

THE FINAL REPORT OF THE CANADA-UNITED STATES BI-NATIONAL PLANNING GROUP

by Doctor Biff Baker

The terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 significantly changed the international defence and security environment, and they highlighted the need for enhanced cooperation between nations to protect their citizens and their economies. This need is critical for Canada and the United States, whose 9000 kilometre common border separates two culturally like-minded nations, whose economies are intertwined more closely than any other two nations in the world, and whose history of mutual support as friendly neighbors and allies is long and distinguished. In the aftermath of 9/11, the North American Aerospace Defence Command's (NORAD) mission was re-focused,¹ and a Canada-United States Smart Border Agreement² was brought into being within three months.

Bi-National Planning Group

The attack also prompted senior officials to discuss means of improving the safety and security of citizens of both nations. One result was the creation of a Bi-National Planning Group (BPG) through an agreement signed into being in December 2002 by the Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs and the United States Secretary of State. This agreement, and its terms of reference, tasked the BPG to develop detailed bi-national maritime, land, and civil support contingency plans and decision-making arrangements in the event that threats, attacks, incidents, or emergency circumstances required bi-national military or civil/military responses to maintain the security of Canada or the United States.³

Key Recommendations

Since the Bi-National Planning Group was not to be a decision-making body, its focus was to find opportunities for improvement, and then to provide concepts of operation and/or recommendations on issues needing to be addressed. A brief overview of key BPG findings and recommendations follows.

The Bi-National Planning Group found that, from a national perspective, both Canada and the United States have articulated the need for enhanced security cooperation in their national strategy documents, as well as in the Security and Prosperity Partnership signed by Canada, the United States and Mexico last year. However, it felt that an overarching vision for continental defence and security organizations was missing.

Hence, the Bi-National Planning Group encouraged the development of a combined vision statement by the governments of Canada and the United States, to provide direction and authority for enhanced coordination and cooperation among our foreign policy, defence and security organizations.

It felt this combined vision should be implemented by a Canada – United States 'Comprehensive Defence and Security Agreement',⁴ with a continental approach to CANUS defence and security, while simultaneously maintaining an open invitation to participation by other countries. This new agreement would provide guidance, direction, and authority to NORAD, Canada Command, US Northern Command, and select security organizations for the development of plans, the conduct of seamless bi-national information sharing, the development of communications architectures, the conduct of joint, combined, inter-agency training and exercises, and the development of coordination mechanisms – including agreements brokered among the military stakeholders and the homeland security and foreign policy communities.

The recently signed agreement expanded the NORAD mission from aerospace warning and control to include maritime warning, thereby tightening a seam between these two domains. Articulating a vision for the Canada-US key stakeholders is the next logical step towards enhancing the defence and security of North America. Embedding this vision into a 'Comprehensive Defence and Security Agreement' would bring unity of effort⁵ and direction to bi-national defence, security, and foreign policy organizations. It would help shift paradigms and outdated cultures, resulting in more effective plans, policies, procedures, and exercises. As a result, the people of Canada and the United States would become less vulnerable to man-made threats, as well as those of natural origin.

In addition to development of a Combined Vision and a Comprehensive Defence and Security Agreement, the BPG also recommended:

- the provision of a deliberate planning agreement articulating specific responsibilities, the goals needing to be accomplished, and how often Canada-US plans should be updated;

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- the development of a nation-to-nation information sharing agreement, shifting defence and security partners from a 'need-to-know' to a 'need-to-share' paradigm. Supporting plans, processes and procedures would be developed in support of this information sharing agreement;
- the development of a communications-needs definition, which will help eliminate operational gaps, shortfalls, and duplications amongst NORAD, Canada Command and US Northern Command across the air, maritime, and land domains;
- the development of a common interagency, intergovernmental, and bi-national Combined and Joint Mission Essential Task List to support a joint and combined, multi-year exercise program that would synergize efforts in defence and civil support.

All 32 comprehensive recommendations can be read in the BPG's *Final Report*, which is available in PDF format at www.canadianally.com/bpg or www.usembassycanada.gov.

Future Coordination

Prior to termination of the Bi-National Planning Group's mandate on 12 May 2006, copies of the *Final Report on Canada-United States Enhanced Military Cooperation* were provided to Foreign Affairs Canada, the Department of National Defence, and the United States Departments of State and Defense. The key strategic-level recommendations were also briefed to the Permanent Joint Board on Defence (PJBD) and the Canada-United States Military Cooperation Committee (MCC). Additionally, the critical theatre-strategic and operational-level recommendations were coordinated with NORAD, Canada Command and US Northern Command, so that momentum on this important work will be continued by these organizations, which have both the responsibility and the authority to defend our two nations.

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NOTES

1. Per Canadian *National Security Policy*, dated April 2004, "Since September 11, NORAD has adapted to the new threat environment by increasing its operational readiness and by addressing threats within and outside North America." (NSP, Page 36). Available at: <http://www.pco-bcp.gc.ca/docs/Publications/NatSecurnat/natsecurnat_e.pdf>.
2. Canada and the United States are actively engaged in implementing the 32-point Smart Border Action Plan. Since the signing of the Smart Border Declaration and Action Plan in December 2001, significant progress has been made to enhance the security and efficiency of our shared border. Available at: <http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/can-am/main/border/32_point_action-en.asp>.
3. See Lieutenant-General Rick Findley and Lieutenant General Joe Inge, "North American Defence and Security in the Aftermath of 9/11," in *Canadian Military Journal*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (Spring 2005, pp. 9-16), for a description of BPG initiatives.
4. Evolving from the long-standing Canada-United States relationship, the continental approach used throughout this document refers initially to the defence and security of the north half of the Western Hemisphere, and it maintains an open invitation to participation by other countries. From a BPG perspective, the envisioned continental approach throughout this report does not violate sovereignty or impair the national interests of any nation, nor does it preclude bi-lateral agreements.
5. This key recommendation supports the intent of Canada's *International Policy Statement (IPS)* and the US *Quadrennial Defense Review Report (QDR)*. Canada's *International Policy Statement: Defence* aim is to, "improve coordination with other government departments and interoperability with allied forces, particularly the United States, through smart investments in evolving technology and doctrinal concepts, training opportunities, and exchange and liaison programs." IPS, Page 12. It also supports the QDR, which "recommends the creation of National Security Planning Guidance to direct the development of both military and non-military plans and institutional capabilities. The planning guidance would set priorities and clarify national security roles and responsibilities to reduce capability gaps and to eliminate redundancies. It would help Federal Departments and Agencies better align their strategy, budget and planning functions with national objectives. Stronger linkages among planners in the Military Departments, the Combatant Commands, and the Joint Staff, with the Office of the Secretary of Defense and with other Departments, should ensure that operations better reflect the President's National Security Strategy and country's policy goals." QDR, Page 85.

THE PEACEKEEPING BLUES

On 24 March 2006, the Canadian Forces (CF) closed out *Operation Danaca* – Canada’s contribution to the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) on the Golan Heights since 1974 – and transferred Canadian responsibilities to a contingent from India. The 191-person Canadian contribution ‘comprised the majority of the UNDOF 2nd Line Logistics Battalion providing general logistics support to the mission, as well as vehicle maintenance, military police and communications specialists for the force.’ A four-person Canadian contribution remained for an interim period, subsequently reducing to two personnel in July 2006.

Comparatively little noticed, the March ceremony on the Golan Heights was also rather anti-climatic. Some might argue that the decision to withdraw from UNDOF – a decision pre-dating the arrival of Stephen Harper’s Conservative government – was inevitable, given ‘the high demand for personnel with specialized skill sets’ and the numerous other demands, most notably those in Afghanistan, upon the Canadian Forces. Perhaps, too, there is a logical point at which peacekeeping commitments of multi-decade duration, as in the case of the Canadian contribution to the UN force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) in the early 1990s, should be relinquished in favour of participation by other UN members. It is, nevertheless, supremely ironic that the withdrawal from the Golan Heights – which reduced the Canadian military contribution to UN peacekeeping to fewer than 60 personnel at a time when the UN fielded some 65,000 military peacekeepers and observers – should come mere months prior to the 50th anniversary of the creation, with very important Canadian diplomatic and military participation, of the seminal United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) during the Suez Crisis of 1956. The remaining Canadian Forces personnel are attached to a comparatively large number of UN operations (thereby proving that even one- or two-person penny packets can look impressive on DND peacekeeping maps), but fewer than 60 members constitutes by far the smallest Canadian military contribution to UN peacekeeping since the inception of UNEF.

This is not to suggest that the decision to decamp from UNDOF was inherently imprudent, but it does raise questions about the failure to participate meaningfully in another UN mission, and hence about Canada’s broader commitment to UN peacekeeping (however defined), about the place of peacekeeping – even frustratingly romanticized peacekeeping – in the Canadian

national psyche, about the extent to which operations in Afghanistan should dominate Canada’s overseas commitments, and about the ability of the Canadian Forces to undertake new UN operations. It might also raise questions about the relationship between public perceptions of peacekeeping and the somewhat tepid public support for the current Canadian role in Afghanistan.

It could be posited that the absence of a broadly-based media and public backlash over the withdrawal from UNDOF – and to Canada’s extremely low ranking on the list of military contributors to UN peacekeeping – provides further evidence that Canadians are adopting a more mature and realistic approach to ‘peacekeeping’ and increasingly understand that peacekeeping, as traditionally defined and practised, can no longer be the litmus test for Canada’s credibility on the world stage. For too long, notes Sean M. Maloney (*Policy Options*, September 2005), Canadians have embraced a mythologized and romanticized vision of peacekeeping: “Are not all Canadian military personnel ‘peacekeepers’? Has UN peacekeeping not been the stock in trade for Canadian soldiers since Lester B. Pearson invented peacekeeping in 1956 during the Suez Crisis? Isn’t our national identity based on the fact that we do peacekeeping while others fight wars? Are we not morally superior because Canada engages in peacekeeping? Will we lose that moral superiority if we engage in operations other than peacekeeping?”

The process by which Canadians so quickly and so deeply transformed peacekeeping into a defining element of their collective self-image is at once fascinating, disconcerting, predictable and puzzling. In many ways, the elevating of peacekeeping to cult status was anything but surprising. Peacekeeping was useful (although not always in ways understood or appreciated by Canadians), comparatively inexpensive (at least during such halcyon years as 1956-1966), and so clearly on the side of the angels. Indeed, as Lieutenant-Colonel D.J. Goodspeed’s centennial year history of the Canadian Forces observed in 1967: “It is suitable and satisfactory that [Canada’s armed forces] should be serving now in a variety of distant lands, still making their country’s name and flag known and respected, but contributing not to the making of war but to the keeping of peace.” Although frequently exaggerated in the cause of Canadian nationalism (some would suggest Canadian smugness), peacekeeping also helped to distinguish Canadians from their American cousins.

That said, it is intriguing that the cult of peacekeeping so frequently prevailed over the skepticism of Canadian prime ministers. John Diefenbaker and Pierre Trudeau were often reluctant peacekeepers, the former because of peacekeeping's Pearsonian/Liberal roots and the latter because of his perception that peacekeeping reinforced an exaggerated and delusional Canadian self-importance on the world stage. Brian Mulroney, although ultimately an enthusiastic peacekeeper, devoted far more attention to defence industrial and related issues than to peacekeeping in his government's ill-fated 1987 white paper on defence. Even the perceived Canadian 'father' of peacekeeping, Lester B. Pearson, was far more realistic than most Canadians about the utility of, and the prospects for, peacekeeping.

Jean Chrétien proved a most ardent peacekeeper, but his unwillingness to match rhetoric with resources, and his references to peacekeeping as a 'Boy Scout' – type activity, were not helpful. Indeed, if Canadians were slow to grasp the dramatic changes to 'peacekeeping' in the post-Cold War era, a substantial measure of blame must be attached to Ottawa's post-1989 reluctance – at numerous political, bureaucratic and military levels – to jettison the old language and symbolism of 'peacekeeping' and its marked lack of candour in acknowledging, let alone interpreting, the scale of Canadian casualties in the Balkans, and such watershed events as the Battle of the Medak Pocket.

If Canadians are now adopting a less naive interpretation of 'peacekeeping' and, concomitantly, a more sober and pragmatic understanding of contemporary stabilization missions, that is most welcome – although one suspects that the mythology of peacekeeping is far too deeply entrenched in the national psyche to disappear anytime soon – but it does not necessarily follow that

Canada's virtual disappearance from UN missions is wise or prudent. The UN's recent peacekeeping record is very far from perfect, but there are missions of merit that could benefit from Canadian capabilities and Canadian expertise. This does not suggest an attempt to recreate the golden era of peacekeeping – when any hint that Canada might forgo participation in a UN mission was treated as a national disgrace – but does suggest that selective, prudent and meaningful participation in UN operations could serve a useful purpose – both in broader humanitarian and geopolitical terms and in terms of Canada's own national interest. If current military capabilities are too stretched to assume a broader UN role – and if Afghanistan continues to consume a very high percentage of available resources – then a logical response would be continued expansion of the Canadian Forces. Privatizing our way back into UN peacekeeping has its attractions (and its proponents), but at best is a supplement to, and not a replacement for, military personnel. UN missions in which Canada could contribute capabilities and resources of types not required in Afghanistan could prove particularly attractive.

There is another danger inherent in a wholesale rundown of Canada's commitments to the United Nations. If Canadians come to believe, rightly or wrongly, that UN commitments have been sacrificed in order to free up resources, directly or indirectly, for operations in Afghanistan, it could have a negative impact on public support for the Afghanistan role. In this context, additional attention to UN missions could add to the insulation of Ottawa, and the Canadian Forces, from accusations of a single-minded obsession with Afghanistan.

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