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NATO Headquarters, Brussels, Belgium.

Leadership within NATO: Canada's 2018 Chairing of the NATO Military Intelligence Committee

by Nicholas Dunning¹

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"Timely and relevant intelligence is our single greatest tool in identifying and managing threats to our peace and security. The Military Intelligence Committee is fundamental to NATO's efforts to promote peace and stability around the world. Canada is proud to be working with NATO countries to increase the speed, effectiveness, and quality of our intelligence to push the boundaries of what we can achieve together for our collective safety and security."

¹ The Honourable Harjit S. Sajjan, Minister of National Defence²



The Canadian Minister of National Defence, Harjit Singh Sajjan, speaks during the NATO Summit, 2018.

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Introduction

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is a cornerstone of Canada's foreign policy and defence policy to prevent and respond to conflicts and crises abroad.³ NATO also represents a long-standing institution in the international rules-based order, which Canada seeks to strengthen.⁴ The current international landscape facing NATO is dangerous, unpredictable, and fluid. Threats emanate from multiple strategic directions, including state and non-state actors, military forces, terrorists, and within the cyber and hybrid domains.⁵ It is against this unpredictable backdrop that "...intelligence is NATO's first line of defence. The ability to effectively collect, analyze, and distribute relevant intelligence across the Alliance is fundamental to NATO's success in meeting the challenges of an evolving threat environment."⁶

Canada led NATO's efforts to advance NATO defence intelligence to meet modern challenges throughout 2018 as the chair of the Military Intelligence Committee (MIC). Canada officially transferred chair authority of the MIC to Albania on 3 December 2018, marking the end of Canada's year-long role as MIC Chair.⁷

Chairing the MIC provided Canada an elevated international profile in the intelligence community. Through this platform, Canada demonstrated multinational leadership within NATO by leading intelligence reforms that improved the Alliance's ability to achieve accelerated decision-making in support of planning, operations, and political decision-making. In order to enhance the learning culture and support leadership of the institution, this article will describe Canada's 2018 chairing of the NATO MIC, articulate the strategic implications, and note some observations with respect to multinational leadership, as well as overcoming the challenge of various national interests.

Background

The NATO Intelligence Enterprise is a complex network that encompasses the intelligence collection and analytical structures, processes, and hundreds of intelligence professionals within the NATO Command Structure and NATO Headquarters (HQ).⁸ The strategic and operational intelligence derived from the NATO Intelligence Enterprise informs decision-makers within the North Atlantic Council (NAC), the Military Committee (MC), Supreme Allied Commander Allied Powers Europe (SACEUR), and NATO's operations and activities.⁹ A critical component of the NATO Intelligence Enterprise is the NATO member nations, since they provide national intelligence and resources to NATO.

In recognition of the evolving global threats, NATO intelligence reform was a significant theme of the 2016 Warsaw Summit, and echoed at the 2018 Brussels Summit. Reinforcing the importance of intelligence to inform NATO planning, operations, and decision-making, a new Joint Intelligence and Security Division

(JISD) was created at NATO HQ in 2016. The JISD would be led by the Assistant Secretary General for Intelligence and Security (ASG-I&S).¹⁰ The JISD merged the former military and civilian intelligence silos into an integrated unit, and thereby became the single intelligence body providing intelligence support to the NAC, and the MC, as well as advising the Secretary General regarding intelligence and security matters.¹¹

With this web of actors, contributors, and leaders reliant on first-class intelligence, coordination and trust between the nations providing resources and intelligence to NATO is vital to synchronize activities, safeguard sensitive information, and guide the ongoing intelligence reform.¹² Former United States Director of National Intelligence James Clapper once described the 'sweet spot' in such efforts as the intersection of safeguarding sensitive information and trust to share for intelligence.¹³ The NATO MIC fulfills the important function of coordinating efforts, advancing trust, and leading change.

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The MIC is the principal advisory body to the Military Committee with respect to defence intelligence issues. The MIC is also a forum for decision-making regarding intelligence, and it participates in shaping NATO intelligence policy. Each nation typically has the head of their military intelligence agency represent their national interests at the MIC.¹⁴ The MIC is supported by a subordinate committee – the MIC at Working Level (WL), comprised principally of defence intelligence policy leaders. Since 2017, the MIC has been chaired by a nation for a one-year term on a

rotational basis, and co-chaired by the ASG-I&S. Belgium served as the first national chair of the MIC in 2017, followed by Canada in 2018.¹⁵ The role of the MIC Chair is three-fold: establish an overall theme and work objectives, convene and facilitate two annual conference meetings of the MIC, and advocate the 'voice of the nations' to the MC and other NATO leadership boards and committees.

NATO Intelligence also has a Civilian Intelligence Committee (CIC). It is the body that oversees civilian intelligence issues at NATO. Reporting directly to the North Atlantic Council, the CIC advises on matters of espionage and terrorist-or-related threats that may affect the Alliance.¹⁶ Like the MIC, the CIC is also co-chaired by the ASG-I&S.

Canada's Role as MIC Chair

On behalf of Canada in 2018, the Commander Canadian Forces Intelligence Command (CFINTCOM) and Chief of Defence Intelligence, Rear-Admiral Scott Bishop, served as the MIC Chair. Supporting the chair on a full-time basis was an intelligence liaison office at NATO HQ in Belgium, and a policy team within CFINTCOM. Assistance for hosting the meeting of the MIC in Ottawa in May 2018 required almost four dozen personnel from across the Department of National Defence (DND) and Canadian Armed Forces (CAF). NATO HQ also provided full-time secretariat support from within the Joint Intelligence and Security Division to help organize meetings, produce records, and to liaise with NATO staffs.

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Arndt Freytag von Loringhoven, NATO Assistant Secretary General for Intelligence, right, joins Rear-Admiral Scott Bishop, Commander of Canadian Forces Intelligence Command and Chair of the NATO Military Intelligence Committee, and they speak to media regarding their participation in the NATO Military Intelligence Committee Conference, Ottawa, 24 May 2018.

As the MIC Chair, Canada established a campaign plan along three lines of effort – political/strategic, operational, and force development – with 12 distinct objectives that guided work throughout 2018. The end state of Canada’s campaign plan was “...a relevant, agile, and modern NATO Intelligence Enterprise that is capable of supporting the strategic interests of NATO and enabling operations through organic NATO and Joint CIC/MIC intelligence capabilities.”¹⁷

Upon conclusion of Canada’s chairing of the MIC, key accomplishments included the following:

- Military-civilian coordination was improved through better military-civilian cooperation, intelligence policy development, governance, and the establishment of a framework for early warning intelligence;
- NATO-Agreed Intelligence was optimized by rationalizing capstone intelligence documents from four-to-two, which will save hundreds of hours of analytical and staff work;
- NATO’s learning culture was enhanced by holding workshops focused upon cyber issues and by supporting operational lessons learned;
- Early warning intelligence to support the NAC, MC, and SACEUR was advanced through a warning and alerting policy;

- NATO intelligence’s governance was improved by changing the MIC WL to be co-chaired by the same nation chairing the MIC, which also enabled further coherence among the nations;
- Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe’s approach and continued implementation of a Joint Effects function within the NATO Command Structure was endorsed;
- The NATO Intelligence deficiencies system was improved through the implementation of a tiered priority approach, which will improve the focus and efficiency of NATO intelligence.

In addition to chairing the MIC, Canada increased its defence intelligence contributions to NATO throughout 2018 in order to reinforce its leadership within the Alliance. For example, Canada assumed the role of Integrated Meteorological and Oceanographic (IMETOC) Lead Nation to provide dedicated meteorological and oceanographic support, data, and products to the NATO Response Force (NRF), which will help the NRF exploit the best window of opportunity to plan, execute, support and sustain military operations.¹⁸ Canada also increased the production and dissemination of intelligence to NATO, and was a significant contributor of geospatial intelligence in support of NATO operations.¹⁹

These increased capabilities provided Canada's MIC leadership with additional clout by providing NATO with critical resources.

Strategic Effects

Global Leadership

Canada exhibited leadership on the international stage by chairing the MIC, which progressed NATO's continued intelligence reforms. This leadership is consistent with *Strong, Secure, Engaged*, which calls upon the DND/CAF to demonstrate global leadership.²⁰ Under Canada's leadership, intelligence reforms improved the Alliance's ability to achieve accelerated decision-making in support of planning, operations, and political decision-making.

Leadership can often be more challenging in multinational settings than national settings due to cultural differences, national sensitivities and objectives, amongst others. Equally, trust is often harder to establish and maintain in multinational environments.²¹ Yet, despite the challenges with leading globally, Canada is a strong proponent of multilateral institutions, and benefits from these guarantors of global peace and security. Therefore, it was a natural fit for Canada to seize the opportunity to chair the MIC, which reinforced Canada's primacy of the rules-based international order.²²

Canada's leadership was demonstrated through multiple actions *before* and *during* the chairing of the MIC. Before assuming the chair, Canada set forth a clear vision and purposeful end state, which was socialized with many NATO intelligence stakeholders. This ensured a unity of approach and common purpose. During Canada's tenure as the MIC chair, it evolved the purpose of the MIC to a decision-making forum, thereby increasing the relevance of the committee. Canada also practiced an inclusive approach as MIC chair, which resulted in record-high participation of nations during various committee meetings. The benefit of the additional voices was the inclusion of new approaches, innovative suggestions for intelligence reforms, legitimacy of consensus achieved on difficult issues, and reinforced unity of purpose. And, as noted by James Clapper, intelligence reforms begin with leadership.²³

Relationships

Canada's leadership as MIC Chair also provided the opportunity to develop deep and meaningful relationships with international

partners.²⁴ It developed a close relationship with Romania, as that country served as the chair of the Civilian Intelligence Committee. Cooperation and coordination between Canada and Romania began almost a full year before each country assumed their roles as chairs. With an unofficial motto of 'no surprises,' both countries advanced a four-point plan of action, which led to significant improvements in civilian-military intelligence relations, enhanced policy guidance, and advanced the implementation of an inclusive warning system.²⁵ The very productive CIC-MIC relationship was a strategic win, as traditionally, there is well-noted strain between the committees, which was overcome by Romanian and Canadian leadership in 2018.²⁶

Canada and Albania also fostered a close partnership. The chairing of the NATO MIC employs a *troika* system involving the past, current, and future chair to ensure smooth hand-overs, continuity, and the success of the MIC. For much of 2018, Canada and Albania

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Rear-Admiral Scott Bishop, Commander of Canadian Forces Intelligence Command.

met frequently in order to prepare for the transition of MIC chairs. These defence diplomacy-type interactions afforded the opportunity to mutually improve knowledge, understanding and interoperability, as well as allowing for the exchange of best practices.²⁷ This initiative ultimately contributed significantly to the success of the MIC.

These meaningful relationships with Romania and Albania will endure beyond chairing the MIC and CIC, since both countries now have experience working bilaterally on intelligence issues of common interest. These partnerships will lead to greater situational awareness through increased intelligence cooperation.

Chairing the MIC also enabled closer cooperation between CFINTCOM and the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), as the latter serves as the Canadian representative at the NATO CIC. CSIS delivered on multiple initiatives within the CIC, such as leading various panels, which showcased Canada's expertise against common adversaries. Within the CIC itself, CSIS helped ensure joint civilian-military initiatives, such as early warning, were advanced in a purposeful manner. Active CSIS participation helped Canada demonstrate leadership within NATO, advanced civilian-military intelligence cooperation, and ultimately helped keep Canadians safe through improved intelligence sharing.

Anticipation

Chairing the MIC also afforded Canada improved situational awareness that will provide early warning of threats, challenges, and crises. In turn, this will make Canada and the CAF more secure, and enable the nation to better tailor contributions to international security.²⁸ In order to lead by example, Canada invested intelligence resources into delivering cutting-edge analysis of our common adversaries, which directly supported the decision-making of the NAC and the MC. It also increased the production and dissemination of intelligence to NATO, and its geospatial intelligence collection in support of NATO operations. This growth in intelligence collection and production led to bilateral and multilateral cooperation with other NATO countries. The end result was that Canada gained access to greater information and intelligence, which improved strategic anticipation.

The strategic effects garnered from chairing the MIC are consistent with direction to the DND/CAF from *Strong, Secure, Engaged*. Specifically, Canada's pursuit of leadership within NATO, ensuring seamless cooperation with allies and partners, while enhancing Canada's ability to anticipate a wide range of contingencies.²⁹

Observations on Multinational Leadership

Canada's chairing produced important observations with respect to leadership in a multinational environment that are applicable to both defence intelligence and the wider DND/CAF. This section intends to highlight these lessons learned.

The observations are framed using University of Genova professor Dr. Angela Di Febraro's research on leadership and command, which, on behalf of the NATO Human Factors and Medicine Research Task Group Multinational Military Operations and Intercultural Factors, examined factors that influence multinational military collaboration in areas including organization, leadership and command, and teams.³⁰ Febraro's research is a useful frame, given the multinational and collaborative nature of the MIC as a defence intelligence body. Three of the "Top 10 Tips for Multinational Commanders," will be leveraged to articulate the Canadian perspective with respect to chairing the MIC.³¹

Prioritize relationship building. Mutual respect is key. The goal is to foster a communicative, collaborative, and co-operative relationship.

Canada was seized with the importance of building and maintaining meaningful relationships as the key determinant for success as MIC Chair. Leveraging the importance of relationships to the intelligence profession, Canada built and executed a deliberate engagement plan with various intelligence stakeholders before assuming the Chair. This engagement plan allowed Canada the opportunity to socialize its plans and objectives as MIC Chair in an honest and clear manner, and also to obtain stakeholder 'buy-in.' This engagement happened at all levels – from the MIC Chair to the desk officer – at formal and informal meetings in seven countries. Engagement at this level and scale required the dedication of significant resources in terms of time and international travel. With open communication throughout, stakeholders were able to understand Canada's plan, felt respected during the development process, saw themselves in the plan, and cooperated for common success.

Negotiation is commonplace; command by discussion.

As mentioned, one role of the MIC Chair is to facilitate two annual conference meetings. The Chair is not only involved in setting the agenda, but also facilitates the discussions that occur over multiple days. Given the importance and sensitivity of the defence intelligence issues with which at times the MIC was seized, the Chair needs to act as a referee. Ensuring all nations had a voice at the table was important, and required the Chair to be trusted as being neutral, and not advancing national interests. For Canada to achieve neutrality as the MIC Chair, and still ensure national interests were preserved, a separate Canadian national rep-

resentative sat in the 'Canada' chair, which therefore permitted the MIC Chair to act impartially.³² Research has indicated there are occasionally 'cliques' within NATO intelligence between nations,³³ so it was important for Canada as the Chair to facilitate honest dialogue throughout. In order to ensure unity of purpose, negotiations, as well as the ability to have frank and honest conversations, were often as important as the outcome.

Establish a common sense of purpose.

Canada articulated its role as MIC Chair as a ‘baton race,’ where Canada was able to move common NATO objectives forward before handing the leadership baton to the next chair. As noted by Febrero, achieving unity of purpose should be a main effort of multinational leadership. This is because leaders must develop mutual confidence among partners to ensure a balance is struck between the group’s interests and competing national interests. Underpinning unity of purpose is trust and mutual confidence.³⁴ With a team sport approach, Canada sought to instill a common sense of purpose through its campaign plan and associated incremental goals, sensitive to unique national requirements and perspectives, and it used open communication to foster trust.

The lessons learned from Canada’s chairing the MIC transcend the intelligence profession. Canada demonstrated the capacity to inspire others, to direct while being inclusive, and to articulate and instil a common direction and purpose.³⁵

Overcoming the Challenge of Various National Interests

NATO recognizes the unique nature of an Alliance, where certain nations may have differing agendas.³⁶ Research by Febrero also confirmed the occasional diversity of national interests and political pressures, which occasionally challenge multinational leadership. In a study prepared while a student at the Canadian Forces College in 2000, Canadian Armed Forces Colonel C.J.R. Davis also observed the influence of national interests, and stated that the presence of politics in coalitions challenges multinational leadership.³⁷ Against this background, Davis noted, “...the willingness to reach a consensus is vital to ensuring the political aspirations of nations are satisfied. A balance

between what is acceptable both militarily and politically must be achieved.”³⁸ While he distinguished between coalitions and alliances, his observation with respect to consensus and the influence of national politics is cross-cutting between coalitions and alliances, and is appropriate to frame Canada’s chairing of the MIC.

While the desire to achieve unity and cohesion dominates NATO, there were nonetheless moments during Canada’s chairing of the MIC that national political views entered the fray.³⁹ In one instance, it was a challenge to advance a key defence intelligence policy matter related to NATO Agreed Intelligence (NAI). As Brian R. Foster, then attending the United States Army War College, described NAI in 2013, it serves as a strategic baseline for the rest of NATO intelligence and activities. NAI is unique, as it is agreed to by all NATO members, and represents a significant undertaking in consensus building.⁴⁰ Despite raising the particular defence intelligence policy issue at the two MIC conferences in

2018, and significant staff work conducted at NATO HQ and within capitals, consensus was not achieved. At its heart, the defence intelligence policy matter is a *political* issue, with significant *national* interests involved. As of this writing, the matter is not resolved, and will likely require resolution through the MC and the NAC.⁴¹

While this particular defence intelligence policy issue represents an ongoing challenge, important lessons can nevertheless be ascertained from the situation. As Colonel Davis noted, “...rapport, respect, knowledge, patience and the appropriate mission for participating nations all contribute to the notion

of mutual confidence.”⁴² Under Canada’s leadership, there was a full engagement with all nations on the defence intelligence policy issue in order to sustain mutual confidence. It was apparent that the matter was a political issue, and as such, it was unlikely to be

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The 28 flags of the countries of NATO.

NATO Photo



NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg delivers a speech at Massey College, University of Toronto, 15 July 2019.

solved by the MIC. Therefore, through notions of respect and transparency, and allowing nations to save face became important diplomatic tools used by Canada. With the longer-term cohesion of the Alliance in mind, rapport among MIC nations was maintained, despite a differing national perspective.⁴³

Canada's leadership chairing the MIC reflected NATO's doctrinal approach to multinational leadership that "...demands an attitude that is not only international in outlook, but also willing to understand differing national perspectives and how they relate to the common purpose."⁴⁴ Canada focused upon incremental goals, achieving mutually-beneficial objectives, and elevated those issues that held sensitive national interests to appropriate decision-making bodies. This approach ensured respect among all nations was maintained and that mutually-supporting objectives were achieved. It is recommended this type of approach be used in similar future situations.

Conclusion

NATO's strength and value lies in the unity of its members. Solidarity is NATO's greatest asset, despite concerns about political dynamics in certain NATO member countries.⁴⁵ NATO remains central to Canada's foreign policy and defence policy. As a founding member of the Alliance in 1949, Canada has participated in every NATO mission, and is frequently cited



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as providing valuable leadership and contributions to NATO's activities and operations.⁴⁶

As the NATO Secretary General noted in a speech in Ottawa, NATO is facing a changing and dynamic security environment, where the line between war and peace is often blurred. It is in the context that NATO relies upon doing more in the way of intelligence as a way to reinforce collective defence.⁴⁷

Canada's chairing of the MIC reinforced the importance of NATO to Canada, the significance of sound intelligence, and the critical nature of relationships. As noted by Canada's then-Minister of Foreign Affairs, Chrystia Freeland [now Deputy Prime Minister ~ Ed.], the current uncertainty about the traditional structures of global leadership has sharpened the need for Canada to strengthen the post-war multilateral order.⁴⁸

Chairing the MIC was a significant undertaking, and it provided Canada an elevated international profile within the intelligence and defence community. Canada's leadership led to improving NATO's decision-making ability in support of planning, operations, and political decision-making, and reinforced Canada's enduring commitment to NATO.



NOTES

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