

# Canadian Foreign and Defence Policy An Appalling Display of Neglect

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*"Canada's defence policy must reflect the world as it is, rather than the world as we would like it to be."*

1994 Defence White Paper

Another frustrating period for the Canadian Forces has appeared in the form of humiliation resulting from the government's mismanagement of the Iraq/Afghanistan file.<sup>1</sup> A situation which no doubt prompted members of the armed forces and Canadians to wonder what is going on in Ottawa.

The Prime Minister's "on the fly" foreign policy decisions during the Iraq War debate at the UN obviously accounted for a change in Canadian public attitude toward the armed forces. Simply put, his no-UN sanction, no-Canadian involvement decision confused Canadians, ultimately prompting them to question the combat-capability of the CF. Described as the "Chrétien Doctrine" by Allan Gotlieb, former Canadian Ambassador to the US, we learn that, "Aside from its lack of moral basis, it is difficult to believe that such a foreign policy serves our national interest."<sup>2</sup>

A country's foreign policy sets the agenda for national defence and hence, the requirements of the armed forces.<sup>3</sup> Clearly, development of new Canadian foreign policy is an absolute must, as is fostering greater cooperation with the US. Mr. Gotlieb goes on to say that, "If Canada genuinely wants to contribute to peace and international security, if it wants to affect outcomes in the world, then it must be able to influence the US."<sup>4</sup>

History tells us that the Rt. Hon. Lester B. Pearson discovered during his tenure that influence only comes when supported and backed up by a viable military, which is what Canada had in his time. Not so today. It appears that Canada is losing the status that showed we could be depended upon to conduct ourselves honourably when a friend and ally asked for help in a just cause.<sup>5</sup>

In a *Citizens Centre Report* article entitled "Rebuilding Respect," Kevin Steel reminds Canadians that if they believe our armed forces should be resuscitated, the government (and I say especially those in the PM's office) must recognize and deal with three realities: (a) Canada has no independent military role; (b) Canada cannot acquire authority over this continent's strategic decisions; and, (c) Canada's influence has

declined drastically because our armed forces have been woefully underfunded, under-equipped and undermanned for almost half a century.<sup>6</sup>

Unacceptable conditions confronting the CF are many, the Sea King replacement heading the list. Sadly, the forty year old helicopters deployed to our ships patrolling the Persian Gulf lack night-time surveillance and are considered to be less capable today than during Gulf War One. In other words, our ships are a potential liability at night. Concomitantly, the future for the award of a replacement contract looks dim, especially in light of recent information suggesting the military helicopter fiasco is shaping up to be the sorriest scandal of Jean Chrétien's government.<sup>7</sup>

It appears that material written by a Colonel who had a direct connection with the Sea King replacement project states that, "political 'interference' could compromise safety of [the] replacement fleet." Picking up on the academic paper which was written by the aforementioned officer, a [globe andmail.com](http://globeandmail.com) article states: "there has been so much interference in Ottawa's bid to buy new naval helicopters that the winning aircraft could end up offering less performance than the 40-year old Sea Kings."<sup>8</sup>

Adding to the confusion surrounding the helicopter replacement issue, *Toronto Sun* writers allege that military officials were pressured to change the specifications of their helicopter requests to allow greater competition from helicopter manufacturers other than Westland which builds the Cormorant. "The suggested changes are mind boggling: The military wants a three-engine chopper that won't crash if one engine fails; the feds say they should accept the two-engine chopper that will go into a 'soft crash' if one engine fails."<sup>9</sup>

While Defence Minister McCallum may have tried his best to keep the helicopter tendering process on an even keel, it is understood the alleged "shanghaiing" of the tendering process will delay delivery of the first Sea King replacement until at least 2009.

McCallum expressed a strange reaction to another important defence issue, namely the air- and sea-lift problem. We read, "McCallum's theory is that as long as soldiers are being paid, they won't care if their equipment is ancient and they cannot deploy overseas."<sup>10</sup> Conclusion: the air- and sea-lift proposals are not going anywhere since the MND has a strong preference for renting both air- and sea-lift capacity when the need arises. And who might be the sea-lift contractor should the need arise to move military equipment? Does he have a hot-line to the Ukraine?

Time and again it has been said that the future state of the navy depends on the investments we make today. The problem is that the defence budget barely covers today's maritime needs. Moreover, the lack of vision by the PM and his PMO "squishy thinkers" means that many important long-term requirements will go unfulfilled.

From the maritime point of view, there is a guideline for the navy's future in the form of the Chief of Maritime Staff's *Leadmark: The Navy's Strategy for 2020*.

Among many requirements that have been identified over the decade, there is one which has received but passing attention. That is the stated need for the replacement for the air defence and command and control capability provided by the Iroquois-class destroyers. In response to this need, *Leadmark* states the navy is developing a Command and Control Area Air Defence Replacement (CADRE) project.<sup>11</sup> It is believed the replacement of the Iroquois-class destroyers warrants a priority right next to the Sea King shipborne helicopter replacement programme.

While the number of personnel required to operate our ships might show signs of decreasing in future, the CF continues to have severe personnel shortages. As Dr. J. L. Granatstein has written, “the government pretends everything is fine and that nothing needs to be done even though experienced officers and technicians are leaving the military in a steady stream.”<sup>12</sup>

In an article entitled “Yesterday’s Army,” Douglas Fisher describes the problem confronting the government should it accept the concept of transformation and agree to provide funds to support the building of the CF to the prevailing fighting paradigm. Military transformation loosely translates into an effort to reshape the military into an agile, highly interconnected force, and purports to implement and capitalize on vast advances in information technology to engage and fight new kinds of wars in future.<sup>13</sup> A wonderful concept, but is our government prepared to recognize and provide the funding to implement the concept?

Transformation of the CF will cost billions. Illustrating but a small segment of the cost, Fisher provides his readers with an equipment shopping list costing a total of over \$6 billion. His \$6 billion figure ignores costing one of the forces most desperate needs—more troops. Nor does it include items such as remotely piloted vehicles, night vision equipment, satellite uplinks, heavy-lift helicopters, and battlefield computers, which the Americans recently used to such good effect in Iraq.<sup>14</sup>

In the process of attempting to deal with the transformation issue and acquiring urgently required modern military equipment, the government has lost sight of the importance of ensuring the security of Canada’s Arctic territories. It is a sad commentary that Denmark’s Standard Flex 3000 Offshore Patrol Vessel, which is capable of patrolling under arctic conditions, has been operating in our northern waters. Our navy does not have a single ship capable of doing the same (sailing our MCDVs to Resolution Island hardly qualifies them as Arctic-capable ships). Global warming patterns suggest that potential territorial jurisdiction problems will confront our government when the Northwest Passage becomes navigable on a year-round basis. Unless the navy acquires ice-strengthened ships, it will not be capable of sailing into ice-covered waters in the Arctic.

The next important maritime issue concerns Canada’s plan for operation in littoral waters. The worldwide trend towards littoral warfare comes at a time when our own *Leadmark* calls for the CF “to provide our country with modern, task-tailored and globally deployable combat-capable forces which can respond quickly to crises at home and abroad.”<sup>15</sup> Preparation and funding for littoral warfare might well run in conflict

with the CF mandate for global-deployable forces. It certainly introduces another costly, tough decision to be made in future. In the meantime the US, and for that matter other allies, are at the stage where the contracting process for the construction of Littoral Combat Ships (LCS) is well under way.

Recognizing the complexity of providing for the security of our country, Fisher makes an important point saying that if advisors to a future Prime Minister continue to speak and act with obvious ignorance on defence matters, is anything likely to change?<sup>16</sup>

Douglas Bland suggests there is every possibility that should our government find that it is called upon to ask the military to use force in the furtherance of government policy, they will likely discover that the armed forces have all gone home. Adding that perhaps the government should take note of what Douglas Bland has written, Canada, he suggests, should "accept the inevitable and simply make a financial contribution to the Pentagon and allow the United States to defend us."<sup>17</sup>

A May 26, cover story in *Time* magazine entitled "Where Has Canada Gone?", sums it up well. The subtitle reads: "The world's second largest country is being swallowed up by its own irrelevance." Invest in a copy, read it, then write your MP and the Prime Minister advocating the government reclaim the lost sense of direction in a new foreign and defence policy.

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## FOOTNOTES

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2 Allan Gotlieb, "The Chrétien Doctrine," Macleans essay, March 31, 2003.

3 Mike Trickey (Liberal MP), "Canada Becoming Irrelevant," Ottawa Citizen, January 7, 2003.

4 Gotlieb.

5 Editorial, "On the Sidelines Again," Ottawa Citizen, May 6, 2003.

6 Kevin Steel, "Rebuilding Respect," Citizens Centre Report, April 14, 2003.

7 Editorial, "Helicopter Scandal is a Real Legacy," Toronto Sun, May 11, 2003.

8 Daniel LeBlanc, "Copter Project Abject Failure," globeandmail.com, May 10, 2003.

9 Editorial, "Helicopter Scandal is a Real Legacy," Toronto Sun, May 11, 2003.

10 Scott Taylor, "Defence Under Fire Again for Mismanaging Books," Halifax Herald, October 14, 2002.

11 Leadmark: The Navy's Strategy for 2020, Directorate of Maritime Strategy, June 2001.

12 J. L. Granatstein, "Will the Government Defend Canada," National Post, September 9, 2002.

13 Gopal Ratnam, "Industry Considers Transformation Needs," Defense News, November 11-17, 2002.

14 Douglas Fisher, "Yesterday's Army," Ottawa Sun, April 27, 2003.

15 Fisher.

16 *ibid.*

17 Douglas Bland, "Will the Last Soldier Who Leaves the Forces Please Turn Out the Light," [canada.com](http://canada.com) news, September 10, 2002.

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