

Diminished Defence: Canadian Coastal Warfare Doctrine 1987 to Present – Script for
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As Canada slowly commits sovereignty suicide¹ on the world stage and, hence, slides ineluctably into the American Empire, there are elements of our Defence policy close to home that could help strengthen our negotiating position with the Americans, and help nurse our sovereignty back to life. As the Standing Committee on National Security and Defence put it in their report *Defence of North America: A Canadian Responsibility*, “The defence of North America must be as important to Canadians as it is to Americans,”² or, at least, the Americans must think it is.

With NORAD still a strong bilateral organization, the air defence of most of North America is relatively secure, or at least stable. The sea and land defence is lacking in coordination. In his book *Fleet Tactics and Coastal Combat*, Capt Wayne P. Hughes Jr. reminds us that “sea battles are not fought for their own sake.... The study of maritime history reveals that fleet battle was rare; once again, the landing of force, the support of operations ashore, and the protection of shipping at sea are, as in the past, the most common employments of navies. It is worth pointing out that conducting an amphibious operation, clearing a minefield, or escorting a convoy were never easy propositions and have their own tactical skills.”³

Canada currently has neither capacity to, nor, it seems, desire to create the capacity to conduct amphibious operations, but the threat in our coastal and internal waters and harbours has become more real with the rise of global terrorism.

National sovereignty represents the preservation of the integrity of the nation’s people, resources, territory, and culture. “Threats to national security include those that are political, such as the threat of military or terrorists activity, and those that are criminal, economic, ecological or health-based.”⁴ In order to protect our sovereignty we must do three things at sea: “know exactly who is using those waters; maintain an unequivocal expression of government authority; and be able to respond quickly and effectively to violations of the law or threats to national security.”⁵ It is here that I think we have been seeing a lack of cogent reflection in our maritime policy, and where some clearer definitions might serve to cut through the fog of bureaulegic.

¹ Richard Moller & Mark Shepherd, *Sovereignty Suicide: Canada’s March Into the American Empire* (www.moller.ca, accessed 15 March 2004).

² Standing Senate Committee on National Security and Defence, *Defence of North America: A Canadian Responsibility* (Parliament of Canada, Ottawa, 2002), p. 24.

³ Wayne P. Hughes Jr., Capt. USN (Ret.), *Fleet Tactics and Coastal Combat* (Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, Maryland, 2000) p. 34.

⁴ Government of Canada, *Proceedings of the Standing Senate Committee on National Security and Defence Issue 17 – Evidence* (www.parl.gc.ca, accessed 12/08/03).

⁵ Government of Canada, *Proceedings of the Standing Senate Committee on National Security and Defence Issue 17 – Evidence* (www.parl.gc.ca, accessed 12/08/03).

In some government documents “defence” and “security” are used interchangeably, in others there seems to be an unspoken attempt to separate them. I therefore propose the following operational definitions.

- **Coastal/Harbour/Port Security** – The day-to-day activities of government related to the enforcement of domestic laws and regulations.
- **Coastal/Harbour/Port Defence** – the activities of military forces related to the confronting of real or perceived external threats to the nation’s sovereignty whether they manifest themselves domestically or abroad.

I will admit right of the bat that there is some overlap that can, and perhaps should, be expected in the actual implementation of security and defence initiatives; the major one being the gathering and sharing of intelligence. As far as possible within the morass of Canada’s coastal doctrine I will stick to these definitions.

During wartime the responsibility for the defence and security of coastal and internal waters has resided with the navy, however, who has responsibility, authority, and perhaps more importantly, capability to deal with these threats during peacetime and times of crisis is less clear. In the 1987 Defence White Paper the government said, “Canada is a maritime nation with a proud sea-going tradition. The three oceans off our shores are sources of natural wealth, which we are only beginning to tap, and avenues for the growing international trade upon which we are dependent for our well-being.”⁶ Today, the economic impact of the closure of the Ports of Vancouver, Montreal, or Halifax would have wide ranging impacts on the Canadian and US economies in a fairly short period of time, and this fact is starting to be used by US Port authorities to attract shipping traffic from Canadian ports towards American home ports.

Environmentally, a well placed mine sinking a single ship could have huge environmental impact on the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Seaway, and if it also blocked the traffic lanes an economic impact as well. “Our opponents have a natural advantage: it is easier to threaten shipping than to ensure its safety.”⁷ Recognizing this threat in 1987 the government announced that “The Naval Reserve will have two functions of its own: Naval Control of Shipping and Maritime Coastal Defence, including the clearing of mines.”⁸ The 1987 defence white paper actually declared for the first time the intention of the government to restore a coastal and inshore naval capability, which was to evolve around the Frontenac Class vessels.⁹

⁶ Government of Canada, *Challenge and Commitment: A Defence Policy for Canada* (Supply and Services Canada, Ottawa, Ontario, 1987) p. 49.

⁷ Government of Canada, *Challenge and Commitment: A Defence Policy for Canada* (Supply and Services Canada, Ottawa, Ontario, 1987) p. 50.

⁸ Government of Canada, *Challenge and Commitment: A Defence Policy for Canada* (Supply and Services Canada, Ottawa, Ontario, 1987) p. 66.

⁹ Rear Admiral Fred W. Crickard (Ret’d), *Evidence Thursday, November 30, 1995 Standing Committee On National Defence and Veterans Affairs* (www.parl.gc.ca/cgi-bin/committees/english_committee.pl?defa, accessed 29/03/2004)

In response to the White Paper, on 1 June 1988 the Commander of Maritime Command published MAOP 322, a “*Plan For the Security of Canadian Ports and Coastal Waters.*” Which was updated and reissued on 19 August 1991. The plan divided Canada’s territorial and internal waters into five districts:

- Maritime – NS, NB, PEI (4 Sub-districts)
- Newfoundland – Newfoundland and Labrador, the Eastern Arctic, and Hudson Bay (2 Sub-districts)
- Laurentian – Quebec west to Becancourt (3 Sub-districts)
- Seaway – Ontario and Quebec east to Becancourt (2 Sub-districts), and
- Pacific – British Columbia (3 Sub-districts)

Reserve Captains (N) and Commanders were appointed as district and sub-district commanders, and they started the task of gathering information on the operations within their areas of responsibility and building relationships with the various other government departments with interest and operations in the area.

The 1994 Defence White Paper re-affirmed Coastal Defence as the primary preview of the Naval Reserve, and trumpeted the pending arrival of the newly renamed Kingston Class coastal defence vessels purchased by the previous Conservative government. The arrival of HMCS *Kingston* and the remainder of the class shifted the focus of the naval reserves and of coastal defence doctrine.

The original plan was to provide two manned Kingston Class vessels to each coastal formation commander. Thus creating, for the first time in Canadian peacetime history, a mandated standing reserve force. These four ships were to “be operating around the clock like the bigger ships—day in, day out; week in, week out; year in, year out.”¹⁰ It was based on this model that the naval reserve establishment was set at 4,000 people. However, once the coastal formation commanders saw the capabilities of the vessels, and, more importantly, the huge cost savings that could be realized the demand was made that all twelve of the Kingston Class vessels be manned full-time. Although ten, rather than twelve, was the number finally settled on, the reserve establishment was not increased to reflect the greater demand.

The sailors had to come from somewhere, so the Maritime Coastal Defence Organization was gutted. In its place four Harbour Defence Units were created. MAOP 322 still remained in place, but no new doctrine was developed for the Harbour Defence Units. Notwithstanding these moves within MARCOM, government policy and in some cases MARCOM itself, continued to trumpet the operational responsibilities of the naval reserve in the area of coastal defence.

¹⁰ Rear Admiral Fred W. Crickard (Ret’d), *Evidence Thursday, November 30, 1995 Standing Committee On National Defence and Veterans Affairs* (www.parl.gc.ca/cgi-bin/committees/english_committee.pl?defa, accessed 29/03/2004)

The National Defence *Performance Report for the Period Ending 31 March 1997* still stated “the primary role of the Naval Reserve is Maritime Coastal Defence and the provision of crews for the twelve Maritime Coastal Defence Vessels. In addition, Naval Reservists are responsible for Harbour Defence, Naval Control of Shipping and augmentation of the fleet.”¹¹ It continued on to say “the Harbour Defence task provides for the defence of ports and anchorages and their immediate approaches in times of crisis. It includes provisions for port safety and security, harbour patrols and interdepartmental operations. The harbour defence organization consists of four units, two per coast. Each team is supported by a diving inspection team. Rigid hull inflatable boats are used to conduct the harbour control activities.”¹² This, in effect, defined an additional responsibility for the naval reserves—adding harbour defence to the coastal defence responsibilities—again with no increase in establishment, but at least now with some strategic guidance on which to build doctrine.

Speaking on behalf of the government in debate in the House of Commons on 14 May 1998 Byron Wilfert, MP (Oak Ridges, Lib) said, “the reserves are not a frill or some out moded luxury. They are a necessity, an integral part of the Canadian Forces. They are able and expected to augment and sustain regular units or, in some cases, execute specific tasks not generally carried out by the regular forces.... Naval Reservists have major responsibility for coastal and harbour defence and naval control of shipping.”¹³ So we see that the migration had started and the reserves now had major responsibility rather than responsibility for coastal defence.

In the 1998 Defence Planning Guidance there is no longer any mention of Coastal Defence, but MARCOM is directed to provide a “deployable harbour defence”¹⁴ capability.

By the time the 2001 Defence Planning Guidance is published, there is no mention of coastal or harbour defence capabilities, however on 27 April 2001 the Director Maritime Policy Operations & Readiness signed a letter of promulgation for a Port Security Unit Concept of Operations. The document asserts facts that are contrary to the references that it lists in its opening, and is riddled with internally contradictory statements, but is the only current doctrinal document defining Port and Harbour security and defence for Canada. On 1 April 2003 a call was sent out for recommendations for updating and revising the Concept of Operations, but to date no update has been promulgated.

So, at least from a coastal defence perspective, we are not giving the Americans very much to lead them towards a feeling that Canada is taking the maritime defence of

¹¹ National Defence, *Performance Report for the Period Ending 31 March 1997* (National Defence, Ottawa, ON, 1997) p. A-2.

¹² National Defence, *Performance Report for the Period Ending 31 March 1997* (National Defence, Ottawa, ON, 1997) p. A-2.

¹³ Byron Wilfert, MP (Oak Ridges, Lib), *Edited Hansard 1505 Number 106, Thursday, May 14, 1998* (House of Commons, Ottawa, ON, 1998)

¹⁴ National Defence, *Defence Planning Guidance 1998* (www.vcds.forces.gc.ca/dgsp/pubs/rep-pub/dfppc/dgp/dgp98/chapt2-e.asp, accessed 29 March 2004)

North America very seriously. Canadian naval reservists continue to participate in combined coastal, harbour and port defence and security exercises with the US navy and coast guard, but doing so in a policy vacuum means that every exercise is an *ad hoc* collection of equipment and skill sets, and Canadian officers continue to be left with no alternative but to order their sailors into potential small arms gun fights in inflatable rubber boats.

Over the last fourteen years we have seen coastal defence move from an energised organization, with a robust doctrinal foundation and plans, operationally and organizationally lead and manned by the naval reserve formation, to ten Kingston Class vessels manned by naval reservists under the operational command of the coastal formation commanders, and a hand full of inflatable boats employed with all but no doctrinal foundation.

In 1995 the *Special Commission On the Restructuring Of the Reserves* reported, “The evidence we heard about the Naval Reserve has generally been consistent with the view that it is experiencing few serious problems. In essence, the decision to give to the Naval Reserve the specific and exclusive task of maritime coastal defence... appears to have had a positive and energizing effect.”¹⁵ Almost ten years on, the picture might not be so rosy, but in the past we find the key to our future. The policy laid down in 1987, and reaffirmed in 1994, is still the government policy of record, no matter how much we have drifted away from it. By shifting responsibility for Coastal Warfare doctrine and training from the Commander of Maritime Forces Pacific to the Commander of the Naval Reserve we can re-energize the naval reserve, and turn it into something more than the discount temp agency it seems to have become. In addition, we will be giving the task to a group of committed individuals who will focus on it as a primary task.

This, inevitably, brings us to the issue of availability. The naval reserve is an all-volunteer organization. The current establishment of the naval reserve was developed assuming only two Kingston Class vessels per coast would be run full time. We are now running five per coast full time. Given that “with the all-volunteer system, you can only count on about a 10% to 15% turnout.”¹⁶ A 9:1 manning ratio was established. That is, for every full time billet required; nine part time establishment positions were created. This may at first blush seem extravagant, but as Rear Admiral Fred Crickard said, “This not a figure [way] out there. It is naval historical experience over the years.”¹⁷ Using this formula the naval reserve should have 3,060 billets solely for Kingston Class manning. Now, the current Port Security Unit concept of operations calls for 108 reserve positions per unit. Following the same formula as above this would call for an establishment of 3,888 for PSU billets, or a total naval reserve establishment for coastal

¹⁵ Department of National Defence, *Special Commission On the Restructuring Of the Reserves, Report* (Department of National Defence, Ottawa, Ontario, 1995) p. 24.

¹⁶ Rear Admiral Fred W. Crickard (Ret'd), *Evidence Thursday, November 30, 1995 Standing Committee On National Defence and Veterans Affairs* (www.parl.gc.ca/cgi-bin/committees/english_committee.pl?defa, accessed 29/03/2004)

¹⁷ Rear Admiral Fred W. Crickard (Ret'd), *Evidence Thursday, November 30, 1995 Standing Committee On National Defence and Veterans Affairs* (www.parl.gc.ca/cgi-bin/committees/english_committee.pl?defa, accessed 29/03/2004)

defence of 6,948. Given that this does not include the billets required for the Naval Control of Shipping tasking it is easy to see that the naval reserve establishment is at about half what it should be to adequately, and reliably provide the expected bodies.

It may seem unrealistic and extravagant to expect a doubling of the size of the naval reserve, but let's look at some dollar figures. Assuming an average daily rate of pay for a regular force person of \$100/day (and I know this is a little low, but for ease of calculation in this example it is close enough). For 108 positions the unit would cost you \$10,800 per day, or \$3,942,000 per year in salaries. Now the reserves are paid 15% less so that is \$85 per day for 108 people meaning a total of \$9,180/day. You only have to pay the reservist when you need them so we will assume a slightly higher than minimum training requirement and say that the reservists will do one two week exercise every year, and 20 days of class A training in preparation for the exercise; for a total of 34 days giving us a total annual cost of \$312,120. But we also have to include that 9:1 ration so we multiply our reserve annual costs by 9 and get \$2,809,080. Still \$1.1 million dollars a year less than the regular force costs, but remembering that only 10 to 15% of reservists volunteer for any given event (hence the 9:1 ratio in the first place) we'll assume the higher number of 15% which brings the cost of the reserve unit to \$421,362 or 10.7% of the cost of having the regular force provide the capability. We have a case where it would still, literally, be a deal at twice the price.

It is always hard to determine the value of credibility in the eyes of one's allies, but moving from a doctrinal deficit, to a credible, deployable coastal defence force would certainly buy us at least \$400,000 of credibility in the eyes of an American government and society so focused on territorial integrity.

“Canadians have been blessed by geography and history. It has been more than [180] years since this country was invaded by a foreign power. Canada as a nation has never suffered occupation. In war, we have always shared in the fruits of victory and have been spared the bitter taste of defeat. Canadian reactions to international security issues have been conditioned by these geographic and historical realities.”¹⁸ In short we have, to use the phrase of Danford Middlemiss, developed a sense that we have a “divine right of invulnerability.”¹⁹ If Canadians don't recognize that, as a minimum, the Americans don't share this belief and that we must take steps to reassure them we are serious about continental defence, our ability to influence the US, and indirectly our other trading partners, will continue to diminish, and sooner than we may think our sovereignty suicide will be complete. Reinvigorating our Coastal Defence capabilities, integrating them with the agencies and departments responsible for port security, and demonstrating a reasonable ability to operate with our southern friends and allies is a fairly inexpensive method of helping to strengthen our sovereignty.

¹⁸ Government of Canada, *Challenge and Commitment: A Defence Policy for Canada* (Supply and Services Canada, Ottawa, Ontario, 1987) p. 89.

¹⁹ Danford Middlemiss, *Proceedings of the Standing Senate Committee on National Security and Defence Issue 17 – Evidence* (www.parl.gc.ca, accessed 12/08/03).