



THE FUTURE OF MILITARY INTELLIGENCE WITHIN THE CANADIAN FORCES

by Dr. David A. Charters

On 16 June 2001, quoting a DND planning document, the *Ottawa Citizen* reported that the Canadian military's intelligence collection capabilities have been seriously degraded in recent years. "Successive budget reductions have caused an erosion in the intelligence-staffing capability to the point where the associated risk is barely acceptable." The problems arising from underfunding include "unreliable and uncorroborated intelligence products" which could leave government and operational commanders poorly informed, and the intelligence staff's limited ability to cope with change. The Canadian Forces (CF) have acknowledged the shortcomings, and have directed the Chief of Review Services "to assess the balance between resources and tasks."¹

This report should come as no surprise. The CF as a whole faces an uncertain future due to a range of factors: its limited size and resources, operational 'overstretch', funding constraints, the speed and scope of technological change, and lack of a clear vision on the nature of Canada's likely future military commitments. It would have been remarkable if these problems had not also affected the military intelligence community. But the question remains: can they be overcome?

This essay will argue that these problems can be rectified, but only if resources and operational requirements are harmonized. This is not simply a matter of dollars and cents. It will require a realistic re-assessment of the Forces' capabilities and most likely commitments. First, the essay will consider the current state of military intelligence in the Canadian Forces, identifying its strengths and weaknesses. Second, it will identify the factors influencing the future of the CF and of the Intelligence Branch. Third, it will consider the implications of these: that the CF will be able to conduct only 'peacekeeping'-type operations in the foreseeable future. Finally, it will conclude with some proposals for 'reform' that will match intelligence resources to operational needs.

MILITARY INTELLIGENCE IN THE CANADIAN FORCES

The Canadian military intelligence community has never been large, even in wartime. Therefore, the present situation of insufficiency is a familiar one.² The current Regular Force strength of the CF Intelligence Branch stands at approximately 160 officers and 260 NCOs. This represents less than one percent of the total Regular Force, and could not by itself meet all of the CF intelligence commitments and requirements. To do so, the Regular Force relies upon augmentation by reservists, personnel drafted in from non-intelligence branches, and civilian analysts. There are about 160 Intelligence Branch reservists, all in the Land Forces.

Current Military Intelligence Functions and Taskings

With few personnel and a wide range of commitments, the Canadian military intelligence community is spread very thin. The following brief summary illustrates this point. The Director General Intelligence (DG INT) at NDHQ runs National Defence Intelligence Centre and the CF National Counter-Intelligence Unit. DG INT carries out a number of specialized functions, including: Strategic Intelligence, Indications and Warning, Current Intelligence, Imagery Analysis and Exploitation, Scientific/Technical Intelligence, and Geomatics (Mapping and Charting). It is also responsible for developing intelligence plans and doctrine, and provides support to the CF Information Operations Group. While DG INT's primary role is to support NDHQ and the CF in Canada and on operational commitments, it also provides the DND intelligence input to national estimates prepared by the Intelligence Assessment Committee of the Privy Council Office.³

DG INT has about 500 personnel, of whom about 200 are from the uniformed Intelligence Branch (Regular Force and reservists on call-out). The remainder

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are non-branch or civilians. By a narrow margin, the majority of Branch personnel (Regular and Reserve) serve outside the Directorate — in the J2 (Intelligence) staffs of every single service and joint headquarters in Canada and with deployed forces abroad, at NORAD headquarters in the US, at several NATO headquarters in Europe, in exchange and liaison posts, at the CF Electronic Warfare Centre (Ottawa) and in EW squadrons, and at the CF Intelligence School and the Land Force Doctrine and Training System.

Strengths

The strength of the Intelligence Branch lies first in its people. They are known and respected for their high-quality, training, flexibility, adaptable skills and experience. Coming from a multicultural country, and having

table', and access to intelligence sharing, that is out of proportion to its size.⁴

Weaknesses

The main weakness is simple and obvious: numbers. There are simply too few qualified intelligence personnel, and they are spread far too thin. This means not only that the Intelligence Branch is hard-pressed to support existing CF commitments, but also that — even using reservists — there is no surge capacity to handle larger and more complex operations. There is some question as well regarding the suitability of the non-Intelligence Branch augmentees. The small numbers also limit the depth and breadth of linguistic diversity available to the branch. That is no small consideration given the wide range of locales to which the CF have been and are likely to be deployed. Understanding the local language is a *sine qua non* of intelligence operations in Low Intensity Conflicts and peace-keeping operations, and unanticipated language skills cannot be produced on short notice.

Although intelligence is well served in the IT equipment field at present, its holdings overall suffer from the same problems as Canadian Forces generally. There is not enough; it is aging rapidly, creating maintenance problems; and escalating procurement costs make one-for-one replacement difficult. Unless the attrition is reversed, military intelligence faces a future of diminishing technical capabilities that cannot be offset by well-trained high quality people alone.

Both personnel and equipment limitations reflect the double-edged sword of priorities and dollars. DND and the Canadian Forces are hard-pressed to maintain 'core capabilities', but there is even some disagreement as to which capabilities are core, and which, if any, are not. This paper takes the view that intelligence *is* a core capability, but it is not a view that is shared universally.

Will these personnel, their taskings and distribution, as well as their strengths and weaknesses, serve the needs of the Forces in the foreseeable future? The answer clearly is no. To understand why, it is essential to look at the factors shaping the future of the CF and its intelligence needs.

FACTORS SHAPING THE FUTURE OF THE CANADIAN FORCES

DND, in a series of papers, has identified and explained the major influences on the future of the Canadian Forces. First among these is the so-called 'Revolution in Military Affairs' (RMA). The RMA posits a future of conventional military forces



DND Photo by: Sgt VMW Striemer, IHD 01-7344

Armoured reconnaissance troops – a prime source of battlefield information.

constant involvement in peacekeeping operations, gives them an advantage in adapting to multinational alliances and coalition operations. Because the Branch is so small, its members have been in high demand over the past decade, serving (often several tours) in a variety of operations and theatres. They have probably gained more operational experience in the last ten years than in the previous thirty.

Second, Canada is a world leader in Information Technology (IT), and the Intelligence Branch has benefited from that. Its IT equipment and its networking capacity are certainly on a par with, if not ahead of, our NATO allies. The CF are 'interoperable' with American forces on the IT level to a much greater degree than the forces of Britain, France, Germany, or the smaller NATO members.

Finally, the CF benefits from long-standing intelligence liaison and exchange relationships with the US, Britain, and other countries under the banner of the NATO and NORAD treaties, and the UKUSA intelligence agreements. This gives the CF 'a place at the

and battles increasingly IT-centred (even IT-dependent).⁵ The 1999 DND paper *Shaping the Future of Canadian Defence: A Strategy for 2020* is RMA-centred, and CF elements are being created to incorporate the RMA. However, the CF's preferred capabilities-based (rather than threat-based) approach to force and mission planning assumes that it does not have and is unlikely to have the resources to prepare for every eventuality, and that significant participation in a major mid- to high-intensity war is the least likely scenario. Instead, the CF's foreseeable operational future is most likely to resemble its immediate past: low-intensity conflict, with particular emphasis on peace support operations. The CF normally will operate in multi-national coalitions, usually contributing battle group-size or smaller contingents. Except in domestic situations, independent operations are unlikely. This puts a premium on interoperability with allies, particularly the United States.⁶

But, 'coalitionism' and interoperability come with a price. First, in coalitions the CF loses some degree of independence and freedom of action. Arguably, it has lost that already, simply by virtue of its limited resources and capabilities. This puts some constraints on the extent to which the CF's operations can serve solely *Canadian* objectives outside Canada. Second, closer doctrinal, operational and technical cooperation with the United States could be expensive, given the Americans' momentum toward RMA-based forces.⁷ This points to the most important driving factor of all: money. Funding, more than anything else, will determine what the CF does in the future, because it will determine the CF's capabilities. These will shape missions and operations and, in turn, will drive military intelligence requirements and resources. Budgetary influences on the future of the CF include:

- continued erosion of defence spending in real-dollar terms;
- continued decline in personnel numbers;
- difficulty in maintaining modernized equipment in any strength; and
- decline in operational capabilities, training, and readiness.

This forces us to ask which capabilities we are likely to be able to afford and sustain.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CANADIAN FORCES

Except possibly for the Navy, whose ships currently are 'state-of-the art', the Canadian Forces (the Army in particular) probably already has passed the point of no return with regard to sustaining even mid-level combat operations for more than a short period. It does not have sufficient trained Regular forces, modern equipment of the right types, logistical support (including heavy airlift and sea lift), or Reserve forces (to provide reinforcement and casualty replacement). Nor does the Army do enough collective, war-fighting training above battle group level. Therefore, large-scale, prolonged, RMA-based high-intensity conventional warfare is likely to be out of our league.

This applies both to expeditionary and to Defence of Canada/Defence of North America operations.⁸ If this is a realistic assessment, it will have significant implications for force structure, doctrine, equipment procurement, mission planning and training.

Likewise, domestic operations such as sovereignty protection and Critical Infrastructure Protection (CIP) are not primarily military tasks. Also, limited capabilities mean that the CF's role in them is likely to be very small. For example, threats to Canada's interests in the Arctic lie more within the jurisdictions of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Environment Canada, the RCMP, and other government departments and agencies.⁹ Few of these tasks require combat capabilities and, arguably, many of them do not require armed forces at all. Most of Canada's Critical Infrastructure (CI) is in the private sector or in arms-length Crown corporations. The Federal government



JSPA Combat Camera photo by MCpl Brian Walsh, ISK01-9663a

Intelligence is an essential component of naval operations, as in Operation "Apollo" in the Arabian Sea.

will have little executive authority to protect them. The role of the newly created Office of Critical Infrastructure Protection and Emergency Preparedness (OCIEPP) will be to assist, facilitate and coordinate activities between other government departments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Cyber-based asymmetric warfare and Information Warfare (IW) problems so far have not lived up to advance billing. The worst-case scenarios — the wholesale 'takedown' of national CI — do not yet seem likely because of the redundancies built into the infrastructures.¹⁰ Therefore, the CF role in critical infrastructure protection could be,

and perhaps ought to be, limited only to protecting CF/DND assets. Tasks would include: due diligence, threat assessment, cooperation with OCIPEP, training and awareness of CF personnel, cyber IW/EW counter-intelligence, cooperation and intelligence sharing with the US and NATO allies and assistance to civil authorities in the restoration of critical infrastructure (e.g., the Ice Storm).

This leaves only peacekeeping, broadly defined, as a significant military role for the CF. Yet, even here, the Forces have reached their capability limit for such operations. Canada is at risk of losing its much-vaunted global leadership role in peacekeeping, if it has not done so already. There are some disadvantages in defining a

ple. This applies both to the 'sharp end' (especially infantry), and to the technical combat support trades: signals, engineering, logistics, mechanics and medical. Without these, the sharp end can't operate effectively for long, even in a low-threat environment. Spending is needed for strategic mobility assets (air transport and sea lift), tactical transport (air and vehicle), field engineering, operational training, maintenance, logistic support, readiness, C⁴I architecture, geomatics and intelligence (people, equipment and skills).

Furthermore, peacekeeping operations are not risk free. Conflict and post-conflict situations are politically and militarily complex and dangerous. During the past decade, Canadian peacekeeping forces have been engaged in combat, riot control, mine-clearing, arms searches, and other activities that often resulted in casualties. Force protection has assumed renewed importance, both to achieve mission objectives and to minimize negative political fallout at home.

THE FUTURE OF MILITARY INTELLIGENCE IN THE CANADIAN FORCES

If peacekeepers are to create a secure environment, then they must 'win the hearts and minds' of the population over to the idea that the conflict has ended, and that reconciliation and reconstruction is the only future. To do that they must listen to the voices of the population. Therefore, in high intensity peacekeeping operations, intelligence and information operations is a two-way street. Intelligence support is a complex task, involving the integration and analysis of many over-

lapping levels of information requirements and collection tasks, sources and methods.¹¹

Requirements

Strategic intelligence requirements for national and international planning and decision-making consist mostly of overall situational awareness. This includes the origins of the conflict, issues at stake, the social/cultural/economic backgrounds (demography, ethnicity, religion), who's who (factions and forces), the current status of the conflict, and situation trends. This information will shape the strategic objectives of a peacekeeping mission, and the mission objectives of the force itself.

At the operational level (theatre/force headquarters), the force commander and the staff will require situational awareness plus operational intelligence. Two categories of information are important at this level. First, military operational information (the belligerents' orders of battle, their broad intentions and capabilities, deployments, allies and other sources of support — domestic and foreign). Second, they need operational support information to facilitate deployment into and sustainment of operations in the theatre. This might be



DND Photo by: MCpl Ken Allan, IISD00-1537

Helicopters operating in support of land forces have an important role in battlefield reconnaissance, as in Bosnia.

niche role for the CF in peacekeeping/peace support operations, including the loss of some operational flexibility and limitations on the ability of the CF to operate with allies in higher-tempo operations. But, as suggested above, the Canadian Forces is already limited by available resources and budget. On the other hand, even if politicians and the public misunderstand the realities of modern peacekeeping, it is still popular. Moreover, the current level of operations can be managed with the limited financial, personnel and equipment resources available, if the government can be persuaded to take a realistic approach to accepting additional commitments.

But, peacekeeping is not a free ride. The experience of the last decade in the Balkans and elsewhere demonstrated the need for well-trained, well-equipped troops. 'Post-modern' peacekeeping or 'High Intensity Peace Operations' (HIPO) require a robust military capability, even if it is not at the same technological level as RMA-type conventional warfare. If the CF is to do anything more than send observers, then the government will have to spend more to prepare the CF for such operations. Above all, peacekeeping is personnel-intensive; it requires 'feet on the ground'. So, more than anything else, DND will have to spend money to train more peo-

summarized as area knowledge — infrastructure capabilities and limits, such as types and conditions of lines of communication and local transportation, ports and airfields, locations for bases, local services, power and fuel supplies, water supplies, public health problems, terrain, and impact of climate on operations.

Finally, at the tactical level, the primary concerns of formation and unit commanders are mission execution and force protection. They need to understand the conflict/peace situation in the local, front-line context: sources and levels of threat (forces, minefields, etc.), belligerent plans and intentions, the status and role of indigenous security forces (police), the relative power and influence of local faction and political structures and community relationships, local political attitudes, the economy, employment, and the role of criminality (black markets, smuggling, etc.).

Collection Tasks/Sources and Methods

These requirements put a premium on Human Intelligence (HUMINT). The major sources are the indigenous population, political and faction leaders, diplomats, business people, recent visitors, refugees and exiles, informants, captured or surrendered combatants, liaison officers, police and other security forces (local and/or international), intelligence sharing with coalition partners, NGOs, media, and academic specialists. Much of this intelligence can be gathered openly, but the reliability and timeliness — and thus the utility — of these information sources will vary. The sources will have their own biases and agendas. NGOs, in particular, may require special handling; those whose members are working in-country may be reluctant to be seen cooperating with foreign military forces, as it could compromise their impartiality, and even put their lives at risk. Thus, peacekeeping forces also will have to generate tactical level “Contact Intelligence” from patrolling, vehicle check points, searches, observation posts, covert surveillance, and from CIMIC and psychological operations activities. Operations of these types will familiarize troops with their areas of responsibility and the people and forces in them, and sensitize them to distinguish between the normal and abnormal. In effect, everyone is a potential source, and every peacekeeper is an intelligence collector.

What is clear from the foregoing is that even high intensity peacekeeping operations have only a limited requirement for RMA-type technical intelligence collection means. There is a need for signals intelligence, but it might take the form of telephone wiretaps or other electronic listening devices rather than combat-oriented intercept systems. Depending upon the type of collection task, target and terrain, there may be a role for remote sensors (acoustic or seismic), ground surveillance radars, night observation devices, and still and video cameras. Space-based and/or airborne imagery collection systems would be most useful for Geomatics support (digital mapping and

photos). But, as a rule in these types of operations, technical means supplement human intelligence collection; they are no substitute for eyes and ears.

Ideally, the two should work in tandem, each enhancing the collection capabilities of the other, thus allowing the intelligence staff to refine and define their information needs and collection targets with increased specificity. Achieving ‘Information Superiority’¹² at the tactical level should allow the peacekeepers to conduct effectively those operations — arms searches, anti-smuggling operations, surveillance and monitoring, capture of war criminals and other offenders — that will prevent or at least limit breaches of the peace.

Implications for CF Intelligence

If this vision of the future is correct, then the Canadian Forces face an operational future that is not oriented to or highly dependent upon the RMA. But the implications for the CF’s intelligence requirements and capabilities are no less significant for that. A future mission profile focused on high intensity peacekeeping operations will place a premium on high-quality intelligence — human intelligence in particular — both for achieving mission objectives and for force protection. This will require more resources dedicated to intelligence, and a re-allocation of existing resources to meet operational requirements.

That said, peacekeeping and peace support operations are not purely military. Their intelligence requirements do not lend themselves to a rigid American-style ‘Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield Template’



Artillery — both a major source of information and user of processed intelligence.

model of intelligence planning, or to simply re-tasking intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance assets. Instead, they require a completely different way of thinking about intelligence collection and analysis: ‘holistic’ situational awareness rather than purely military ‘bean counting’ or ‘plans and intentions’. Moreover, this requires fusion of all collection and

analysis capabilities in a way that will allow information and analysis to flow across traditional boundaries between strategic, operational, and tactical operations and intelligence, between organizations, and between domains of security — relief, reconstruction and reconciliation. In high intensity peacekeeping operations, intelligence requires ‘jointness’ that extends well beyond the purely military realm.

Focusing the CF Intelligence community predominantly on this role would play to its strengths and concentrate its expertise, allowing it to enhance and exploit its personnel, skills and technology to generate intelligence synergy to greatest operational advantage. The CF would be able to spend its limited funds selectively on niche collection and analysis capabilities and on critical C⁴I/interoperability systems. This also would permit the Forces to develop some value added intelligence techniques and products to trade, thereby allowing them to ‘sit at the intelligence-sharing table’ and to ‘buy in’ to coalition partners’ intelligence products that enhance knowledge and close gaps in coverage. In turn, this would help deployed CF contingents to achieve ‘Information Sufficiency’ at strategic and operational levels, and a degree of ‘Information Superiority’ at the tactical level within the area of responsibility. Ultimately, it would increase the effectiveness of CF peacekeeping operations.

However, this probably cannot be achieved with current personnel and organizational resources. Indeed, it would require substantial reform of the Canadian military intelligence community. The CF’s military intelligence needs include: first, more personnel, or, at the very least, more personnel available for deployment. Second, deployed CF formations will need a different mix of intelligence personnel, not all military. To facilitate intelligence fusion in theatre, joint and national intelligence centres should include police and civilian

intelligence personnel, and even some non-government analysts. Third, in that regard, there is a real need for high-quality analysts — creative thinkers, well versed in the new intelligence collection skills (on-line data-mining and information-sharing). They also need to have in-depth area expertise and language/dialect skills.

To achieve these objectives, the CF as a whole, and the Intelligence Branch in particular, will have to draw upon a more diverse cultural/linguistic and skills base. In an era of fiscal restraint, the best, and cheapest, way to do this may be to recruit and invest in more Militia personnel in Intelligence rather than in the Combat Arms. However, the Reserves alone are unlikely to be able to fill all of the CF’s intelligence needs. They may also need to contract out for certain skills or knowledge, as needed and ‘just in time’. This is usually more expensive, but may be unavoidable if there are specific gaps in the CF’s knowledge, skills or technology. For training, the CF should invest in the best. If there are skills and capabilities we can’t teach at home, then we should send small numbers of Intelligence personnel wherever the best courses can be found, be that Britain, the US, Germany, or elsewhere.

This re-focusing of Canadian Forces Intelligence would enhance not only Canada’s peacekeeping operations, but also the operations of the CF in general. Talent and flexibility would allow the Forces to adapt to an uncertain future. However, this probably can be achieved only if the CF disposes of some of its ‘Big War’ commitments, tasks, technologies and mindsets. The changing nature of conflict and the fiscal realities of Canadian defence policy are already shaping the future of the CF. Ultimately, it is all about making choices.



NOTES

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2. Major S. R. Elliott, *Scarlet to Green: A History of Intelligence in the Canadian Army, 1903-1963* (Toronto: Canadian Intelligence and Security Association, 1981), pp. 57, 61-62, 82, 86, 92-94, 119, 126, 426-27, 447, 523-25, 529-30, 551-52, 572.
3. Privy Council Office, *The Canadian Security and Intelligence Community: Helping Keep Canadians Safe and Secure* (Ottawa: PCO, 2001), pp. 14-15.
4. Martin Rudner, *Canada’s Communications Security Establishment: From Cold War to Globalisation. Occasional Paper No. 22* (Ottawa: Norman Paterson School of International Affairs, Carleton University, 2000), pp. 9-10, 16-17.
5. On the RMA, see: Lawrence Freedman, *The Revolution in Strategic Affairs. Adelphi Paper 318* (London: IISS, 1998).
6. *Shaping the Future of Canadian Defence:*

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7. Andrew Richter, *The Revolution in Military Affairs and its Impact on Canada: the Challenge and the Consequences. Working Paper No. 28* (Vancouver: Institute for International Relations, UBC, March 1999), pp. 17-18, 20, 23, 40, 42, 47-49. See also: Sloan, p. 12.
8. Canada, House of Commons, Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans

- Affairs, *Report on Plans and Priorities, Second Report* (2001), pp. 5-8.
9. On arctic sovereignty threats, see: Rudner, *Intelligence and Information Superiority*, pp. 16-17.
10. Office of Critical Infrastructure Protection and Emergency Preparedness, “Role and Objectives,” at ; Stewart Bell, “Cyber-attacks Threaten Canada: CSIS”, *National Post*, 18 July 2001.
11. On requirements and collection, see: David A. Charters “Out of the Closet: Intelligence Support for Post-Modernist Peacekeeping”, in *Intelligence in Peacekeeping. The Pearson Papers, Number 4* (Cornwallis Park, NS: Canadian Peacekeeping Press, 1999), pp. 42-50.
12. Rudner, *Intelligence and Information Superiority*, pp. 1, 6-8, uses the term in an RMA context, but it is also relevant to peacekeeping.