 1969 – and five medium vessels, *Pierre Radisson* (1978), *Sir John Franklin/Amundsen* (1979), *Des Groseilliers* (1982), *Henry Larsen* (1987) and *Terry Fox* (1983).³³ Thus, almost all of them range in age from 36 years to 22 years, with the exception of the 17-year-old *Larsen*. While the Coast Guard has been

attempting to gain Cabinet approval to *begin* examining a new shipbuilding program, there are no indications that any such decision will be *made* in the near future. It is difficult to fathom how the Government can be serious about improving northern security unless it begins to take this *particular* shortcoming much more seriously.

Nevertheless, the government indicated, during the summer of 2005, that it was willing to increase its symbolic actions. The decision of Minister of Defence Bill Graham to send a Ranger patrol to Hans Island, followed by his own visit there, was one of the clearest indications of the government's willingness to engage in strong, possibly provocative, action to protect and promote Canadian northern interests. The visit was meant to send a message to Canadians, and to the international community, that the Canadian government is willing to take Arctic security and sovereignty seriously.³⁴

The Sustainability of the New Arctic Security

Thus, it is clear that the government had become focused on addressing the neglect of Arctic security in the past. The final question that needs to be addressed concerns the willingness of the Government to maintain its resolve, and to spend the resources necessary to provide for the surveillance and protection of the region. This ultimately depends upon the factors that have driven the Government to recognize the need to act, and whether there is the political will to provide the resources that will be required in the long term.

Four factors have led to this renaissance in Canadian Arctic security:

1. The attacks of 11 September 2001 drew attention to the vulnerabilities of North America to terrorism.
2. The impacts of climate change are increasingly seen as leading to the melting of the Arctic, and thereby making it more accessible to foreigners.
3. The demand for natural resources, and, especially, energy sources, pointed to an increased exploration and exploitation of the resources that are found in the Canadian north.
4. A series of widely publicized international incidents has revived the interest of both the Canadian political elite and the general public in defending Canadian Arctic sovereignty and security.

The attacks of 9/11 drastically changed the manner in which North Americans viewed security. They drove home the existence of new threats, replacing the perceived danger posed by the Former Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact. While debate remains as to the nature of the new threats, and the best means of countering them, the attacks made it clear



His to protect and to preserve.

continue to experience the most pronounced changes in the entire world due to climate change. The Arctic Council commissioned a multi-year study that reached an extremely high degree of consensus. *The Arctic Climate Impact Assessment (ACIA)* has made it clear that the Arctic is warming, and that it will continue to warm at an alarming rate.³⁵ For Canada and the other Arctic nations, this means that their Arctic regions will become more accessible as the extreme environmental conditions moderate. However, the specific local effects are not yet clear. While considerable concern has been raised regarding the prospects of international shipping in an increasingly ice-free Northwest Passage, it remains uncertain as to whether international shipping companies may find it more attractive to sail on the Russian side through the Northern Sea Route, or even perhaps over the North Pole itself, rather than sail through the Northwest Passage.³⁶ All of this depends on how the ice melts as climate change warms the region. However, what *is* certain is that the Arctic is physically changing.

The Canadian north has tremendous resource potential. The discovery of diamonds in the Northwest Territories has moved Canada from being a non-producer

that new, dangerous and unexpected security threats do exist. They also drove home the fact that in order for North Americans to remain adequately protected, all its borders must be made secure. While no one is expecting an immediate attack from Inuvik by al Qaeda, potential dangers do exist in the long term. If southern borders are made more secure and the northern ones are not, it stands to reason that the latter constitute a vulnerability. Terrorists could be willing to exploit such shortcomings. For example, it is unsettling to know that there is still no security screening of passengers boarding aircraft in many of the Canadian northern airports outside the territorial capitals. Terrorist attacks have demonstrated that it is necessary to be on guard for these new threats.

The ongoing debate on the impacts of climate change is enormous, and cannot be fully assessed here. However, the most comprehensive review of literature generated by leading international experts makes it clear that the Arctic is already being transformed. Furthermore, the Arctic will

of the gems, to the third largest source behind Botswana and Russia. However, the greatest resource interest remains the potential developments for exploiting Canada's northern gas and oil. There is renewed interest in Canada in developing such exploration in the region around the Mackenzie River delta.³⁷ This area had undergone extensive exploration in the 1970s, but the collapse of oil and gas prices at the end of the 1970s and early 1980s, combined with the decision not to build a pipeline along the Mackenzie River valley, postponed most of these projects. Rising energy prices in the 1990s, which continue to skyrocket in the 2000s, and a renewed interest in building a gas pipeline along the Mackenzie, have created growing expectations that substantial oil and gas resources will be developed around the Mackenzie River delta and into the Beaufort Sea. While it is uncertain as to when the oil and gas resources will be developed and brought to southern market, with skyrocketing global energy prices it appears that this will occur sooner rather than later.

Finally, the national media are increasingly developing an interest in providing coverage of the issues of Arctic sovereignty and security. Specifically, there has been tremendous interest in issues relating to climate change, sovereignty and the Northwest Passage. However, as demonstrated by the coverage provided by the *National Post* and *The Globe and Mail* on the Hans Island issue, there is also a growing willingness to air detailed examinations on issues concerning Arctic security. It seems likely that all future issues featuring northern security and sovereignty will continue to be given significant coverage.

Conclusions

In summary, the factors that have pushed Canadian policy-makers to re-examine Arctic security will not soon dissipate. Terrorism will remain a threat to North American security; climate change is not going

“The ongoing debate on the impacts of climate change is enormous, and cannot be fully assessed here.”

to reverse itself; at some point in time, oil and gas development will occur in the Canadian north; and the attention accorded Arctic sovereignty and security issues by the national media will not soon disappear. All the security threats faced by Canada in its Arctic regions, as cited in the *Arctic Capability Study* and the *International Policy Statement*, will remain relevant.

Canada is now experiencing a renaissance in how it addresses the issues of Arctic security. It has acknowledged the cost of its previous neglect, and it appears poised to develop the tools needed to meet the challenges that are already re-shaping the Arctic region. Of course, nothing is for certain with respect to governmental action, but it appears likely that the government will remain – and *needs* to remain – committed to improving Canada’s ability to truly be the “True North Strong and Free.”



NOTES

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16. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
20. This was done, but the report remains classified.
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24. Government of Canada, *Canada’s International Policy Statement: A Role of Pride and Influence in the World Overview* (Ottawa: 2005), p. 7.
25. Department of National Defence, *Canada’s International Policy Statement: A Role of Pride and Influence in the World Defence* (Ottawa: 2005), p. 17.
26. *Ibid.*
27. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
28. *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.
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