



DND photo RP001-2015-0023-007 by Corporal Nathan Moulton

Canadian and German military members ready for a parachute jump during a parachute training exercise in Kalna, Poland, 29 July 2015, as part of Operation *Reassurance*.

Prescriptions for Defence

by Martin Shadwick

In the run-up to the Chrétien government's 1994 white paper on defence, a host of non-governmental organizations, some permanent, some ad hoc, offered up their recommendations and prescriptions for Canadian defence and international security policy—and concomitant force structures—in the post-Cold War geo-strategic environment. One of the most visible participants, the Canada 21 Council, a blue-chip group of former government officials, retired senior officers, and academics, argued that in the new strategic context there was “no obvious need to maintain the wide range of air, ground, and anti-submarine conventional forces needed to repel a military attack” and that in any event, the Canadian defence budget “today cannot not meet the rapidly increasing costs of a modern, high-technology military. Unless policy is changed quite radically, the result will be that Canada will have simply a miniature model of a traditional ‘general purpose’ military force—one with just a little of everything, but not enough of anything to be effective in any conceivable situation.”

To the Canada 21 Council, the “new global circumstances” and the “reality of financial stringency” demanded a restructured military establishment “that would be capable of assuring our territorial sovereignty, assisting in the protection of North America, and participating in common security operations to a greater extent than is possible now.” The protection of territorial sovereignty,

a task falling primarily upon the air force and the navy, required “an ability to know what is going on within our borders, in our airspace, and in our contiguous oceans.” By contrast, participating in common security operations, “usually under the aegis of the United Nations, implies having reasonable numbers of combat-ready, well-trained troops, with fully adequate equipment, able to respond to requests in well-defined circumstances.” The Council advocated the “adoption of a Canadian policy that would specify the level of military operations above which Canada would decline to participate,” adding that it did “not believe that Canada either wishes to or could afford to maintain armed forces that would be capable of undertaking a peace enforcement role against modern, heavily-armoured military forces.” Moreover, “if we wish to expand and improve the armed forces’ ability to support common security missions, while also protecting territorial sovereignty, operating the search and rescue system, maintaining stand-by forces for aid to the civil power, and being prepared to act in national disasters, we must find the necessary resources by reducing or eliminating some current roles. This, in turn, implies the reduction or elimination of some of the armed forces’ traditional military capabilities.”

The Council therefore proposed that: (a) current Canadian military capabilities “be progressively eliminated where they depend upon the use of heavy armoured formations, heavy artillery, air-to-ground fighter support, and anti-submarine warfare techniques”;



DND photo SW2015-0228-734 by Corporal Felicia Ogunniya

HMCS *Moncton* sits at anchor in Pond Inlet, Nunavut, during Operation *Qimmiq*, 21 August 2015.

(b) the recently acquired *Halifax*-class patrol frigates be retained “to patrol our contiguous oceans,” but that “they should abandon their anti-submarine role and should, in the long term, be replaced by much smaller ships, more appropriate to the new role than is the present fleet;” (c) planning for replacement submarines be shelved in favour of acquiring “three peacekeeping support, multi-role replenishment ships;” and (d) that the “fighter fleet should be reduced by about two-thirds.”

Although the prescriptions offered up by the Canada 21 Council did not find favour with the architects of the 1994 white paper on defence—most fortuitously, given subsequent developments in the international strategic landscape, even if the Chrétien government remained vulnerable to criticisms that it failed to back an essentially sound white paper with adequate funding—the deliberations and reports of such bodies as the Canada 21 Council served a constructive purpose by challenging the status quo, advancing thoughtful analysis, and contributing to a Canadian defence policy debate that is all too often conspicuous only by its absence. Today, as Canada confronts the requirement for a thoroughgoing review of defence policy—one prompted and shaped by a ‘witch’s brew’ of tough economic times, profound questions over the fiscal sustainability of Canada’s existing national defence program, and a tough, unpredictable and frankly disconcerting geo-strategic environment—the need for thoughtful and thought-provoking input from the widest possible array of voices on the defence of

the realm has seldom been greater. One might disagree, indeed, disagree most strongly, with some of the proffered prescriptions for defence, but time spent in thoughtful debate is seldom wasted.

One recent, albeit controversial, contribution to this process has been a June 2015 report by Professor Michael Byers, *Smart Defence: A Plan for Rebuilding Canada’s Military*. Published by the Rideau Institute and the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, the report enumerates a range of contemporary defence challenges in Canada, including deficit-cutting burdens that have fallen heavily upon DND, procurement delays that have compounded the spectre of inflation, and perceived mismanagement in the procurement system. The report points to a “crisis” in defence procurement but posits that the “crisis” presents “both a challenge and an opportunity...to rebuild the military from the ground up, and do so in a way that addresses this country’s actual needs.” By adopting a “smart defence” approach to defence policy and defence procurement rooted in NATO concepts of specialization and burden sharing, the report envisages a substantial saving—“more than \$10 billion over twelve years”—in Canadian defence spending, an increase in “capabilities on most fronts, including Arctic and coastal surveillance, search and rescue, disaster and humanitarian relief, and peacekeeping,” and the maintaining of jobs in “the Canadian defence, aerospace, and shipbuilding industries by honouring or renegotiating existing contracts and adding the possibility of Canadian-made [fixed-wing] search and rescue [aircraft].”



DND Photo WT03-2015-0012-01, Joint Task Force Ukraine

Canadian Armed Forces personnel await transportation to the International Peacekeeping and Security Centre in Yavoriv, Ukraine, after arrival at L'viv Danylo Halytskyi International Airport, 25 August 2015, during Operation *Unifer*.



DND photo CK2004-0065-22d by Corporal Robert Boittrill

CT-155 Hawk.



DND photo 739-IMG0025

A CP-140 *Aurora* flies by Mount Rainier in the State of Washington.

Although separated by a span of more than 20 years and a plethora of significant jolts to the strategic landscape, it is intriguing that both the report of the Canada 21 Council—*Canada and Common Security in the Twenty-First Century*—and Michael Byers’ *Smart Defence: A Plan for Rebuilding Canada’s Military* embraced similar examples of role specialization as pivotal elements of their respective rebuilding strategies. Similar, too, was their strong support for such roles as Arctic and coastal surveillance, search and rescue, disaster and humanitarian relief, and peacekeeping. It is also noteworthy that strong public support for such roles surfaced in DND-commissioned polling from both the early post-Cold War period and recent years.

The *Smart Defence* report is informed by an analysis of the types of missions undertaken by the Canadian Armed Forces between 2000 and 2014. This analysis identified six “core missions” including: (a) the surveillance and defence of coastlines and airspace in Canada; (b) search and rescue and disaster relief in Canada; (c) humanitarian, peacekeeping and combat missions against non-state actors overseas; (d) naval patrol and interdiction missions against non-state actors overseas; (e) air strikes against ground targets overseas, in coalition operations involving air superiority; and (f) air transport. “These six core missions,” notes Byers, “provide essential background, and thus a starting point for

planning the rebuilding of Canada’s military. Most significantly, this analysis shows that the Canadian Armed Forces are never actually tasked with high intensity state-to-state combat missions.”

This benchmarking of recent missions in a study promoting increased specialization has drawn criticism from David McDonough of the Conference of Defence Associations Institute. “By so doing,” argues McDonough, [Byers] assumes that future missions for the CAF will be the same as past missions, which effectively embodies what military strategists try to avoid—namely, fighting the last war. Uncertainty about the future means being careful not to assume the next conflict will be like the last one. Who would have guessed before 9/11 that the CAF would find itself focused on stabilization and counterinsurgency operations in Afghanistan? Or, from the perspective of a few short years ago, that it would be currently undertaking bombing missions in Syria/Iraq and busy training Kurdish forces.” McDonough criticizes the fifteen year timeline because it excludes Canada’s role in the Kosovo conflict and also posits that “the report...pays little attention to increasingly sophisticated capabilities—from anti-ship cruise missiles to advanced (and possibly portable) surface-to-air missiles, to unmanned vehicles—that have proliferated to a growing number of actors.”



DND photo CX2014-0664 by Captain Trevor Field

A CH-149 *Cormorant* flies over Lima, Peru during a functional flight test as part of Exercise *Cooperation III*, 22 April 2014.



DND photo ET2011-0153-07 by Master Corporal Daniel Mallette

HMCS *Cornerbrook* departing C-Jetty at CFB Esquimalt for sea trials.

The cornerstone of the *Smart Defence* prescription, and certainly the largest generator of its projected financial savings, is its plan to cancel the planned acquisition of the F-35—on cost and performance grounds and because it is single-engined—and “extend the CF-18 fleet with 30-40 new F/A-18 *Super Hornets*.” The latter “could then be used for day-to-day operations, including training, while the CF-18s are rested in climate-controlled hangars

for situations requiring a greater number of [fighter aircraft].” The resulting savings would then be applied to the purchase of 40 to 50 BAE Systems *Hawks* (or a “similar” aircraft). The latter would be used to replace the leased *Hawks* currently utilized as fighter-trainers and the *Tutors* utilized by the Snowbirds. The new aircraft would also be “available for close air support, should they be needed when Canadian soldiers are deployed on peacekeeping or other missions overseas.” This approach, argues Byers, would “ensure that new [aircraft] arrive before the CF-18s have to be retired, while providing a 10-15 year ‘bridge’ during which time it should be possible to ascertain whether a completely new fleet of fighter jets is needed, or whether geopolitical or technological developments (e.g., dogfight-capable drones) have rendered such planes an unnecessary component of Canada’s military.”

This is, to be sure, an unorthodox proposal, albeit one with some intriguing operational and other attributes—not least, in some quarters, its ability to buy time on a contentious procurement issue. But, as various commentators have noted, it is difficult to see how a small fleet of only 30 to 40 *Super Hornets* could adequately address Canada’s national (i.e., air sovereignty), NORAD, NATO and other commitments. Supplementary CF-18s and *Hawks* may appear attractive on paper, but would introduce their own complications, including the lifespan and upgrade status of any retained



DND photo LE2015-0056-21 by Master Corporal Mélanie Ferguson

A Company of the Immediate Response Unit [West] leaves Prince Albert in LAV IIIs [6.0] in a convoy to travel to a fire affected zone of Saskatchewan during Operation *Lentus 15-02*, 13 July 2015.

CF-18s, their availability rate, the *very* modest level of commonality between the *Hornet* and the *Super Hornet*, and the number of *Hawks* that could readily be diverted from domestic training and air demonstration tasks to such functions as close air support (assuming, of course, that they would be adequate in some CAS scenarios). If one is prepared to forego the stealth and sensor attributes—admittedly, expensive attributes—of a fifth generation fighter and remains troubled by the F-35’s single engine, a mixed fleet option more palatable than that advanced by *Smart Defence* might be a force of more than 30 to 40 F/A-18E/F *Super Hornets* and EA-18G *Growlers*. Some form of successor to the leased *Hawk* fighter-trainers (and, ideally, the air demonstration *Tutors*) would, of course, still be required. The degree to which that type might hold a secondary CAS or other commitment would be worthy of study.

The air element of the Byers plan also argues that “there is no need to acquire new [maritime patrol] aircraft, including unmanned drones,” but does recommend the upgrading of four additional *Auroras* (thereby upgrading all 18 aircraft in the inventory). This is an intriguing proposal, but one harbours reservations about the absence of maritime patrol UAVs and the cost-effectiveness of diverting funds from a longer-term *Aurora* successor to the upgrading of four additional aircraft. The plan also advocates the expansion of the *Cormorant* search and rescue fleet by five to fifteen aircraft, with the final number dependent upon Ottawa’s acceptance or rejection of a related Byers plan to increase SAR reliance upon long-range helicopters while reducing the attention

devoted to fixed-wing SAR aircraft and their SARTECHs. A lessened role for fixed-wing SAR aircraft, posits Byers, could generate procurement opportunities for suitably-equipped Viking *Twin Otters* and Bombardier Q400s. Some additional *Cormorants* are clearly required (it is curious that there is no reference to potential VH-71 conversions) but the case for a significantly reduced role for fixed-wing SAR, and a dramatically expanded *Cormorant* fleet, remains insufficiently proved.

Byers recommends that the contract for the “performance-compromised” *Harry DeWolf*-class Arctic Offshore Patrol Ships (AOPS) be renegotiated and “twelve high-speed purpose-built offshore patrol vessels...utilizing off-the-shelf designs, for patrol and interdiction on the Atlantic and Pacific coasts,” substituted at a total cost of \$500 million—thereby implying a comparatively small (and not necessarily ideal) vessel. The new class would replace the twelve *Kingston*-class maritime coastal defence vessels. The Canadian Coast Guard’s projected heavy icebreaker, the *John G. Diefenbaker*, would be axed in favour of two-to-three medium icebreakers. The latter, and existing medium icebreakers, would receive light deck guns. Although Byers is not alone in his lack of enthusiasm for AOPS, its cancellation, and renewed reliance upon the Coast Guard, would once again leave the RCN devoid of an Arctic capability. Other analysts, perhaps reconciled to the AOPS, have pointed to the utility of an embarked *Cyclone* helicopter, but under current plans the AOPS will possess only a limited ability—certainly not a frigate-like ability—to operate the *Cyclone*.

In addition to cancelling AOPS, for a projected saving of \$3 billion, the Byers plan would cancel the *Victoria*-class submarine (for a projected saving of \$2 billion), proceed with the building of two *Queenston*-class joint support ships, and reduce the projected fleet of Canadian Surface Combatants (CSC) from fifteen to twelve ships. The latter would “be equipped as large corvettes or small frigates rather than air-and-missile defence-capable destroyers, in recognition that the Navy’s current and future likely missions concern non-state actors” (a recommendation that would save a not insignificant amount of funding). No specific alternative is identified, but the description could favour something along the lines of the Dutch *Holland*-class. In his review of *Smart Defence*, David McDonough criticized the submarine recommendation, arguing that Byers was too quick to dismiss their advantages, “including their range and endurance, capacity for surveillance and intelligence, and ability to operate in much more contestable and dangerous regions, not to mention their impressive combat capabilities.” He also notes that, without submarines, Canada “would be largely left out of the water-space management arrangements that provide information on submarine activities of other nations...” The CSC recommendation fared no better, with McDonough positing that Byers had “ignored the value of larger vessels in terms of range, endurance, and sustainability, as well as their multi-purpose capabilities... He also overlooks the value of air defence, especially in littoral zones and even against non-state actors.”

On the army side of the ledger, Byers argues that, “... as with peacekeeping, operations against non-state actors demand lighter equipment than state-to-state warfare. Heavy armour is unnecessary and can actually impede efforts to ‘win hearts and minds.’”

He consequently praises the original acquisition of the LAV III, and recommends that the current upgrade project continue. So too should the acquisition of 500 Textron Tactical Armoured Patrol Vehicles (although he notes that “modifications (‘Canadianization’) requested by [DND] have caused some unfortunate delays”), and “armoured trucks” (presumably a reference to the subsequent July 2015 order for 1500 Mack 8x8 standard military pattern trucks and 150 armour protection systems). Sensible findings for the most part, although there is continuing room for debate on the future utility of heavy armour.

On balance, the Byers report represents a useful addition to the debate over role specialization and advances some intriguing, albeit controversial and challengeable, force posture and procurement options. Some of its identified options are worthy of further study or could serve to stimulate debate on follow-on scenarios. Repackaging the CSC project as a mix of full-scope frigate/destroyer-type vessels and a smaller number of vessels similar to the *Holland*-class wouldn’t be ideal, but could prove intriguing. Further role specialization is unavoidable, but, as in the past, the real challenge is selecting which capabilities to retain or retain in part, and which to jettison. The cost of ‘getting it wrong’, as Colin S. Gray reminded us in another study from 1994, *Canadians in a Dangerous World*, could prove very steep.

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DND photo ET2015-0061-01 by Leading Seaman Zachariah Stoga

HMCS *Victoria* returns home through the Straits of Juan De Fuca, from operations with the United States Navy (USN), 26 February 2015.