



Canadians interacting with signalers from the 6 Mobile Strike Force of the Afghan National Army in Kabul, Afghanistan, during Operation *Attention*, 21 July 2013.

Being ‘Left of Bang,’ or Proactive:’ The Future Place of Capacity Building in the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces

by Peter J. Williams

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Introduction

At the time of writing, Canada has deployed Special Operations Forces to Iraq in an ‘advise and assist’ role in order to help the Iraqi security forces deal with the threat posed by the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and Levant (ISIL). In 2014, we concluded Operation *Attention*, Canada’s participation in the NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan (NTM-A), which delivered training and professional development support to the national security forces of Afghanistan: the Afghan National Army (ANA), the Afghan Air Force

(AAF), and the Afghan National Police (ANP). Through our involvement in Afghanistan, which lasted over a decade, members of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) were truly involved in a myriad of activities, ranging from combat, and, more recently, as part of NTM-A in *capacity building* of the Afghan National Army (ANA) and the Afghan National Police (ANP), collectively known as the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF).

Our troops returned home to a CAF family very different from the one which entered Afghanistan in the wake of the 11 September 2001 attacks. While there is no doubt that our ranks are now filled with combat veterans, and that we have gained new capabilities (*inter alia*, M777 155mm howitzers and accompanying precision munitions, Counter Improvised Explosive Device (C-IED) capability, and strategic airlift in the form of C-17 transport aircraft), the CAF of tomorrow will not, at least in the near term, necessarily continue to enjoy the largesse which the Government of Canada (GoC) has provided it in the past in support of our operations.

Far from it. Deficit reduction remains the watchword, and concurrently, the Department of National Defence (DND) has embarked upon a Defence Renewal initiative, whereby resources for less important activities and programs will be reduced and re-invested, internally, into higher priority Defence programs. This comes at a time when the Canada First Defence Strategy (CFDS) is also undergoing a review, one which will impact upon the future missions and roles of the CAF.

Across government, other departments are looking at new ways of doing business. The Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development (DFATD), in late-2013, published its Global Markets Action Plan (GMAP). Central to the GMAP is the concept of “economic diplomacy.” The GMAP goes on to state: “This new focus represents a sea change in the way Canada’s diplomatic assets are deployed around the world.”² Doubtless, such an approach will impact upon how the DND/CAF conducts its global activities and engagements downstream.

Defence ‘belt tightening’ is not restricted to Canada alone, as our two closest allies, the United States (US) and the United Kingdom (UK) are also looking at how to gain more ‘bang for the proverbial buck,’ or indeed, the pound sterling. Further afield, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is examining how, in an environment of shrinking budgets, it can advance its concept of Smart Defence³ so as to meet future security challenges. It is also fair to say that many nations, including Canada, having expended

so much blood and treasure in Afghanistan, are also questioning the need for future major military interventions, and are asking themselves what the requirement is for military forces in the post-Afghanistan era. Indeed, in the post Afghanistan era, might it not be better to enable a nation facing crisis to build up its own indigenous forces *before* such an event occurs rather than having to send in our own forces *after* the fact?

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The aim of this article is to examine the extent to which military capacity building should become a *key* and *explicitly-stated mission* for the DND and the CAF in future.

Canada’s Legacy in Military Capacity Building

Military capacity building is not a new task for the CAF. Our record in this field is long standing, particularly in Africa.⁴ For various reasons, our efforts there, specifically in Ghana and Tanzania in the 1960s, were not sustained. Since then, the main DND vehicle to deliver such ‘foreign military training,’ or what this author will call military capacity building, come under the Directorate of Military Training and Cooperation (DMTC) within DND’s Policy Group. According to the DND website: “DMTC develops policy and implements training programs to meet the government’s foreign and defence policy objectives. These training programs expand and reinforce Canada’s bilateral defence relations, while raising its national profile on the world stage.”⁵



A Canadian advisor with Afghan National Army soldiers during Operation Attention.

DND photo AT2013-0100-09 by Master Corporal Frieda Van Putten



A Canadian advisor with members of the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces during Operation *Sculpture*.

More recently, some of our larger scale capacity building efforts have been conducted outside DMTC auspices, under named CAF operations:

- In Sierra Leone, again in Africa under Operation *Sculpture*, a mission which lasted over a decade, (2000-2013), which constituted Canada's participation in the International Military Advisory and Training Team (IMATT), a multinational effort led by Britain to help the Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone build effective and democratically accountable armed forces in compliance with the Lomé Peace Agreement;⁶
- In Afghanistan, under Operation *Argus*, (2005-2008), which constituted a team of CAF strategic military planners the Canadian Forces maintained in Kabul to help the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan develop key national strategies and mechanisms for the effective implementation of various strategies, including working with departments without a defence or security nexus. This team was called the Strategic Advisory Team Afghanistan, or SAT-A;⁷

- In Jamaica, under Operation *Jaguar* (2011), which was Canada's contribution of a military aviation and search-and-rescue capability that supported the Jamaica Defence Force;⁸ and
- In Africa, this time in Mali, with members of the Canadian Special Operations Forces Command (CANSOFCOM), providing training to the Malian armed forces in their fight against al-Qaeda insurgents.⁹



Canadian technical advisors instructing technicians from the Jamaica Defence Force during Operation *Jaguar*, 13 October 2011.

Although the aforementioned missions have concluded, the CAF, at the time of writing, is still conducting other global capacity building efforts:

- In Jerusalem, under Operation *Proteus*, the deployment of a CAF team to support the work of the Office of the United States Security Coordinator (USSC) for Israel and

the Palestinian Authority. The aim of this mission is to provide the Palestinian Authority Security Forces (PASF) with training advice and support;¹⁰ and

- As a result of events in Eastern Europe, in December 2014, Canada signed a Declaration of Intent with Ukraine to explore opportunities to conduct joint military training and capacity building.¹¹



DND photo IS2013-1009-02 by Sergeant Matthew McGregor

A member of the Malian military watches as Canadian and French military members unload a Canadian Armed Forces CC-177 *Globemaster III* aircraft in Bamako, Mali, 01 February 2013. The aircraft was transporting supplies to Mali for the French military.



DND photo TN2014-0899-J0015 by Master Corporal Roy MacLellan

Chief Warrant Officer Sergei Riabtsev of the Ukraine Navy shakes hands with James Bezan (right), Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, at the end of the formal ceremony marking the arrival and handover of a shipment of supplies to the Ukraine in Kiev, 28 November 2014.

Canada is not alone in actively supporting military capacity building. Our current efforts in Afghanistan with the ANSF are but the latest in a series of such programs dating back to the 19th Century, which have included British, Ottoman Turk, and Soviet military advisors helping to build indigenous forces in that country.¹² The United States has long recognized the importance of such efforts, and as early as 1940, enshrined it in their doctrine for what the US Marine Corps (USMC) termed ‘Small Wars.’ Noting that after an initial intervention by US forces, once ‘domestic tranquility’ is restored:

“There is also present the obligation to restore to the foreign country its organic native defensive and law-enforcement powers as soon as tranquility has been secured. The organization of an adequate armed native organization is an effective method to prevent further domestic disturbances after the intervention has ended, and is one of the most important functions of the intervention since the United States armed forces may have superseded or usurped the functions of armed forces of the country concerned at the beginning of the intervention. It is obvious that such armed forces must be restored prior to the withdrawal.”¹³

Mandate and the Canada First Defence Strategy (CFDS)

According to the *Canada First Defence Strategy* (CFDS extant at the time of writing), the then-Canadian Forces (CF), “... will have the capacity to perform the following six core missions:

- (1) Conduct daily domestic and continental operations, including in the Arctic and through NORAD;
- (2) Support a major international event in Canada, such as the 2010 Olympics;
- (3) Respond to a major terrorist attack;
- (4) Support civilian authorities during a crisis in Canada such as a natural disaster;
- (5) Lead and/or conduct a major international operation for an extended period; and
- (6) Deploy forces in response to crises elsewhere in the world for shorter periods.”¹⁴

The provision of CAF resources in a capacity building role is not explicitly stated herein, although it could be argued that it falls under Missions Five and Six, and of these two, it would appear that Mission Six would be the most likely contingency calling for such forces. Note that this mission speaks of deploying forces “... in response to...” a crisis. While it may not have been the intention of the CFDS authors to project this emphasis point, one could be forgiven for thinking that such a mission statement is more *reactive* than *proactive*.

While crises will continue to materialize with little-or-no warning, such as natural disasters, or the events of 11 September 2001, is it not more prudent, where and when it is within our capability and national interest to do so, to ensure that any future crises are anticipated, and that where and when appropriate, military forces are deployed ‘upstream’ as it were to ensure that a future crisis does not arise which could entail a major military deployment, such as is envisaged under CFDS Mission Five? Properly focused capacity building resources would enable us to do exactly that.

Capacity Building Forces: Risks and Challenges

The benefits of pre-emptive capacity building notwithstanding, such deployments are not without attendant risks and challenges. If the mandate of the deployed capacity building force extends beyond ‘train’ and ‘advise,’ and enters into the realm of ‘equip,’ the costs could be quite substantial once costs for the provision and sustainment of weapons, equipment, and ammunition are factored in. Capacity building forces does not automatically mean that the troops involved are armed or lack some form of integral force protection. As is the case with any military mission, a thorough threat assessment will need to be made in order to determine the level of force protection, and indeed, the medical and logistical support required in theatre, including the extent to which any of this could be provided by the host nation.

The pre-emptive nature of such forces is obviously linked to their timely deployment. Thus, a major risk is that if not deployed far enough in advance of a crisis, such forces may find themselves ill-equipped for the (potential crisis) environment in which they would now find themselves immersed. This means that at strategic levels of national defence, foreign affairs, and the executive arms of government (and this will not necessarily be easy), we will have to become much more nimble at looking ahead and in taking the necessary steps and decisions which would facilitate the deployment of a pre-emptive capacity building force. Related back to deficits identified in the current missions assigned to the CAF under the CFDS, we will need to demonstrate a greater degree of pro-activeness in anticipating crises, and, where and when required, in deploying capacity building forces in advance of them.

From a purely military point of view, capacity building forces, by their very nature, tend to be biased toward the officer and non-commissioned officer (NCO) ranks, with the result that the units from which they are drawn in Canada can experience a major leadership deficit. This will likely remain the case in future for such missions, and so, judicious use will have to be made of readiness cycles, such as the CAF did for four sequential rotations of Operation *Attention*, in order to ensure that the loss of these leaders to overseas missions does not generate long-term detrimental effects at home.

However, if a providing nation ‘gets it wrong’ and chooses the wrong partner with whom to help build their military capacity, great embarrassment, and perhaps even worse, could accrue to the nation which provided the capacity building forces in the first place. Should the host nation forces eventually be involved in a coup, human rights abuses, or war crimes, grave accusations could be levelled at the country which helped to train and advise those indigenous forces. In this respect, Canada has been somewhat fortunate. For example, members of the Jamaican Defence Force who had been mentored by CAF members were later responsible for the successful and peaceful resolution of a hijacking incident on that island in 2009.¹⁵

Capacity building can also have *mixed* and even *fatal* results. As described earlier, CAF members helped train members of the Malian armed forces. When that country fell victim to a coup, troops that had been trained and advised by the CAF were on the side of those *against the coup* and who tried to restore a democratically elected government. Sadly, some of those trained and advised by the Canadians were eventually hunted down and killed by the coup instigators.¹⁶



DND photo IS2013-0004-34 by Sergeant Norm McLeen

Master Corporal Daniel Choong oversees the firing line as drills are practiced at the Kabul Military Training Centre range during Operation *Attention*, 30 October 2013.

Capacity Building Forces: Attractions

Without doubt, there are many benefits to employing capacity building forces in a pre-emptive manner in advance of a crisis. First, and most obviously, if one ‘does it right,’ it saves one the potential trouble of having to send in numerous and costly forces after a crisis breaks out. In particular, in the lean fiscal years ahead, and frankly, at a time when many nations are tired of long and costly military commitments, such a pre-emptive deployment could be seen as the ultimate ‘bang for the proverbial buck.’ The deployment of NATO forces to Macedonia in 2001, although not in a capacity building role *per se*, is generally touted as an (albeit somewhat rare) example of how pre-emptive deployment can avert a future crisis.¹⁷

By extension, deployments with a relatively smaller footprint will likely be more amenable to populations whose taxes will have to fund such missions, and who might see such a deployment as a dividend. Governments will doubtless be attracted to military options which can be delivered at a lower cost of blood and treasure. This, however does not absolve the government in question from having to explain to its citizens, including its soldiers (as indeed it should do in the case of all military expeditions) what the force in question is meant to achieve. In the case of our own government, the concepts of economic diplomacy as outlined in the GMAP, combined with the ability of the DND/CAF to deliver pre-emptive capacity building might be seen as a way to protect the investment. Thus, the DND/CAF may find that they are in future directed to conduct such missions more often than they recommended doing so in the past.

So, what is to be done?

First and foremost, among the lists of missions assigned to the CAF must be one which gives prominence to the deployment of such forces which have been advocated in this article, and unlike the current CFDS mission, one which emphasizes its proactive nature. To that end, I propose the following new mission, which would be added to the list of extant CFDS missions:

Deploy capacity building forces in advance of a crisis overseas.

In terms of where this mission would fit within the current list, it should become the new CFDS Mission Five, the first four being largely related to domestic defence, missions which must remain the primary focus of the CAF. The current CFDS Missions Five and Six would be retained.

Simple adoption of such a mission will not be easy, but I suggest it will force us to look at external defence and security matters in a new light. First, the government will need to be convinced that such a mission is really necessary. Many governments are quite content to wait for a crisis to occur, and then to respond after the fact, if it is in the national interest to do so. When faced with military advice to deploy forces in a pre-emptive manner, they will rightly ask, “Crisis? What crisis?” It will then be up to leaders within Defence to make the case that by deploying a (relatively) small force now, the necessity to deploy a much larger and costlier one later stands a greater chance of being reduced.



An Afghan National Army (ANA) military police officer stands sentry for an ANA graduation parade at the Kabul Military Training Centre, 9 November 2013, during Operation *Attention*.

Our CAF doctrine will need to place more emphasis upon capacity building, a gap which currently exists in our military literature. At present, we produce advisor handbooks when required, and in such cases, we often rely upon the advice of those outside Defence for such resources, useful though they are.¹⁸ We need our own doctrine, based upon the experiences of the many capacity building missions we have conducted and are currently conducting.

The contribution from subject matter experts within defence should not merely come from those currently in uniform. Any successful defence organization not only knows how to command, control, generate, and employ its forces, and this is certainly where uniformed, military expertise would provide its greatest contribution, but also how to make decisions regarding policy, resource allocation, infrastructure, and so forth. This expertise can be contributed by defence bureaucrats, both serving and retired.

Having recently served in a capacity building function in Afghanistan with Operation *Attention*, I noted that several of my peers were serving as advisors at defence ministry level, advising Afghan officers at the three-and-four-star level. While they no doubt did great work, I often placed myself in the shoes of those senior Afghan generals and wondered how much they truly listened to some of those young colonels, particularly in a society where respect for elders is paramount. Therefore, I suggest that we should leverage the expertise of retired general and flag officers, as well as retired senior civil servants with strategic defence experience, to provide capacity building expertise at defence ministry levels. Such persons would bring excellent experience, and indeed, ‘the

wisdom of years’ when dealing with their foreign counterparts, whom I would suggest would be more likely to listen to them.

This leads to the next consideration, which is that such a force should not come from Defence alone, and indeed, any capacity building efforts made by the DND/CAF must be part of a broader Whole of Government (WoG) effort. Chances are that if we identify a country or a region facing future crisis, it will likely be a case where reform is required in sectors than just the target nations’ security forces. Other departments of the Government of Canada, deploying either their own expertise or by exploiting the expertise of its retired community, could complement the DND/CAF efforts. Whether providing advice on electoral, judicial or educational reform, a WoG effort by Canada would be able to address many of the aspects of a future crisis in a timely, proactive manner. It is not for nothing that our country traditionally ranks near the top of the UN Human Development Index.¹⁹ Here is a way for Canada to ‘share its wealth,’ wealth which I believe would be gratefully accepted. DFATD has resources available to assist in this regard under its Counter-Terrorism Capacity Building Programme CTCBP²⁰ and the Anti-Crime Capacity Building Programme (ACCBP).²¹

Partners in such capacity building efforts are not just to be found within our own borders, but with like-minded nations as well. As mentioned earlier, Canada is not alone in attempting to stretch scarce defence dollars. Therefore, an approach to another international partner to combine forces in a co-operative capacity building effort, before a crisis, with relatively lower costs, may receive a more favourable hearing than one would expect when

trying to form a coalition of the willing after a crisis. As NATO conducts a degree of soul searching after the termination of its current mission in Afghanistan, perhaps it will conclude that its future lies in the capacity building realm.

Most importantly, all this will require a mindset where we are focused upon anticipating crises and taking the necessary actions well in advance of them, to save us the cost of a major military intervention ‘Right of Bang,’ or lacking in proactivity. Given the work currently being done within DND/CAF under the review of the extant CFDS and Defence Renewal, and in an environment when NATO is trying to be ‘smarter’ about defence, it simply makes sense and is highly timely and appropriate to give increased prominence to pre-emptive capacity building as a core Defence mission.

A Word of Caution

At this point, the reader might think that what is being proposed is a niche role for the DND/CAF, and also for other departments of the Government of Canada. Not at all. As mentioned earlier, what is being proposed is not a reduction to the CAF mission set, but the addition of one which is more *proactive* than some of the missions, which are, unfortunately, more *reactive* in nature. To those who might think that the proposal tabled in this article envisages a CAF which should be re-structured to better facilitate the deployment of capacity building forces, I would suggest that the current structure of our environmental and special operations

forces units already enables the proposition. Having spent a year in a capacity building capacity in Afghanistan, perhaps the greatest lesson I took away from the work of our team was that it was our grounding in having trained for combat throughout our careers that made us successful as advisors. Or more appropriately, “combat advisors,” as our Canadian commander styled us. Thus to those who might think that a renewed focus upon pre-emptive capacity building as a stated mission for the DND/CAF, would result in a dividend as a result of divestment of heavy platforms that are no longer needed, I would say that they have missed the point. Our current force structures will still be needed for the other CFDS missions, and it is from these units that we will continue to draw personnel to act as advisors in a capacity building role in future. That said, and notwithstanding the popular image of the Canadian soldier as peacekeeper, it seems to me that there is something quintessentially Canadian about wanting to act so as to *prevent conflict* rather than after having to *act after a conflict has started*.

Conclusion

The international environment is evolving, as is the nature of conflict and the military’s role within it. In the past, when faced with crises, states have responded with extensive and costly military deployments. This may be less likely in future, and indeed, pre-emptive activities such as capacity building may come with a degree of inevitability and a relatively lower cost which will be attractive to governments. The former US Defense Secretary, Robert Gates, when addressing a class of US Army West Point Cadets



DND photo AF2007-A029-0042 by Sergeant Craig Flander

Sergeant David Muirhead, an RCMP officer working at the Kandahar Provincial Reconstruction Team’s civilian police detachment, speaks with the second-in-command of the Arghandab District’s Afghanistan National Police headquarters, 23 March 2007.



Major Mike Reekle and an Afghan National Army lieutenant colonel watch for the return of a large military truck driven by an Afghan soldier, mentored by an American civilian driving instructor during Operation *Attention*, 29 October 2013.

in 2011, was perhaps speaking for many statesmen when he said: "...any future defense secretary who advises the president to again send a big American land army into Asia or into the Middle East or Africa should have his head examined."²² While the DND/CAF must always be in a position to provide options to government, including *crisis response* as outlined in the CFDS, a *renewed and resourced* focus upon *pre-emptive capacity building* forces as an explicitly-stated core mission for the DND/CAF, a mission we would undertake with the Whole of Government and other international partners, is one way to avoid costly post-crisis deployments and to get us to where we need to be, namely, 'Left of Bang.'



NOTES

1. <http://www.cp-journal.com/left-of-bang/> According to this website, when it is said that one is observing or taking action "Left of Bang," one is being proactive. All the events that have to occur before 'bang' can take place are placed left of the bang on one's timeline.
2. <http://international.gc.ca/global-markets-marches-mondiaux/assets/pdfs/plan-eng.pdf>
3. http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_84268.htm? Smart Defence is described as "...a new way of thinking about generating the modern defence capabilities the Alliance needs for the coming decade and beyond. It is a renewed culture of cooperation that encourages Allies to cooperate in developing, acquiring, and maintaining military capabilities to undertake the Alliance's essential core tasks agreed in the new NATO strategic concept. That means pooling and sharing capabilities, setting priorities and coordinating efforts better."
4. See "The Future of Foreign Military Training" by Lieutenant-General (ret'd) Mike Jeffery at: <http://www.cdfai.org.previewmysite.com/PDF/The%20Future%20of%20Foreign%20Military%20Training.pdf>
5. <http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/training-international-policy/index.page?>
6. <http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/operations-abroad-past/op-sculpture.page?>
7. <http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/operations-abroad-past/op-argus.page?>
8. <http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/operations-abroad-past/op-jaguar.page?>
9. <http://news.nationalpost.com/2011/12/03/canadian-special-forces-mentor-malis-military/>
10. <http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/operations-abroad-current/op-proteus.page?>
11. <http://news.gc.ca/web/article-en.do?nid=912739>
12. See Stephanie Cronin, "Building and Rebuilding Afghanistan's Army: An Historical Perspective," in *The Journal of Military History*, Vol. 75 (January 2011), pp. 45-91.
13. *Wars Manual, United States Marine Corps 1940*, (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1940), Cp. XII, Sect. 1, Para 12-3.
14. <http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/about/canada-first-defence-strategy-summary.page?>
15. <http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/news/article.page?doc=caribbean-military-maritime-training-centre/hgq87xrx>
16. <http://news.nationalpost.com/2013/01/27/soldiers-trained-by-canadian-special-forces-hunted-tortured-in-mali-after-failed-counter-coup/>
17. <http://www.rusi.org/publications/whitehall/ref:I478753AF393C4/#.Ut2DGRAo6Hs>
18. While training for deployment on Operation *Attention*, the author relied upon a Host Nation Security Force Advisor Training Handbook produced by the Centre for Cultural Learning of the Canadian Foreign Service Institute, within the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development (DFATD). From discussions with members of the Canadian Forces Warfare Centre, it was confirmed that we currently have no specific CAF doctrine manuals devoted exclusively to capacity building.
19. <https://data.undp.org/dataset/Table-2-Human-Development-Index-trends/efc4-gjvq> This table lists data collected since 1980.
20. <http://www.international.gc.ca/crime/ctcb-rcat.aspx?lang=eng>
21. <http://www.international.gc.ca/crime/accbp-prlc.aspx>
22. <http://www.defense.gov/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1539>