

**The Future of Canada's Navy:  
Strategic Initiatives and Requirements**

**Navy Summit 2008**

**By:**

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***\*Check Against Delivery***

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I consider it a privilege to speak with you on the strategic challenges our navy must meet, and the broad reach and depth that will be required to meet these challenges.

Let me begin with my biases – because they affect my analysis, and in the spirit of full spectrum contextual awareness, you have the right to know what those biases are:

1. fixed, pre-announced multi-year two percent spending increments from Treasury Board, the PCO, Finance Canada or Public Works are actually not about our core strategic interests or geopolitical security – they reflect the necessary work of number crunchers in a fiscally responsible government. They are not unimportant, but letting them and their implications define strategy and capacity is like letting the janitor decide on the height and structural engineering of a building. His views should be counted, but not allowed to become exclusive or seminal.

Let me add to this – that relative to the difference between necessary strategic capacity and number cruncher preferences, every senior Naval and Military officer has a sworn duty to serve Her Majesty by telling the duly elected government of the day the truth about the difference between the two. To do so before policy is decided by the duly elected, is neither disloyal or insubordinate.

2. As a broad expansive country with three oceans, perimeter patrol duties throughout the hemisphere, and interdiction obligations in protection of environmental, fishery, national security and sovereignty interests, combined with alliance diplomatic and sea lane stability obligations around the world, a nation of our size and broad interest requires a naval capacity that is robust and flexible. While modernizing and upgrading parts of our 33 ship navy may seem adequate for some, the strategic context we face argues for a more robust fleet and broader range of capacities.

3. Every major commitment Canada has made under Liberal and Conservative governments, whether for humanitarian purposes like Katrina, or in support of UN or NATO decisions relative to the first Gulf War, the fight against terrorism, or the effort to contain Saddam Hussein when he set aside UN sanctions and expelled weapons inspectors from his country, each and all began with or relied upon a naval deployment. Why? Because it was the quickest, most multi-capable military and diplomatic instrument available to the Parliament and Government of Canada at the time. And it still is.

4. Canada's capacity to influence diplomatic, political and economic events in our own country's interest, and, in a way that reflects our core

values of democracy, rule of law, economic opportunity, freedom and social justice is not enhanced when we have no way to project Canada's presence abroad or in our own hemisphere as necessary and appropriate. Our national security and our economic prosperity depend on that capability. Reducing or diluting that capability is diminishing our country's capacity to protect its own national interests. Pressures in all parts of the world – deployment capacity from a standing start much closer to littoral waters, as well as the 33 platforms we need for existing minimized obligations argues strongly for a sixty ship navy and a coherent multi-year ramp up. Strategic redundancy both within systems and within task groups that are themselves a system of systems is not a luxury - it is an operational exigency, for the navy and for the protection of Canada.

Having laid out those biases, let me now be clear about my particular perspective. As a Senator who warmly supports the present Conservative Government, I am not a member of that government. I can and do speak freely. As a Conservative in the Senate, outnumbered three to one by Liberal Senators, I remember that like some of these Liberals, I was appointed by a Liberal Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Mr. Martin – who slashed defence spending awfully when Finance Minister, but who also had the decency to admit as much in the Officers' Mess at Valcartier in

2004, and begin, however slowly, the re-investment process when he became Prime Minister. The massive re-investment that has now become serious under Prime Minister Harper cheers me immensely. But it is decades overdue. And improving on a diminished and geopolitically less-than-scale base of human resource and marine platform capacity should not, however directionally sound, be confused with adequacy. We must do more and we are starting from a diminished base quite disconnected from our strategic imperatives.

The engagement, thanks to Gordon O'Connor, to rapidly providing substantial airlift capacity is vital and deeply welcome and appreciated. The fact that, as we sit here today, we can only tactically essentially engage with any strength at all from airfield to airfield with armed troops and kit for whatever mission, is still a huge capability gap. That we do not need to beg and borrow as much airlift or as extensively is progress. That the Manley Task Force on Afghanistan had to borrow helicopters from the US to discharge their remit is simply embarrassing.

Some on the left, will argue that we are spending too much on defence already. And they have many supporters in high places in the civil service. There are few areas of the Constitution where the federal government has more precise or exclusive obligation than National Defence.

Yet I know that the Clerk of the Privy Council, whom I like and respect, and his colleagues in Treasury Board and Finance are, on occasion, susceptible to the view that Defence always wants more, the demands are endless and no positive yield to the rest of the economy emerges from Defence or diplomatic expenditure. Traditionally, if we want to look at waste, we should look at how we have used the spending power in areas outside Section 91 of the Constitution, in areas well beyond our federal jurisdiction. And, somehow, federal governments always run out of money when defence comes along. Those eager to go back to that old tendency are not cured. Their inclinations are simply in remission. It is vital that federal dollars are spent on federal primordial constitutional obligations. Without national security – which in terms of inbound vital trade and external bound exports embraces multi-capable sea lane presence and capacity – government fails its core task.

Do we face the World War II kind of existential threat now?

Of course not. Nor do we need World War II levels of expenditure or defensive sacrifice. But there are threats out there – some of which we must talk about freely. And in so doing, we should honestly ask about what our actual capacity now is to address these threats. How or with what would we respond, as a sovereign nation to the following sorts of challenges:

- a Canadian registered and owned cruise ship, or one many Canadians are on of another registry is taken over and held hostage by a nihilistic terrorist group disinterested in a negotiated outcome.....how would we respond?
- a major Russian passenger plane goes down in our Arctic region – what would our response be and how quickly?
- a non-state actor with rudimentary capacity but financed and trained by a major Middle Eastern player blocks the Straits of Hormuz
- a major Canadian embassy hosting a substantial trade event in a foreign country is overtaken by terrorists with hundreds of Canadian and foreign guests and staff of the embassy held hostage
- a natural or man-made disaster befalls one of our Caribbean Commonwealth neighbours requiring both rapid evacuations and massive assistance and stabilization
- a decline in international security and stability in Asia, Africa, the Middle East or our own southern hemisphere requires a unified allied response in hours and days, not weeks and months
- we receive intelligence reports of a series of toxic, thermonuclear or other threatening container contents shipped by non-state actors on a series

of largely innocent ships to various Canadian and American ports along the western or eastern seaboard...

- LNG tankers aimed for our east coast are attacked by rogue forces from non-state actors with modest but sufficient capacity

I could go on, but you get my drift...and you get my drift without my even having raised a rapid decline in seaborne freedom of passage emanating from countries in Asia and the Middle East or Eastern Europe who have navies with meaningful strategic capacities.

No armed force, on the land, on the sea or beneath it, or in the air can do everything everywhere all the time. We can't dance at every wedding – nor should we want to. That's not who Canadians are.

We are not primarily a military power. But history teaches us that when our allies or principles are attacked, we engage, after careful consideration, as a free and independent democracy. And, when we do, we give the best we have and do a job greater than our geopolitical footprint might suggest. That was true in World War I, World War II, Korea, Sinai, Cyprus, Bosnia, Gulf War I, Haiti, Afghanistan, and in the myriad of UN engagements since and beyond.

Our present, soon to retire, CDS, General Hillier, has spoken eloquently of the Vimy effect – where Canadian troops – airmen, soldiers

and sailors use technical and innovative means and instruments to achieve tactical leverage within a broad theatre strategy – on occasion when and where our allies had not yet broken through. It is all about leverage – and no national instrument produces more leverage than high end, well-trained and technically acute naval capacity.

What are our strategic imperatives? Let me suggest a virtual triangle of strategic priorities for which robust naval capacity, above, beneath and upon the seas operation is essential.

1. Canada must be able to patrol and protect our own three coasts and have a robust and articulated ability to insert troops anywhere on that shoreline, interdict ships of any registry with and beyond and beneath our territorial waters when Canadian security or environmental interests are threatened; and we must be able to have sufficient deployable naval and air capacity to provide search and rescue and perimeter defence in our own marine territory and in concert with allies and hemispheric neighbours provide coastal defence and stabilization capacity at any time, with surface and sub-surface assets.

2. On a global basis, essentially with allies but also in task groups that are uniquely Canada, sustainable and independent, Canada has a strategic imperative to be able to come to the aid of Canadian shipping, Canadian citizens, allies at risk and be able at Canada's sole discretion, to deliver and execute escort, humanitarian and combat missions with above-sea, beneath-sea and surface assets with the mix of capabilities best suited to these contingencies.
3. Consistent with our parliamentary democracy, our UN and NATO membership and NORAD obligations, we need the capacity to have tactical options in support of our strategic exigencies. We can't only have the choices to send troops or assets from airfield to airfield – we must have the option to pre-position humanitarian or diplomatic assets in theatre, adjacent to theatre or insert special forces or evacuate high value friendly or hostile targets as circumstances may require. Broad reach amphibian capacity is no longer a “wouldn't it be nice” option. It is vital to genuine “robust flexibility “ and the

choices flexibility allows. The ability to make those choices really only exists when a multi-variant, robust naval capacity exists.

So that we are clear, this is about a navy with the assets and flexibility that maximizes the choices available to the duly elected government of Canada and the military high command in terms of best advancing our vital national interests. If the nature of our naval capacity actually limits choices, constrains options, it is less than the asset it should be or the asset our national interest requires.

The nature of non-state actors and their linkages to major powers like Iran, the broad geopolitical reach of troubling issues in Asia and the Middle East, the broad trade routes that impact on core economic interests and our support of the doctrine around the “responsibility to protect”, the exposure of our allies, core alliances and partners, in all parts of the world, argues for this robust capacity. It is a capacity that helps prevent war; a diminished capacity invites unwarranted adventurism from others.

What does that “robust” capacity mean? It means we can have up to ten multi-capable task groups deployed in different parts of the world – including off our own coasts. It means that we are able to use the CF 18s

that already have reinforced undercarriage and tail hook necessary to be so deployed on mobile naval platforms. The range of expeditionary challenges our forces may face cannot be met only by airfields like Aviano.

We must have the naval air platforms available for Canadian or allied CF 18s and multipurpose heavy lift or combat helicopters to deploy as necessary. We should have this capacity and we need to be able to have it in more than one theatre at a time.

No Cabinet should ever be without options to provide air cover, evacuation or re-supply to Canadian troops, diplomats, humanitarian workers or Canadians abroad in challenging difficult or confused battle or pre-combat context. If we cannot insert special forces, cover, re-supply, evacuate or provide air to surface cover support for Canadian troops without depending on others, we should simply not deploy. That is my definition of a real “Canada first” defence policy.

Canadians at a St. Petersburg Conference earlier this month heard Russian naval officials speak of 5 new naval task forces for which steel is to be cut this year. The growth of the People’s Republic of China navy, while not unreasonable for a country growing as China is, raises the bar on our Pacific operational exigencies. My friends, the values that reflect the best of globalization – the rule of law, the relatively free movement of people,

goods and capital, democracy, diversity, respect for individual civility – values that have seen millions transit from poverty to middle class optimism in places like China and our commonwealth colleagues in India- these are what we must defend and champion. That requires a dynamic presence, a presence that can be both diplomatic and friendly or resolute and disciplined –and always combat ready in symbolizing who we are and what values we both share and are prepared to defend.

The United States Navy may well have fiscal trouble maintaining its fleet in the coming years. At the same time, we see a rise in piracy which has direct implications for the security of maritime trade- the life blood of the global trading system. Some of this is taking place in littoral waters and choke points. In the past it has been argued that that since the USN "commands the seas", allied contributions are not important. But this may no longer be the case. We may not be able to rely upon the USN to provide the global public good of secure sea lanes of communication. This is why the USN is pressing for a Global Maritime Partnership (GMP). This is why Admiral McFadden's reflections in the U.S. recently, on behalf of our navy on the benefits of a cooperative stance were so resonant. This all, of course means that a very good case can be made for Canada to augment its high seas and maritime projection capabilities.

So, enhanced presence in every global region, more seamless engagement on our own three coasts, naval air capacity for both diplomatic, international order and civility and enemy, and joined up naval, air, land and expeditionary ability, well resourced, trained, drilled and based at coherent and integrated centres like Esquimalt, Shearwater- Halifax, and deployed on a staged readiness basis at sea are vital to the Canada we all serve in the world we must now address.

We need as well a coherent strategic use of seabasing. If we are serious about both special forces, mixed humanitarian and security missions and if we want expeditionary capacity that does not always start many days if not weeks from potential zones of interest worldwide, we need to take seabasing a lot more seriously. Canada does not have a range of bases worldwide. We will never have a massive multi-platform fleet placed strategically on the world's oceans. But that should only argue more intently for seabasing capacity. Especially in the face of non-traditional combatants from non-state actors worldwide, our capacity to mount joined-up operations must not be limited either by airfields or traditional coastal base availabilities. Seabasing may require the J.S.S. answer, or lighter Australian-style supply and command options. But it cannot exclude air

capacity that facilitates insertion, enhanced patrol, humanitarian interventions or evacuation capacity.

It was Vice-Admiral Buck who, when Chief of the Maritime Staff, said in 2002 that: “on the basis that Canada should contribute to collective security commensurate with our desired national defence role in world affairs, a naval task group is the most flexible and easily sustainable instrument of foreign policy that a government can have at its disposal”.<sup>1</sup>

And while interoperability with American naval task forces is an important vehicle for collective security worldwide, and while Canada’s ability to discharge the command and control function at the head of large multi-national fleets in the Gulf, the Adriatic and elsewhere is a matter of modern established fact, a “Canada first” defence capacity must include a Canadian task group naval reach that can be independent and sustainable over long periods of time and at great distance from our shores when necessary.

Whether it be on the South China Sea, the Arabian Sea, the Persian Gulf, the Mediterranean, the Indian Ocean, off the Aleutians, on the mid-Atlantic, the North Pacific or off our own three coasts, a steady, multi-

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<sup>1</sup> V.Adm. R.O. Buck, CMS, Conference of Defence Association Institute

capable, fighting navy presence with the right platforms, above, upon and beneath the seas are vital to Canada's global reach.

The reality of the low intensity contingencies imperiling our national security, involving non-state actors or proxy client states in ways that puts our economic security, consular or environmental interests at risk is no longer constrained by the bi-polar discipline of the east-west divide that shaped the cold war. The restraint and containment strategies, along with the matching and robust investments NATO made were core factors in the USSR's embrace of another approach to its internal and global priorities.

The reinvestment by Russia in new naval capacity, the growth of the Chinese naval reach, the increasing and coming reliance on vital shipments of everything from liquefied natural gas, food stuffs, national resources, manufactured goods by sea, the coming intensity in offshore explorations and extraction of natural resources, all reflect a new geopolitical reality. There is no analysis of the challenges we face in the Arctic, on our expeditionary and special force exigencies, in our sub-surface needs for defence, training and sovereignty measures, in our interoperable missions with allies, in our need to seabase for reasonable flexibility that can embrace our present platform number as sufficient. Even if one embraces just a few of the naval operations that do not involve war such as UN sanctioned

enforcement, evacuation of non-combatants, assisting other nations in distress, intercepting threats to immigration or environmental integrity, peace support operations or assisting in public health or anti-drug initiatives, we need to be aiming over time for a sixty ship navy. And while most of those ships must be built in Canada – many can simply be procured more reasonably by joining up, where possible, with allies like the Australians, to broaden programmes already underway where delivery dates are not so remote. A sixty ship fighting navy is also the only way to ensure, over time, that every subsequent modernization or new procurement does not thin out the existing fleet to levels so low as to make any reasonable mix between tasking and capacity essentially impossible without Canada largely withdrawing from the seas.

So Halifax class modernization, frigate life extension, the Maritime Helicopter Project, the Aurora Modernization Project, the Joint Support Ship, the Arctic patrol ships are all vital and worthy investments of public funds. And while technology enhancements, coastal patrol air capacity and new Arctic coastal presence ensures a relatively better and technically more acute mix between existing capacity and existing missions, it does not enhance net capacity and reach overall.

Until CMS can get updates from large, flexible and combat-ready task groups off our northern and Pacific and Atlantic coasts, the southern American hemisphere, the south Pacific, the Asian waters of the Pacific, the Middle East and the Bering Sea, all on the same morning and have that kind of capacity to put at the disposal of CDS and the government of the day and Parliament, with contingent capacity at home and at seabasing locations that span the free range of humanitarian, diplomatic and combat options that are contingency-responsive, we are not mounting the naval presence Canada needs and today's world necessitates.

So, the fact that our navy, its trained men and women, its reservists and commanders, its planning and platforms do well today in constrained circumstances is outstanding, deeply praiseworthy but not sufficient.

Standing on guard for Canada can no longer and only be the positioning of assets on our coasts that can be deployed in training, allied operations or simple coastal patrols. It requires a well modulated, cooperative, joined up presence in marine zones and international waters far away from our shores, but very close to our national democratic, security and economic interests. Let me state it in numeric terms. A rational defence policy based on the right mix of technically adaptable assets and reach would see naval expenditures double in real 2008 dollars in the next decade

or so. That's where we should be headed. Does that mean we should reduce resources for other armed services? That is the wrong question. What it actually means is that we should increase defence expenditures overall.

This week, we will all pause to commemorate the Battle of the Atlantic, the sacrifices made, the battles won, the sea lanes kept open at great cost in blood and treasure. The Second World War tells us that great countries, strong democracies and good people can ramp up when they have to. But surely, in the face of the multi-polar, mixed and uneven intensity, the challenge of asymmetrical threats array for us and our allies, we must take the other lesson the Battle of the Atlantic imparts. Not being ready, not being flexible and present in key theatres, not having the diversity and number of platforms we really need is simply an invitation to the adventurism and aggression of others.

And none of us in this room want ever unwittingly or otherwise to be part of that.