

Conference of Defence Associations 72nd Annual General Meeting

“Changing times, an evolving Canadian Forces – a new defence strategy”

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Please check against delivery

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I'm very pleased to be here to address you in person today.

I hope that those of you who caught my video presentation at last year's general meeting weren't looking forward to another movie.

When I last spoke to you, my message was about how our Government is rebuilding the Canadian Forces.

I spoke of our vision and the steps we were taking to make the Canadian Forces into a modern and flexible military ...

a combat-capable military ...

ready to tackle the realities and threats of the 21st century.

Last May, the Government of Canada took a huge step forward in realizing this vision when the Prime Minister and I formally announced the Canada First Defence Strategy (CFDS).

The Strategy is our plan — our blueprint, if you will — for rebuilding the Canadian Forces over the next 20 years.

It's our commitment to deliver a sustainable military that can better serve Canadians and Canadian interests.

These are interesting days for our Forces — their operational tempo is the highest it's been since the Korean War ...

and the multiple demands they're facing are more varied than ever.

This morning, I want to continue where I left off last year ...

and elaborate on what our government is doing to position the Canadian Forces for success now and in the future with the Canada First Defence Strategy.

I'd like to talk a bit about how it will benefit Canadians ...

and how it will ensure that, for all Canadians, the Canadian Forces are synonymous with excellence at home, strong continental partnership, and leadership abroad.

CFDS

Every single day, somewhere in the world, members of the Canadian Forces are risking their lives to keep us safe.

Whether it's braving treacherous winds to rescue someone from a storm-tossed sea ...

patrolling the skies ...

or heading out on a mission to train the Afghan police and army in Kandahar ...

there are dedicated men and women out there who are proud to wear our flag and a simple flash "Canada" on their uniforms.

Our government believes that asking them to go into harm's way requires a clear political commitment that ensures they have what it takes to succeed.

So when we came into office three years ago, we immediately set about addressing critical gaps in personnel and equipment.

Building an effective military requires time and clear, strategic goals.

It was obvious that we needed a long-term plan to turn things around.

Our answer was the CFDS.

We began by closely analysing the security environment and the challenges that our military faces today — and is likely to face tomorrow.

That gave us a clear vision of what we want our Canadian Forces to be able to accomplish.

First and foremost, we knew that Canadians would expect nothing less than a military that delivers excellence at home ...

a military that is a strong and reliable partner in the defence of North America ...

and a force that projects leadership abroad by contributing to global peace and stability.

Once we established our level of ambition for the Forces, we were able to determine the capabilities they require.

And from this, it was clear where we needed to invest.

To support the Canada First Defence Strategy, our government committed to increase National Defence's budget from approximately \$18 billion in fiscal year 2008-2009 to over \$30 billion by 2027-28.

This predictable, long-term funding will allow us to balance our strategic investments across the four pillars that underpin military capability.

The first of these pillars is personnel — we will be expanding the Canadian Forces to reach 70,000 Regulars and 30,000 Reservists over the next 20 years.

People are Defence's most important resource ...

And the Canadian Forces are actively recruiting the "best and the brightest" that Canadian communities have to offer.

For the last four years, they have generally met or exceeded their annual recruitment targets ...

but attrition remains a serious challenge.

We're working on a number of initiatives to retain trained personnel ...

initiatives that would improve career management and provide greater support for Canadian Forces families ...

such as improved deployment, reunion and relocation programs, expanded child care, enhanced mental health care and better alignment of Canadian Forces and Veterans Affairs Canada services.

The second pillar underpinning our military is infrastructure.

Some of you may know that National Defence is the largest property holder in the federal government...

The department owns approximately 21,000 buildings, and 800 parcels of lands covering 2.25 million hectares, which is four times the size of Prince Edward Island.

With CFDS, we're upgrading a significant portion of our defence facilities with new investments in infrastructure ...

like runways and single quarter accommodations.

In fact, the Strategy will allow us to either replace or refurbish about half of our infrastructure over the next 20 years.

These investments will help communities across the country and benefit local economies by creating opportunities for local companies and creating jobs for Canadians.

The third pillar is readiness — giving our Forces the flexibility and responsiveness they need to deploy.

Our investments in training and maintenance are improving the Canadian Forces' deployability and their sustainability.

More resources for readiness mean that we can respond better to the demand for spare parts, fuel and ammunition.

The fourth and final pillar is equipment.

We're acquiring new equipment ...

such as strategic airlift — these aircraft are already in service — and the Arctic/Offshore Patrol Ships.

And we'll be replacing our military's core fleets ...

important assets like destroyers and frigates ...

fixed wing search and rescue aircraft ...

fighters ...

maritime patrol aircraft ...

and a fleet of land combat vehicles and systems.

We're also working to improve the defence procurement process.

We've already reduced the procurement time very substantially by up to 70% on a number of recent, larger procurements, such as Strategic and Tactical Airlift.

And we responded in record time to the need for medium- heavy lift helicopters and UAVs for our troops in Afghanistan.

Economic Benefits for Canada

The 20-year planning and funding outlook of the CFDS is good news for the Canadian Forces and good news for the Canadian economy.

It will make it easier for companies in Canada ...

many of them small- and medium-sized enterprises ...

to continue to develop top quality defence products and services.

This will help position them as suppliers of choice for domestic and global markets — both defence and commercial.

This is a point I'd really like to emphasize ...

because even though defence procurement has been topical lately ...

I'm afraid that Canadians have not been getting a balanced picture.

As you know, not every contract can be awarded to a Canadian firm.

And this has been the subject of most of the recent debate — and the misunderstandings — surrounding defence procurement.

Our government supports a fair, open, transparent and competitive procurement process.

And we are committed to providing the Canadian Forces with the best equipment available, at the best price for Canadian taxpayers ...

while ensuring benefits for industry in Canada.

Under the Industrial Regional Benefits (IRB) Policy, winning contractors from outside Canada must spend an equivalent amount of the contract value here in Canada.

I want to make that very clear.

Even when a contract is awarded outside Canada, industrial benefits are returned to Canada.

dollar for dollar.

The contract for our C-130J tactical lift aircraft is a good example of the Policy at work.

Since January 2008, Boeing and Lockheed Martin have already announced contracts worth well over one and a half billion dollars for Canadian companies across the country as part of their industrial benefits commitment to Canada.

Whether defence contracts are awarded to Canadian companies directly or through IRB commitments, the result is high quality jobs for Canadians.

How the CFDS is making a difference

At Home

Our investments under the CFDS are giving the Canadian Forces the resources they need to perform their vital missions to the very highest standard.

Their number one mission is to deliver excellence at home.

Canadians feel safer knowing that there are brave souls out there ...

well-trained and equipped ...

and dedicated to our defence, security and safety.

Men and women who are there for us.

They're there when civil authorities call for assistance in times of crisis.

Just last spring, they evacuated a thousand people from flooded Northern Ontario communities.

And every day, they're out there — at great personal risk — saving Canadian lives in search and rescue operations.

They're carrying out sovereignty patrols, helping the RCMP conduct drug interdiction operations, and assisting with security for major events ...

like the security preparations that are already well underway for the Vancouver Games ...

Support to the Games will be our top domestic priority next winter — more than 4,000 Canadian Forces personnel will be part of the RCMP-led federal-provincial security team.

The Arctic is another area where the Canadian Forces are working closely with other government departments and agencies.

Last fall, I travelled to the Arctic with General Natynczyk and my colleague, Steven Fletcher, to observe Operation NANOOK — the largest of the northern sovereignty operations the Canadian Forces conduct each year.

Quite a number of other government departments and agencies were involved in the operation — from Public Safety Canada to Health Canada.

Local authorities — like the Emergency Management Office for Nunavut and Iqaluit's Qikiqtani Regional Hospital — took part, too.

Effective stewardship of the North requires a team effort — and integrated operations like NANOOK facilitate better collaboration between the Canadian Forces and their many partners.

As the Arctic becomes more accessible, the role our military plays is clearly becoming increasingly important.

That's why we're proceeding with efforts to expand the Canadian Rangers ...

standing-up an Arctic Training Centre ...

and establishing a berthing and refuelling facility in Nanisivik.

The CFDS is helping the Canadian Forces enhance their presence and develop their capabilities to operate in the demanding realities that are the North.

Continent

The Canada First Defence Strategy also calls for the Canadian Forces to be a strong and reliable partner in the defence of North America.

We have no closer friend and ally than the United States.

The depth and significance of this relationship has been particularly evident in the past few weeks, as we've built on our friendships with our colleagues and counterparts ...

and as we've forged new relationships.

As you know, Ottawa had the pleasure of hosting President Obama last week on his first official foreign visit.

We also hosted the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Mullen, this month ...

and I was able to meet with Secretary of Defense Robert Gates at the NATO Ministerial in Krakow.

I'll be meeting with him again in Washington next week.

These relationships are really the surface, though, of something far more profound and tangible ...

the fine work that our militaries do around the world and also here on the continent as they work together, side by side.

In my view, this partnership is second to none.

But as my colleague in Foreign Affairs said at yesterday's seminar, with a new administration in the United States, it's "important that we take stock of our defence and security relations."

This means exploring how our common defence institutions can be strengthened.

As we have for more than 50 years now, we will continue to guard our airspace — and now our sea approaches — through NORAD.

We will remain innovative and look for ways to make this cornerstone of our defence relation even more effective.

And Canada Command and US Northern Command will work bilaterally toward improving the defence of North America.

Taking stock also means looking at ways that we can work more closely on international security issues of shared interest ...

from counter-proliferation and Afghanistan to the future of NATO and defence cooperation in the hemisphere.

Whether at home or abroad, working in partnership means carrying our fair share of the defence burden.

Thanks to our government's efforts to renew the Canadian Forces, we are increasingly able to do our share.

As a stronger partner, we're winning Canada new respect.

Abroad

The same holds true in our relationships with our many other defence allies and partners.

Through CFDS, we are committed to a Canadian Forces that can project international leadership by making meaningful contributions to global security.

When it comes to international stability, Canada's influence on the world stage ...

our voice within the many regional and international organizations we belong to ...

is directly proportional to what we contribute.

And the Canadian Forces are an essential part of that contribution.

Afghanistan

Nowhere is this more apparent than in Afghanistan ...

where we have more than 2,800 men and women in uniform.

They are working as part of a whole-of-government effort to bring a measure of stability and relief to its long-suffering people.

The majority of them are operating in the Kandahar region, one of the toughest spots in Afghanistan — the heartland of the Taliban.

From the beginning, our troops have had to adapt to rapidly changing conditions and unexpected demands.

Our Government has responded by providing them with the best possible equipment.

Leopard II tanks.

Enhanced Route Clearance vehicles, which enable our engineers to better detect and clear IEDs.

And most recently, Chinook and Griffon helicopters, and UAVs.

Altogether, these acquisitions are making Canada an even more reliable partner for our allies and Afghan security forces.

There is no question that the mission is difficult.

Canada has paid a heavy price, with the loss of 108 soldiers and a diplomat.

We're up against a ruthless and resourceful enemy ...

and there has been a disturbing upsurge in their activities over the past year.

And not just in the south.

As I said, I just returned from a NATO Ministerial ...

and I also attended a conference in Munich and spoke in London this month.

There was much discussion about Afghanistan and the challenges faced by the ISAF mission.

Just last week, President Obama ordered additional soldiers and marines to Afghanistan ...

up to 17,000 troops, most of whom will be deploying to Regional Command South.

This is a very welcome part of the Americans' increased commitment to Afghanistan, which also includes more development assistance and diplomatic engagement.

But all the NATO countries need to pull their weight ...

and not just in terms of numbers of troops or equipment.

We must also look at caveats and geographic restrictions.

We need to get better at working together.

We need to engage the Afghan Government more effectively.

And we need to ensure that we're engaging Pakistan — this is essential to finding a sustainable solution for Afghanistan.

According to recent international surveys, Afghans continue to support ISAF ...

while support for the Taliban is down to four percent.

But these surveys also show declining support for internationals.

We must add urgency to our effort.

Our own government has been examining the Canadian mission in Afghanistan.

Last June, we renewed the focus of our contributions, placing greater emphasis on governance and reconstruction.

And we're moving toward the "whole of government" approach that the CFDS sees the Canadian Forces operating within.

We've assigned more diplomats and development officers to the mission.

But security remains critical to enabling their efforts.

I have been to Afghanistan several times now — my most recent visit was over the Christmas period.

I've seen the great need ...

and I've seen the changes being made.

Yes, progress is slow.

But it's real.

In Kandahar, three schools have been built by Afghan and Canadian hands.

And we have 22 more under construction.

There's progress on the Dahla Dam and its critical irrigation system.

Children are being immunized — with the goal of eradicating polio.

I'm also seeing real progress with the Afghan National Security Forces.

Canadian soldiers are mentoring five Afghan Army battalions and a brigade headquarters.

And within the past few months, the Afghan brigade planned and conducted its first independent brigade-level operation.

Modest achievements, but huge in terms of Afghanistan's future ...

educated, healthy children, jobs for Afghans, water, security.

As you know, the Canadian Forces' mission in Afghanistan will end in 2011.

The Parliamentary motion was clear.

But that does not mean an end to Canada's overall mission, and our diplomacy and development efforts will continue.

Success in Afghanistan is crucial for the good of the Afghan people.

But ensuring that Afghanistan is at peace with its neighbours ...

and can never again be used as a launching pad for terrorist attacks abroad ...

is good for international security, as well.

Conclusion

Ladies and gentlemen, a strong military requires the unswerving commitment of a government.

And our government has made that commitment with the Canada First Defence Strategy.

The Strategy is already delivering results for Canadians and for the Canadian Forces.

Thanks to our investments in personnel, in infrastructure, in readiness and equipment ...

our men and women in uniform are stronger partners in their collaborations at home and abroad.

While global security challenges and the capabilities needed to meet them will evolve ...

this government's vision won't change: a renewed military that has the leadership, the training and the equipment to deal with today's — and tomorrow's — challenges.