

The Perfect Wave: The Canadian Military Facing its Most Significant Change in 50 Years

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"Canada's Security Interests – Lessons of History"

Good morning. It is a pleasure for me to be here with you today, and I am honoured that the Conference of Defence Association Institute asked me to be a speaker. I congratulate the Institute for sponsoring this seminar, and I applaud the graduate students for taking the time to prepare papers and presentations for the seminar and the chairs for offering their time to make this seminar work.

The theme selected for this conference *Canada's Security Interests – Lessons of History* is most appropriate for the times. Our extended participation in Afghanistan and, by extension, non-military participation with the United Nations multinational forces in Lebanon and with the African Union in Darfur, Sudan, is generating continued debate about what are Canada's security interests in this new environment. Just these past weeks, there has been much discussion on how we got involved in Afghanistan, "the twisted road to Kandahar" as one Globe and Mail columnist put it last week, and why we are engaged in a nasty war so far away. Some military and political analysts are already writing the first history of Canada's decision to go to Kandahar. It is interesting, in some ways, to think, as Janice Gross Stein and Eugene Lang argue in their recent book, *The Unexpected War*, that "Canada slipped into war in Afghanistan, step by step, incrementally, without fully understanding that it was going into war."

What I want to do this morning is to talk to you about the CF, more particularly to highlight the important changes we are currently facing. I will do this while presenting some historical perspectives to offer some context to those changes.

My recent two assignments, coupled with my current appointment as Commander CDA, provided me with unique perspectives to talk about change in the CF. I want to share those with you, as I believe these are relevant for the challenges we all face. My experience as a Team Leader for a CDS Action Team in 2005, followed by being Chief of Staff of the CF Transformation Team, added to spending a year and a half in the Policy Group working at the military strategic-diplomatic-political interface, is shaping much of my comments of this morning.

It is an understatement to say that the Canadian Forces have more visibility amongst Canadians than we have seen in nearly a decade, perhaps even more. The last time we had so much publicity and front-page stories was in the years of the Somalia Inquiry, and when we faced the important reductions of the mid-1990s. It was a "period of darkness," as General Hillier stated last winter at the annual general meeting of this Association, and a period that we would like to forget.

This time, however, it is different for the Canadian Forces – quite different. There is a war in Afghanistan, and the Canadian Forces are in the middle of it. The events in Afghanistan, and the issues surrounding our decision to participate and to extend past 2009, if this is the

decision this country takes, constantly make headlines in our national newspapers and get much coverage on radio and television.

How can it be otherwise, when we consider the risks we are facing in Afghanistan, the mounting cost of the war (\$7B), and the sacrifices we have already endured – this, in a country, Afghanistan, that we could not even spell the name correctly in 2001?

It has been six years this month that we engaged in this conflict in Afghanistan, in the aftermath of the events of 9-11. Sustaining this high-level engagement creates many challenges for the CF and the department. And this sustainment is taking place within a change environment without precedent for the Forces. *I believe* is the most important we are seeing in nearly half a century.

Much of this change does not make headlines in the newspapers – like the war, and few people outside the military are taking notice. What is even more remarkable in some ways is that most people inside national defence, including at the general and flag officer level, are too busy managing its consequences that they barely have the time to reflect on the scope of the change. I believe these changes will shape the CF for years to come, as was the case with many of the changes that took place in the 1960s. Equally as important, the choices we are making *now* will influence future foreign policy decisions involving the Canadian military.

There are three fundamental currents driving this change. Perhaps, it is best to imagine three under-water earthquakes, each having generated their own series of tidal waves. The waves are adding up to each other, creating a “perfect wave” that the CF must navigate through. I say perfect wave not as in “everything is perfect,” but more like a perfect storm analogy: the conditions created by three important change initiatives are affecting the CF concurrently.

These three are the: (1) the CF Transformation launched by General Hillier in early 2005; (2) the decision by both the Liberal and Conservative governments to increase the strength of the CF; and (3) the decision in 2005 to deploy Canadian troops into a combat role in Kandahar, Afghanistan. Let me look at each of these in turn.

In the post 9-11 era, military analysts and senior officers have identified the need for a new vision to guide the CF in meeting the defence and security challenges of the 21st century, especially the asymmetric threats posed by terrorism and failed or failing states. The previous CDS, General Ray Henault, had clearly recognized that fundamental changes to the CF were necessary to better position the institution for the coming decade. Transformation and change were the main themes of the last two CDS Annual Reports to Parliament.

However, transforming the CF without the benefit of a new defence policy, without an overarching CF vision, and with a frozen budget, proved to be near impossible. The election of a new prime minister, Paul Martin, the appointment of a senior Cabinet minister as MND, Bill Graham, and the arrival of General Hillier as CDS in February 2005 would provide the long-awaited opportunity.

On 4 February 2005, General Hillier, assumes command of the CF. Within days, he launched the CF Transformation, having convinced the government of the need for a new vision for the CF. A decision by the government to increase the defence budget just three

weeks after the appointment of the CDS gave the Transformation added impetus and much credibility.

I was fortunate to be part of the first general/flag officer session where General Hillier sketched for us the CF vision; there was much enthusiasm and the air in the room was electrifying. I – we – had not seen anything like this in our career. We had a definite sense that we were going to be part of a historical period in the evolution of the CF. I remain convinced today that we are heading in the right direction, and that this change was needed.

Within months, the government released a new Defence Policy, advocating a prominent role for Canada's military within Canada's international policy, providing the foundation for change that the CF leadership was seeking. The CF vision is bold (I say *is* because it remains relevant): it aims at fundamentally reorienting and restructuring the functions of the CF and its command and control to better meet the emerging security demands at home and abroad.

General Hillier strongly believed – still does – that for the CF to achieve greater operational effects in Canada and around the world, it would need to assume a more “integrated and unified” approach to operations, which could only be achieved through a major transformation of the existing command structure, the introduction of new operational capabilities, and the establishment of fully integrated units capable of a high-readiness response to foreign and domestic threats.

But there are two truly dominant ideas that underpin this Transformation. The first one is to transform the Forces to better deal with “the snakes,” the term the CDS employs to refer to the potential non-state actors enemy we may face in the new security environment, instead of “the bear,” representing the more conventional armed forces of the Cold War. To be able to deal with “the snakes” means changing the force structure of the military from one capable of operating “full spectrum” to one adapted to non-state actors. In practical terms, this also means in the minds of many to fundamentally transform the CF “into a force capable of operating from littoral areas and focused on land effects.”

Barely a year into the CF Transformation, in January 2006, the Conservatives were elected, replacing the Liberals, and their defence platform, while largely coherent with the Defence Policy of April 2005, contained important differences. The CF vision, especially the portion relating to the acquisition of new operational capabilities, needed harmonization with the agenda of the new government. This process is continuing, and at some point we will see this new vision spelled out in a new policy yet to be promulgated, the *Canada's First Defence Strategy*.

Still, several major new crown projects were announced these past 20 months, notably: the acquisition of four C-17s long-range strategic aircraft, new CC-130J tactical transport aircraft, medium lift helicopters like the Chinooks, three joint support ships, modernization of the Frigate-class ships, eight new arctic patrol ships, and new tanks.

There is one core project of the CDS vision that was being developed that is now on hold: the expeditionary amphibious capability – the “Big Honking Ship” – intended to give Canada a capability to deal with non-state actors in a hostile littoral environment and which could also act as an offshore command post. At the present time, there is simply not enough funding to sustain all the above projects and the Joint Contingency Task Force. Still, many

of the projects support the new vision, and provide the foundation for re-orienting the operational capabilities of the CF.

The second dominant idea, seldom discussed, is the progressive removal of the bureaucratic shackles that constrained the CF from becoming more operational. This is, in simplistic term, to move away from a management culture, inherited from the 1960s and 1970s, to one that places operations primacy at the centre of all decisions. The new operational vision for the CF does not work well with a bureaucratically-unified CF.

In 2005, the CDS established six key principles to guide the Transformation. I will not go through them here but suffice it to say that his focus on operations primacy and a command-centric organization are more than shaping command and control structures and capabilities: they are progressively changing the culture inside the CF.

In terms of reorganization of the CF, the last time we had change of this magnitude is in the 1960s, with integration and unification of the three services. In many ways, several recent decisions in the CF reverse decisions made by Minister Paul Hellyer in the mid-1960s. Let me talk a bit more about the impact of Minister Hellyer's policies, as they influenced the Forces for over forty years.

Minister Hellyer strongly believed that the mechanisms of civil control of the Canadian military needed a major overhaul, and that this was best achieved through a centralization of the control and administration of the CF into one Chief of the Defence Staff, instead of three service chiefs reporting independently to the minister. Minister Hellyer wanted one integrated Canadian defence policy, one overall defence program, one CF Headquarters (CFHQ), and one Chief of the Defence Staff with authority over the three service chiefs. He achieved most of it.

But Minister Hellyer had more change in mind for Canada's military forces than just headquarters restructuring. On the heels of the Glassco Commission, the Royal Commission that looked at the organization of the federal government, he viewed a major reorganization of the defence forces as the only means to make resources available for future capital equipment acquisitions. He was convinced that the establishment of a streamlined bureaucracy, and the modernization of defence management methods, would help in achieving the desired economies.

One other way to save was to integrate completely the services into one service (the Canadian Armed Forces), hence unification. Hellyer also changed the command structure, creating six functional commands instead of the eleven headquarters of the three services. There is no indication that Hellyer was concerned about the potential adverse impact that the administrative centralization he was proposing would have on the operational effectiveness of the various CF components. This is where the reorganization of the 1960s differs with General Hillier's transformation, who is not focused on efficiencies but operational effectiveness.

Minister Hellyer's ideas and his policy of unification generated controversy from the outset, with Hellyer frequently being blamed for subsequent failings of defence policy and the armed forces. This is probably unfair, as there were several positive effects of unification. A plethora of tri-service committees was abolished, considerable reduction of facilities and services was achieved, a single CF policy and planning process for the entire Department was established, decision-making was improved with the creation of the office of the CDS, a broader understanding of the tasks and problems of the CF was obtained at the senior

levels, and the scope of career opportunities for some support trades and classifications was expanded.

There were negative effects of unification, stemming largely from Minister Hellyer's single-minded focus on administrative efficiency. While, in fairness to Minister Hellyer, not all negative aspects were the direct result of unification. But many dominant ideas that constituted the pillars of unification set the pattern for further centralization at NDHQ, and significantly influenced the continued bureaucratization of defence in the 1970s and early 1980s, a trend for which Minister Hellyer continues to be blamed.

Back to 2007 and the CF Transformation. The CDS created new operational commands, including the Special Forces Command, to emphasize operations, and not service development and focus. Major command and control changes have been put in place – especially the new operational commands created in February 2006 (Canada Command, CF Expeditionary Command, CF Special Operations Forces Command, and Support Command) and the Strategic Joint Staff. In many ways, this transformation is strengthening the concept of “unified” commanders, that is, a commander with a joint staff with the authority to direct and coordinate operations with forces and capabilities generated from the three environments and other formations. These days, the CDS is tackling the next spiral of the Transformation to pursue the CF vision. These include areas such as training, the professional development of officers and NCMs, personnel support, training delivery, leadership, the distribution of the various occupations in the CF, to name a few.

But the CF Transformation is not taking place in a void. While Minister Hellyer's restructuring, which I referred to before, took place in a period of reduction of CF personnel, the present transformation is taking place in a period of growth of the CF strength not seen since the 1950s, adding significantly to the challenges, but providing unique opportunities as well.

The Transformation of the CF will not rely only on a new command and control framework, new technologies and equipment, “but more important on the human capability that is the basic component upon which all military capability depends.”

As of July 2007, Regular Force (Reg F) members numbered 53,600 trained effective strength (TES), with a total RegF strength of 63,400. Toward the end of the 1990s, the strength of the CF hit a low of about 57,000. In 2005, the Liberal government announced increases of 5,000 Reg F members and 3,000 reservists. The new Conservative government announced last year increased of 10,000 Reg F and 13,000 reservists. The government would like to reach 75,000 Reg F members, but an intermediate target of 68,000 for 2011 has been established for now. This represents an important increase (nearly 30%) from the low of the late 1990s.

Growing to those levels is a significant challenge, considering the strength of our economy, and the current demographic features of this country. In a very competitive labour market, young Canadians want to keep their options open; while many join the CF (over 6,000 last year, likely over 7,000 this year), it is not certain they will opt for a long career.

The projected growth of the CF is the most significant since the Korean War and the early 1950s. In 1950, before the war, the strength of the CF was at 47,000, but it increased to over 100,000 in three years. At the time, it had been decided to recruit a Special Force for the Korean War. Barely six years after the end of the Second World War, it was easier to

recruit then as there was significant residual capacity from the war. After the 1950s, it was largely a decline of the CF strength for forty years.

This rapid force expansion, coupled with the CDS Transformation, is putting to test our recruiting and training systems, which had been operating in a low gear for nearly twenty years. For instance, the CF Leadership and Recruit School in St-Jean more than doubled its establishment in three years (now over 600), and the school had to change the way it conducts its courses because of the high throughput of students and increased emphasis on individual survivability and force protection. Lowering the entry level fitness standard for recruits is increasing our pool of potential CF members, but at the same time it is creating other challenges that we have to manage. This month, we will have 32 platoons of recruits with nearly 2,000 students in house. When you think that we used to recruit just barely 1,000 persons *a year* in the 1990s, it gives you some perspective of the scale of the Force Expansion.

These changes are important, for sure, but the most determinant element affecting the CF is – without a doubt – the Afghanistan Campaign, and more particularly our combat engagement in the Kandahar region. This represents our most intense army engagement since the Korean War, and, worth highlighting, our first counter-insurgency or guerrilla war since the Boer War in South Africa in 1900.

How do historians of tomorrow will characterize this war? Usually, the level of participation, the intensity and length of the war, and the casualties count tend to be what we remember about a war.

Except for the two World Wars, which were of a scale beyond imagination, let us look at the two other conflicts we participated in during the last century. The Boer War of 1899-1902 has an important place in our Canadian history, for good reasons, mainly related to our national development. In South Africa, 5,330 Canadians participated (2,036 arrived too late to participate), and 270 died there, but 89 in combat. The others died of disease and other causes. In Korea, more than 26,000 served, and we suffered important losses (516 deaths and 1,500 casualties).

In Afghanistan, at the end of the current mandate in February 2009, over 22,000 CF volunteer members will have served in the campaign, nearly as much as Korea. To date we have lost 71 soldiers and one diplomat, including 63 who died in combat related activities. Even with the protection soldiers have, more than 250 have been injured (and another 185 returned home for sickness and other reasons). No doubt, that the quality of medical care provided and the speed at which this care is provided on the ground is saving many lives. A costly war in terms of human losses for Canada, and one that compares with the Canadian participations in both the Boer and Korean Wars.

The Afghanistan war is justifying the need to introduce many changes within the CF and to accelerate others that maybe were not getting any traction because of bureaucracy or lack of funding. A war like this forces an organization like the CF to redefine its priorities, in many ways. We have seen the army equipment acquisition, probably one of the more visible aspects that most people are noticing. In 2003, the MND had announced that we would acquire the Mobile Gun System. While just 16 months ago, we were thinking about eliminating the tanks from our inventory, *Operation Medusa* in September last year changed all that. *Op Medusa* was the offensive operation that Canada led to rout out Taliban fighters in southern Afghanistan. So, no more MGS, and now we are leasing twenty tanks and we

will procure 100 more modern ones. Better armoured vehicles have or are being acquired, such as the South African mine-protected vehicle *Nyala*.

The army has accelerated the development of the Canadian Manoeuvre Training Centre in Wainwright to provide highly realistic combined arms combat training up to the battle group level and we have changed the pre-deployment training to increase the survival and individual protection components. This greater operational focus has affected nearly all of our training courses, including the basic recruit course and other officer and NCM training. In some cases, such as the basic officer training course, the change is the most significant since the 1960s.

Sustaining the deployment of 2,500 soldiers every six months is very demanding, and all environments must contribute, especially in the logistics, engineering, medical and other support fields. Many of our personnel policies are being completely revamped, more accurately modernized for a military at war. Just as the Boer War provide the impetus for the introduction of a separation allowance for spouses left behind without an income at home (an allocation that continues to exist today), the war in Afghanistan has triggered a review of many financial benefits, from non-taxable income, to insurance, to risk pay, to funeral entitlements, to name a few. You will recall the debate in the House of Commons and in the national newspapers about the funeral benefits that families of CF members who died on active duty should be entitled to. The desire by Canadians to support our troops overseas and their family is a great stimulus for this change. The entire process for individual honours and awards is also being changed, with the assistance of Government House.

Finally, "jointness," which had become an organization concept for us in Canada because we could not use the terms "integrated" and "unified", is being relegated to its true meaning, that of "joint effects." Joint organizations are not the solution anymore; witness the disbandment of the CF Joint Operations Group. Some people are now starting to use the term "unified" for its real meaning, as we are doing for the new operational commands. In many ways, the shadow of Minister Hellyer is fading.

In short, the war in Afghanistan is doing what wars tend to do to military organizations: shake them to their core, re-focus the priorities of the organization toward operational primacy and help to remove bureaucratic cobwebs.

Let me conclude rapidly. Three important waves of change are facing the CF, creating nearly a perfect wave. DND/CF is a very large organization, and it should not be surprising to find out that the management of the change is often implemented compartmentally. I believe that we fail at times to realise the magnitude of the changes taking place within the institution. This is one of those times.

I also believe that the CF culture is slowly changing to one focused more on operations. We are seeing it with our civilian counterparts in the department like never before. It remains to be seen how fundamental and how deep this culture change will be. No doubt, having over 20,000 members of the CF participate in a war in Afghanistan, and thousands more or directly or indirectly supporting it in Canada, will definitely change the identity of the CF of tomorrow. In addition, operational capability choices that are being made today – with a greater emphasis on a land-warfare centric vision to achieve strategic effects for Canada – will, in my mind, influence our decisions for future CF participation abroad.

Finally, people ask me: "Will all this be reversed when General Hillier leaves the CF, in a year or two, or if we have a change of government?" My answer is: "I don't believe so." Many of the changes are too fundamental to be reversed. Some changes may be reversed when we finish to expand the force or get out of Afghanistan, but my belief is that many of those will become permanent. Just look at the changes that Minister Hellyer instituted in the 1960s. Only today, forty years later, are some of those being dismantled.

We are facing a "perfect wave", perhaps navigating it is more appropriate, and the smart people we have serving the CF and the department will ensure that this wave does not turn into a perfect storm. We are working hard at it for sure. The current period is presenting us with many challenges, but so many opportunities. The "perfect wave" is an happening we may not see for another generation. These are opportunities that our predecessors would have wished for in the 1990s. We can truly shape the CF for the next 10 to 20 years. I consider myself fortunate to be part of the CF senior leadership team at this time. These are exciting times.

Thank you.