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64th Annual General Meeting and 18th Annual Seminar and the Conference of Defence Association - End-of-Day Summary

PRINCIPAL(S)/PRINCIPAUX: Dr. Douglas Bland, Chair of the Defence Management Studies, Queens University

Dr. Douglas Bland: I know better than to stand in between everybody in the reception, so I'll try and take some of these notes and bring them together. I was asking myself what's the most popular word used here today from the beginning this morning, and I think when the Minister was speaking I counted that he said "facing challenges", I think it was seven or eight times. I was actually listening to what he was saying but it occurred to me as we were going along and through the speeches as we were going along, that phrase was used, those words were used all the time and I conjured up an image of a soldier jumping out of an airplane and to his horror discovering that his parachutes completely failed and as he's heading towards the ground he yelled out, "Look out below, I'm facing challenges."

The notion that we've recognized the challenges - sometimes people are confused and they think that they've also recognized the problem or the solution, and I have to now use the word because my challenge is to try and sum up these very fine presentations by a lot of distinguished people and a variety of ideas. I want to do it not by mentioning everyone by name and rehearsing what was said, but by touching on a couple of things that struck me as interesting and then to try and focus a little bit on the other aspect of capability planning that's operational readiness and relate that operational readiness to the defence review and do that all in about 15 minutes I think or something like that. So if I'm a bit hurried it's just because I've scratched out great chunks of what I was going to say. Dare I move this thing? No.

One of the things that struck me when Jack Grenstein was talking, people asked him "What is the motivator for governments? What will make them change their mind?", and when he was talking, he went through the history and he said well, what has happened in the past has been great wars, big threats, First World War, Second World War, other sorts of ideas and people thought that that would be the motivator for change or was the motivator for change, and then when people looked at the September 11 events many people in this room and across the country quite reasonably thought that this would be one of those initiators that would lead to great changes and many were disappointed when that hasn't happened. This has been treated as perhaps an isolated event - back to business as usual.

But it occurs to me that, not to be too cynical, that the great motivator for political parties in Canada and all political parties in Canada, especially when they're in power, is the fear of

becoming politically liable for something. When they have a liability on the horizon they act quickly to put it aside. Anything that would look like it would upset their agenda or change their election promises or their possibilities gets to be a problem and I think that explains in some respects the contest that's been going on between, quite frankly, parts of the CDA, the general population and the government bureaucrats and public relations people. It's been a to-ing and fro-ing about whether there's a problem in the armed forces or not a problem in the armed forces and it's a battle over whether this is going to be a political liability, and I think what's happening now is that the political liability is starting to grow on people.

John Fraser talked about truth in politics and I think it's important to talk about, and it can be quite a difficulty for leaders when they avoid... it's not simply avoid telling the truth, but honestly looking for the truth, and it becomes a great danger for them as politicians when the truths come out but for military people, for Canada, it can be a great danger for soldiers in the field when they are confronted with the real truth that causes the great expenditure of blood and treasure. And I think it's very important and it's ethically responsible, or should be, for political leaders and military leaders at all times to be putting the truth of the situation in front of the people and in front of their troops.

Jim Ferguson, my good friend from native Manitoba, talked about the next war and the image of officers and controllers sitting in the 101 Colonel By Drive I guess, the apartment building or the place, directing operations and it seems like a new concept but it's not really. If you think back to the First World War, what was the image of the British Army? Generals in chateaus far removed from the battlefield, launching people into operations at great expense. But they were working in the era of the revolution in military affairs because they had indirect fire artillery and the idea was that the artillery was the weapon — or the gunners will correct me that the shell is the weapon — but the artillery community was the weapon and the concept then was "artillery conquers, infantry occupies". And I think without... I agree a lot with what Jim was saying, but there is that concept building in this revolution in military affairs.

But it also goes back... he's raising an interesting point that's starting to show up in academia a little bit, that we have entered a new era, we've passed the era of mobilization, levy en masse, the Napoleonic concepts are beyond us now, at least for the people in the west. What we're starting to see now is return perhaps to the 17th/18th century truly professional armies, small groups, very capable military organizations at land and sea, now in the air, set aside from society to go about the government's business without interfering with the people and the economy and so on, where we've left this notion perhaps of mobilization and that's going to have a big impact on us as we go forward.

Howie Marsh, well, Howie. I have great admiration for Howie's intellect and for his grasp of technical matters that I don't understand, and his way of presenting them and his enthusiasm, his enthusiasm for them. But I must say after listening to him numbers of times, I never know whether to be optimistic or pessimistic. Perhaps he will help me through that sometime in the future.

David Pratt talked very comprehensively about the political roles of the governments and

what we can expect, not much change, which is a reasonable way to look at things, but I was struck by the notion that he said that the era of mutual assured destruction has passed. I think that the only thing that we need to keep in mind here is that the only thing that's passed in that concept is the mutual. What we're talking about is assured destruction for anybody who gets in our way. It may be limited warfare for us but it was total warfare for Milosovic and we need to remember that when we are dropping these weapons on people who throw spears that it's a very different kind of warfare we're engaging in and it might rebound on us as it has.

The conference has quite rightly had its eye on the combat capabilities of the armed forces, but capabilities are of little value if they're not ready for use, and the implicit second purpose of the meeting and the message I heard coming out often was that we need to address the concept of force readiness and that is a subject which surprisingly is an orphan in Canadian defence history, in Canadian defence policy, in military doctrine. We talk about almost everything else but we don't talk about force readiness. Go to the white papers over the years if you've got lots of time to spare and nothing much interesting to do and you'll have a hard time finding in any of those documents any reference to operational readiness. And I think that has to be part of the new white paper that we're looking for. Well, how are we going to keep operational readiness on the map?

The first thing we have to understand, that operational readiness is not of military interest. In other words, there is no intrinsic reason why a military unit should be at high or low readiness. The only reason comes from foreign policy, defence policy objectives, goals of the government. Then we'll bring units to whatever state the government wants. The imperatives of operational readiness come from foreign policy. If politicians want to keep control of crisis management systems, then they should have their forces at high states of readiness so they don't have to make visible moves during the early parts of the crisis to bring troops online, something that we seem to have to do all the time.

If our foreign policy is still axworthy in the sense that we want to be a force for good in the world and to go out, as Tom would say, or Lloyd I should say, Lloyd Axworthy would say, and be involved in other people's problems, then foreign policy planners have a right to be involved in discussions about the state of operational readiness of the Canadian Forces and that's where I think the integration of foreign policy planners and defence planners in a defence review is important, not in trying to come up with some idea about, you know, the world's round and there's going to be lots of Chinese and all those kinds of things. What we need to do is relate foreign policy objectives, practical foreign policy objectives, to defence decisions.

You know, in the past Lester Pearson might have won the Nobel Peace Prize for his initiative to organize a Middle East emergency force in 1956, but he only proposed that and he was only successful at it and he got his medal for it because the Canadian military at the time was ready and capable of doing what he proposed. That's the difference between 1956 and 1996, the bookends of our intervention history. 1996, as you recall, we tried to go to Zaire to save people in that dreadful situation and when the Canadian Forces tried to organize a multinational command and control system and to deploy forces over there, we couldn't get

there. In 1956 we got into the Middle East with our own ships and our own planes, without own commanders, with a Canadian, General Burns, as Force Commander of the entire organization, and Canada was the leader of smaller nations in that crisis, and it worked for us because General Eisenhower, President Eisenhower at the time, gave Lester Pearson the auto-pack after we came back. So people talk about softwood lumber.

When we talk about operational readiness, there's three questions that are central to any defence review or policymaking area, and the questions are: Readiness for what, readiness for when and readiness of what? And I won't go through the entire paper but when you start with the first question, readiness of what, it's actually a very much under-developed concept in our system I think. When we do a defence review we always ask the inevitable question, "What is it that the Canadians wish the Canadian Forces to do?" And we always get the same answer. "Defend Canada, defend North America in cooperation with the United States and do multinational operations for the good of the world in other places."

And then we, after that's answered, bureaucrats, military officers, academics I guess, get into a generally mind-numbing reductionist reasoning process of trying to bring these general statements of objectives down to precisely measurable missions, roles, tasks — you've all seen the little descending chart — arriving at exactly what it is you're going to have to do. This process is always complicated when you have advocates from inside the organization, from outside, whether from the army, navy and air force or from peace groups, who want to define the end state - what is it that the armed forces are going to do? One end state is peacekeeping, humanitarian operations, boy scouts with guns as the Prime Minister unfortunately said one day, or at the other end you're going to have people who say "No, no, we want to get back to proper soldiering, get ready for the great war and fight the battle space" — what is it called? — "the battle space conflicts of the 21st century."

The trouble with these kinds of end-state predictions is they're based on bold assumptions that we actually know what's going to happen, that they misconstrue the battlefields and the events that people are going to get into. The reality is that while governments can decide where to employ the Canadian Forces, they rarely have any control over the circumstances that arise from that employment.

The other thing that we know is that when we send people into operations, they don't go out and become involved in a precise spot on the so-called spectrum of conflict. Indeed, what has always happened in warfare in our experience and most people's experience is that soldiers and sailors and airmen go out and they're involved in some aspect of the spectrum of conflict all along it, all at the same time.

My father was in the Canadian Army in Holland in 19... at the end of the War, and one thing he did for sure as an artilleryman is he fired weapons at the Germans and killed the Germans — war fighting — and he gave out candies and stuff to kids and he helped build hospitals and schools and did all those kinds of things that are mingled together and we know that's what's going to happen. So the attempt to come up with a precise end state for the force for capabilities and for readiness is probably... what is it we call today? - a mugs game. It's not

the answer and it gets for-structure planning onto the wrong area.

What we do need to do, and as several people have mentioned already today, it is much more preferable to aim for developing and employing forces in a carefully selected range of high payoff generic missions and their close variables, leaving the details of specific missions to able force commanders who can make the changes. In other words, we'll plan for.. the for what is for specific missions. It's not about developing a whole bunch of capabilities that we will have around the base, around the hangar floor and then when something happens we'll rush together and knit something together and send it someplace. That's not the way to go.

If you control — now, the second question, readiness for when — if you control, are careful in controlling the readiness for what, then the question of readiness for when becomes a second order and an easy question. If you know what you're going to do, the range of what you're going to work in, being ready to do the mission becomes less important. If the orders are reversed, making readiness for when more important than readiness for what, arguably as we have in the present defence policy, then training and planning have no objectives other than to get ready to be at 30 days notice to move. You know, the old armor core saying "Move now, route to follow". We have no point of orientation for commanders and trainers if it's only about being ready to for when, not ready for what.

Consider the good old days of the Cold War and NATO Forces in Europe, both in one keg and four brigade, the missions were generally known and planning and training were concentrated on the mission. The answer in Canadian Forces Europe to the "for when" question was "whenever we are called, we're ready". Imagine how ridiculous it would have been if we sat around with no mission waiting for the call to go and then we would have had to, like the CDS is forced to do many times here, organize the mission, train for the mission, get ready to deploy, then deploy. By then the Russians would have been at the Rhine, not that they might not have been there anyway. But the concept is to get the forces ready for a specific set of missions and not missions predicated on army/navy/air force, I might add.

Readiness of what? And here we've had I think a consistent word right from the Minister in the morning through John Fraser's words and other people's words and in the questions - the readiness for what for Canadian Forces should be the readiness of our people. It's people that turn inert capabilities, tanks, airplanes and so on, into actual capabilities. And people have spoken and written many words about the need to improve the capabilities of the Armed Forces and I think it worries me sometimes and it does worry me sometimes that in some circles leaders and planners are concentrating their efforts and intellect on the so-called revolution in military affairs. Although high-tech equipment and weapons platforms, to use the modern jargon, will increase the capabilities of the Canadian Forces, they don't increase the readiness of the Canadian Forces necessarily.

The under-rated element I think in our thinking and in strategy 2020 is people, and we need to get away from that. I think it's conspicuously inappropriate for people to say, as a general officer was forced to say, thought he had to say because his resources are pressed, that the policy is to spend people to buy equipment. Trained people with less effective platform effectiveness than is desired in most cases can overcome enormous difficulties and adapt to

all sorts of situations along the spectrum of conflict and the details of a particular mission. That's a lesson from most of our history and it's certainly the lesson from our involvement in the civil war in Yugoslavia and other kinds of wars. Readiness for people is what's really required.

So those are the three questions I think that we need to look at in a defence review, is readiness for what and make it readiness for the mission. What's the common element then when we start looking at capabilities? What is the capability that we want the Canadian Forces to be able to do? I think the answer is that we want not just forces but force. The capability that we have or the Armed Forces ought to have to answer Huntington's old question, what are we paying you for?, we're paying the Canadian Forces to be an organization that can go into any number of situations and apply the force the arms to those situations as is appropriate in the circumstances. So the final, the reductionist answer here is what is the for what? The for what is to organize to be able to apply force to specific missions, and I think we have to get away from the notion that we're out there to deploy forces, and then we'll try and figure out what they're supposed to do. That's not what we're doing, we're applying force, deploying force into situations.

Let me just jump quickly into a couple of points on the defence review that I've heard around here today and other places and a couple of ideas of my own that I think I'd like to talk about. Two fundamental questions that should be on the defence review. I don't think the defence review should be undertaken as an attempt to solve the problems that we talked about today, the present-day, present-force problems. The CDS and the people can do things with what's at hand adequately in the circumstances. It might not be perfect, it certainly isn't perfect, but they can get by. The defence review doesn't want to have a talk that has an attention span of the next couple of months. I think the main aim of the defence review is to answer the question "How are we going to go about rebuilding the Canadian Armed Forces over the next seven or eight years?" The defence white paper ought to have a program from beginning to end with the resources, resource guidelines - how are we going to rebuild the Armed Forces over the next seven to 10 years?

After seven years of famine, it's time for seven years of plenty. The process might best be directed by building a harmonious force structure on the premise that Canadians and Canada will be prepared for certain standing generic missions at home and abroad in which force, not just forces, will be used.

The second point, the second point in my view might be a little more controversial because it deals with Canada/U.S. defence relations. In my view, the defence review led by Parliament, not the bureaucracy, must reconsider the assumptions and preferences of the defence establishment with regards to interoperability with the United States and with the Canadian Forces and the United States. The notion that the Canadian Forces should become increasingly allied with and even a part of, an operating part of the United States Army, Navy and Air Force is an idea that divorces defence policy from foreign policy. And moreover it is an idea that's impossible to sustain politically in Canada in a crisis when conflicts seem possible.

If you don't agree with that, have a look at the Cuban Missile Crisis when the Canadian Forces were completely integrated, dedicated and working with the NATO systems and the government, because they didn't pay any attention, weren't aware of the details. When the crisis came Prime Minister John Diefenbaker now became interested, ran down to National Defence Headquarters and pulled on the levers only to find that they weren't hooked onto anything. The Canadian Forces had taken off in front of him. We can't have those kinds of situations developing again. That's not to say that Canada shouldn't build forces that can cooperate with the United States in the defence of North America, and arguing against imprudent concrete associations doesn't say anything about the impossibility of working alongside American units and other units in certain circumstances. However, there's no high value payoff for Canada and Canadian interests in basing our entire national defence and foreign policies on providing redundant capabilities to the United States Navy or small companies to an army that has as many divisions of infantry as we have battalions. The fact that such associations are professionally rewarding, benefit the Canadian Forces, are welcomed by American Commanders is, as they say, true but irrelevant.

What's most critically required to serve our national interests are appropriately interoperable Canadian and United States defence and foreign policies. What Canadian foreign policy demands or ought to demand from the Canadian Forces are Canadian military ways and means that would allow Canada to be truly useful to Canada and the international community but especially to the President of the United States and the American Congress in defence and security matters. In 1956, but not in '96, Canada had the means to deploy an independent expeditionary force and to command a multinational emergency force under the United Nations flag. In 1956, we did that, not out of the goodness of our hearts, but to calm an international crisis which threatened the security of the United States but which President Eisenhower could not address without escalating the crisis. We stepped in to do something the Americans couldn't do for themselves. Canada, under the guise of UN neutrality, feigned disinterest, was helpful to the United States and the world community and we were rewarded for that.

The lesson is simply this in my view: Canada's permanent foreign policy is to be as helpful to the United States as possible in the circumstances, especially in matters of national defence and security. We receive high payoff, high-level payoffs by taking on defence and security matters and tasks and responsibilities where and when the United States cannot either for domestic or international political reasons, do them by themselves. Providing small redundant forces to American commanders doesn't meet this objective and might impair it. The inevitable... but inevitably being helpful by being able to act credibly and independently would require Canada to re-establish its capability to deploy and to lead middle-power expeditions under various mandates independent of the United States and other major powers. Getting there is going to be the problem but I think it's a concept and an approach that must be considered by this new defence review.

Finally, I think this conference and the efforts of the CDA and the remarks of participants and people in the audience have moved us along the path towards new ways of thinking about Canada's place in Hobbs's world. The challenge for everyone here is to sustain that momentum in your own communities, in my view. Now finally, I don't want to steal the

President's thunder and he wouldn't let me, but I would like to join those who have acknowledged the very important part the CDA and the CDAI especially has played in the development of Canadian defence policy and keeping it on a high level for the last number or 10 years, and especially the efforts of Alain Pellerin and Shayne Henry whose work is, I know in the academic community, regarded very highly, and besides that it's a good source of information. But it is a great credit to them and it's a great credit to the organization. I've heard it said that Shayne Henry is going to retire and not be involved in any more of this stuff in the years to come. I'll believe that when I see it, especially if there's another defence review. You know, Shayne, once more into the breach. But really, it is a great credit to these individuals and the volunteers, essentially volunteers who work with him in the Institute and I congratulate them for that effort and for this conference. Thank you very much.