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# CANADA'S ARCTIC MARITIME SECURITY: CONCRETE ACTIONS OR SMOKE AND MIRRORS

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**INTRODUCTION**

As a result of the end of the Cold War and September 11, 2001, the geopolitical landscape has changed dramatically in Canada's North. Globalization and the abundance of untapped natural resources have created the requirements for new sovereignty and security policies for Canada. It is clear, given the weak legal arguments presented by Canada thus far, that we need a significant presence in the North in order to assert our authority over the maritime area that we have claimed. In the wake of forming the new Canadian government, the Conservative party and its leader have placed high priority on the North. This paper will examine the issues that relate to the security and sovereignty of the North and propose a way ahead to implement a much broader maritime security framework than the recent announcements by the Defence Minister, the Honourable Gordon O'Connor, to construct port facilities and acquiring three "armed icebreakers". Canada needs the means to defend and uphold Canadian sovereignty and security to enforce both Canadian and international Laws within its EEZ and territorial waters of the Arctic.

This paper is divided in two main sections: First an examination of the factors shaping why Canada needs to defend the North. In this section we set the stage and look at the some of the significant historical events that have challenged Canada's sovereignty and security. Next it is important to identify the environmental changes and how they will change the Canadian North by increasing access to the resources and in the future will turn the Northwest Passage into a lucrative venture. After a short look at threats to the environment and security, it is important to review Canada's legal claims and their validity on the international stage. In order to place the threat to theses claims it is important to look at what other "polar" states have for northern

capabilities and their roles. The last significant factor has been the lack of resources dedicated to the maritime security of the North from the political "will".

In the second portion of the paper will focus on executing the maritime security in the North. In order to develop the proper security framework, the paper will review the commitments of the new Conservative government and its ambitions for the North. The final section of the paper will look at current operations and suggest a short term and long term way ahead to achieve the goals for maritime security and defence of the North.

In order to understand Canadian attitude towards the North, one must first look at the significant historical events that have taken place over the years in Canada's North.

## CANADA'S MARITIME SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

### Historical events

The challenges of Canada's North did not really begin until the 1950s. In 1948, the Canadian Navy sailed the aircraft carrier *Magnificent* with her escort into Hudson Bay. This was the first deployment of warships to enter the bay.[1]

*HMCS Labrador* was commissioned on July 8, 1954. She was conceived as Canada's first modern, powerful icebreaking vessel, which would help to meet National Defence needs in the high arctic. In addition to her defence role, she was equipped with state of the art scientific equipment making her a self-sufficient explorer. She was also equipped to act as a floating laboratory, hospital, transport, rescue ship and school. In August 1954, she rendezvoused with American sister-ships *Northwind* and *Burton Island* off the coast of Melville Island. This marked the first combined US/Canada military operation in the North. Together they crossed the Northwest Passage. After sailing down the west coast and through the Panama Canal, the *Labrador* became the first vessel to circumnavigate North America in a single voyage.[2] After only three years of operations in 1957, she was turned over to the Canadian Coast Guard where she continued to operate for 29 years.

In 1957, the first American nuclear powered submarine, *USS Nautilus*, transited the Northwest Passage under the ice, without the Canadian government's permission.[3] Despite this incursion, the Canadian Navy would not return to the Arctic until 1970. The return occurred as result of a new American challenge to the Canadian Arctic sovereignty, when *MV Manhattan*, the largest and most powerful commercial ship ever built in the US at that time, transited the

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[1] Nathanial French Cadwell, Arctic Leverage: Canadian Sovereignty and Security , Praeger, 1990, p42
[2] CCGS Labrador – Wikipedia http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMCS_Labrador_(AW_50) , 13 March 2006
[3] USS Nautilus (SSN-571) http://www.geocities.com/CapeCanaveral/1056/nautilus.thm?200613 13 March 2006

Northwest Passage.[4] This first transit, in 1969, of *MV Manhattan* only generated parliamentary statements but the second voyage in 1970 resulted in the deployment of the Canadian Navy and legislative action. The Arctic Water Pollution Prevention Act was enacted by the Canadian Official to exercise control over this transit.[5]

More recently, in 1985, US Icebreaker *Polar Sea* transited the Northwest Passage without permission from the Canadian Government. The US government saw no need to request permission from Canada as they viewed this action as their right of passage. They claimed that this was simply a cost effective way to get the ship from Tule to Alaska and no permission was required to travel through international waters. An agreement between the US and Canada followed shortly in 1988 to cover transits of USCG ships.[6]

In 2002, the Yokosuka shipyard in Japan launched the first icebreaking tanker. This 106,000 DWT tanker has been rated as a Class 1A Super Icebreaker. It has been designed with Azipod azimuth thrusters for propulsion (similar to Canada's planned AOR+) and a stern designed for icebreaking. She was built with a typical "bulb" bow for efficiency in open ocean sailing. However, once she reaches significant ice conditions, she simply turns around and uses the stern to continue her voyage in the ice covered areas. Her size, tonnage and manoeuvrability allow *MT Mastera* to operate in ridge ice thickness of up to 13 meters.[7] Fleets of these types of vessels are in production around the world. For example; Aker Finnyards of Finland has built two additional 106,000 DWT oil tankers, has won contracts to build a 14,500 DWT Artic capable container vessels, two 70,000 DWT Arctic shuttle tankers and a bulk carrier all to be

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[4] Gedney Larry, Helfferich Merrit, Voyage of the Manhattan, Alaska Science Forum December 19, 1983 article 639, http//www.gi.alaska.edu/ScienceForum/ASF6/639.htm 13 March 2006

[5] Great game in a cold climate… p35

[6] Northwest passage http://www.answers.com/topic/northwest-passage, 13 March 2006, p5

[7] MT Matera, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MT_Mastera 16 March 2006

delivered within the next few years.[8] Consequently, activities in the North can be expected to continue to be on the rise.

These events have been presented to sense why Canada must establish itself in the North. Canada must be in a position to be proactive rather than reactive regarding security and sovereignty challenges.

The current rate of global warming will result in greater trade access to the North and the exploitation of natural resources.

**The Environment and Arctic Commercialization**

The most recent report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) indicates that Arctic is especially sensitive to the dynamics of rising environmental temperatures. They concluded that:

> "It is very likely that: nearly all land areas will warm more rapidly than the global average, particularly those at high latitudes in the cold season; in Alaska, northern Canada, Greenland, northern Asia, and Tibet in winter and central Asia and Tibet in summer the warming will exceed the global mean warming in each model by more than 40% (1.3 to 6.9°C for the range of models and scenarios considered)".[9]

Environment Canada has observed an average temperature rise in Canada of 2.1 C over the past 59 years. With the exception of 2002 and 2004, the seasonal temperatures have remained above the normal for the past 8 years.[10] This trend shatters the IPCC predicted a rise

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[8] High Technology Finland: Opening up the Arctic http://www.hightechfinland.com/2005/new_materials/logistics/en_gb/aker/?show=all 16 March 2006

[9] IPCC, Climat Change 2001: the scientific Basis, http://www.grida.no/climate/ipcc_tar/wg1/index.htm, 16 March 2006

[10] Environment Canada: Temperature and precipitation in Historical Perspective, http://www.msc-smc.ec.gc.ca/ccrm/bulletin/regional_e.cfm, 16 March 2006

totalling 5 C by 2100. This year alone (2006) has been the warmest year on record across Canada. The arctic tundra recorded an average rise of 3.9 C and the Mackenzie District (part of the western Arctic) a dramatic 7.4 C rise above normal.[11] These temperature are expected to have significant affects on the both the first year and multi-year ice formation. The 2006 summer shipping seasons will be a good indicator of the future ice coverage in the North. According to the Canadian Ice Service the amount of ice in Canada's Eastern Arctic Archipelago decreased by 15 percent between 1969 and 2004 and in parts of the Western Arctic, the ice had receded by as much as 36 percent.[12]

What does this mean? Many debates have occurred regarding the potential commercialisation of the Arctic. Most of these debate revolve around when, not if, ice free navigation will be available in the Northwest Passage. Franklyn Griffiths, professor of political science at the University of Toronto, claims that unpredictability of multiyear ice will create conditions that are not favourable to navigation will result as the net effect of climate change on the Northwest Passage.[13] He explains that the rise in temperature will release multi-year ice and make the journey more dangerous to un-strengthened vessels. He concludes that many other routes such as the Northeast Passage will be available to commercial traffic before the Northwest Passage. Dr Rob Huebert, associate director of the center for military and strategic studies at the University of Calgary on the other hand argued that ice free navigation during extended summer season will be available within the next 25 years.[14] The 5000 mile reduction in shipping routes

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[11] Environment Canada: Winter temperature trend, extremes and current season ranking, http://www.msc-smc.ec.gc.ca/ccrm/bulletin/rsummarytable_e.html?table=temperature&season=Winter&date=2006&nyears=59, 16 March 2006

[12] Environment Canada: Climate science in Canada: The Arctic, http://www.ec.gc.ca/climate/CCAF-FACC/Science/fact/arctic_e.htm, 16 March 2006

[13] Griffiths Franklyn, New illusion of a Northwest Passage, Paper presented at the Conference on international Energy Policy, the Arctic and the Law of the Sea, 23-26 June, 2004, St Petersburg, Russia

[14] Huebert Rob, The Shipping News Part II: How Canada's Artic Sovereignty is on Tinning Ice, International Journal, December 2003.

between Europe and Asia will represent a significant benefit to commercial carriers. It will also become very attractive for the massive supertankers and container ships that are forced to plow around the tip of South America because they are too big to pass through the Panama Canal. The additional ice strengthening costs could quickly be recovered in the first few years of operations of the vessel.

As discussed in the previous section there a growing numbers of ice capable commercial fleet exist around the world which can already operate in these waters almost year round. It is interesting to note that even non-polar countries, such as Japan and China, are investing in this capability. In 1999, the first non-American commercial shipping transited through the Northwest Passage when a Russian floating dry dock based in Vladivostok was sold and towed through the passage to avoid storms in the open ocean while enroute to Bermuda. Both the ocean tug and the floating dock proceeded without any issues.[15] Other commercial ventures such as ecotourism have been on the rise since the mid-1990s. To date most of these trips have been incident free and have been made by icebreakers converted to cruise ships or ice-strengthened vessels. However, in 1996, Canada was reminded of its responsibility for Search and Rescue (SAR), when the *Hanseatic* went aground on a sand bar near Cambridge Bay.[16] Fortunately, commercial tugs were able to conduct the rescue and eventually removed the ship from the sand bar. The increased activity in the North, especially the development of the natural resources, will result in increased local shipping to support the communities and industries.

Natural resources of the North may have the most significant impact on the maritime environment. It is the abundance of non-renewable resources (hydrocarbons, minerals, and methane hydrates) that offers the greatest potential for the North. Optimistic estimates of total

[15] Hubert Rob, Climate Change and Canadian Sovereighty in the Northwest Passage, http://www.isuma.net/v02n04/huebert/huebert_e.pdf, 15 March 2006, p88

recoverable Arctic hydrocarbon reserves are in excess of 200 billion barrels of oil and more than 300 trillion cubic feet of natural gas.[17] In addition to the non-renewable resources, the Arctic ice accounts for as much as 10 percent of the world's fresh water.[18] Both Finland and Denmark are amongst countries which already export Arctic fresh water to the Middle East and the rest of the world.

While mining is a land-based activity, it will also have a significant impact on the maritime environment. It will increase the local shipping activities to transport equipment, personnel and goods creating risks to the environment ranging from pollution to the release with ballast waters of foreign species such as the zebra mussel in the fragile Arctic eco-system.[19]

Finally, one topic often overlooked is nuclear pollution. Scientists have been detecting varying levels of radiation throughout Canada's Arctic. Radioactive dumping by northern Russia in the Kara Sea and adjacent waters constitutes as much as two-thirds of all radioactive dumping in the world's ocean.[20] Other contaminants have also been found in the North such as mercury and brominate fire retardants. The impact on health of Northerners, wildlife and cultural security at this stage is unknown.[21]

The North is often described as the "sink" of the world. Most airborne pollutants will eventually find their way to the poles. With this in mind, the advent of exploration and exploitation of the North will place the ecosystem in grave jeopardy. Surveillance and enforcement of the activities in the North is crucial to protecting Canada's environment. This

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[16] Ibid p88

[17] Canada, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Canada and the Circumpolar World, http://www.parl.gc.ca/committees352/fore/reports/07_1997-04/chap6e.html, 16 March 2006

[18] Government of Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nanuvut, Developing a New Framework for Sovereighty and Security in the North, April 2005, http://www.gov.yk.ca/news/2005/files/sovereignty_and_security_in_the_north.pdf, p4

[19] Leblanc Pierre, Canada and the North – Insufficient Security Resources, CCS Research Papers, http://www.ccs21.org/research-papers/papers/leblanc-canada_north.htm, 16 March 2006

[20] Government of Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nanuvut… p11

again reinforces the requirement for Canada to have iron clad legislation and enforcement measures in place.

In order to determine the level of enforcement in any given region one must look at the physical security threats that have or will have the potential to materialise over the next few years.

**The Security Threats**

Since the US started the war against terrorism, the words "terrorism" and "nine-eleven" have occupied a place in our lexicon once reserved for terms such as "the red menace" or "the yellow peril".[22] This is why terrorism plays an upfront role in Canada's International Policy Statement.[23] However, while the potential from an immediate attack by al Qaeda from Inuvik is far fetched, the long term danger still exists. As the southern borders are made more secure, the northern ones are not. For example, most northern airport facilities have no security screening.[24] This uncontrolled access in the North has created similar problems with drugs. Drugs can already be found in most the Northern communities. Given the level of security applied by the US and Canada in the southern regions, the Arctic with the very limited surveillance and enforcement has been an open backdoor and will become the destination of choice for drug smugglers.[25]

Finally, illegal immigration continues to be a serious problem for the Canadian government. There have been a number of attempts to enter Canada illegally from the north

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[21] Ibid, p11

[22] Delvoie Louis, Terrorism: Global Insecurity or Global Hyperbole?, Canadian Military Journal Winter 2005-2006, p103

[23] Department of National Defence, A Role of Pride and Influence in the World Defence, 2005, p5

[24] Hubebert Rob, Renaissance in Canadian Arctic Security?, Canadian Military Journal Winter 2005-2006, p28

[25] Leblanc Pierre, Canada and the North… p2

such as in Iqaluit in 1997.[26] Increased shipping activities will only raise both the drug and immigration infraction potentials as the summer shipping volume is increased and the length of the season is also extended.

Having determined that there will be an increased presence and attendant risk in the North in the years ahead, it is necessary to examine the agreements in place to affirm Canadian northern sovereignty.

**Legal Claims**

Rob Huebert stated that there is no question about the status of the land territory that comprises the Canadian Arctic archipelago. All conflicting claims were settled in the 1930s, with the exception of the ownership of a small island between Baffin Island and Greenland named Hans Island.[27] However, this cannot be said about the maritime environment. Canada is facing three claims against its declared maritime jurisdiction in the North.

First is the conflict over Hans Island. The resolution of this conflict will determine the maritime boundary line between Canada and Greenland in the Davis Straits. On the western side of the Canadian Arctic, the boundary that separates Canadian and American territorial waters are also being debated. Canada claims that the boundary for the territorial waters extends along the line that separates Alaska from Canada while the US position is that the boundary is perpendicular to the shoreline.[28] There is a similar debate occurring on Georges Banks in the Atlantic, however, in this case the claims of perpendicular versus country boundaries are reversed.

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[26] Ibid, p2
[27] Hubert Rob, Climate Change and Canadian Sovereignty… p88
[28] Ibid p88

The third dispute is that Canada's claims the Northwest Passage as internal water. The US government and the European countries have rejected this claim stating that the Passage is an international strait. Canada put forward three arguments to claim internal waters. The first argument was made on the basis that these waters are considered internal by virtue of historical title. A study by Donat Pharand, a Leading Canadian legal jurist, concluded Canada could not succeed in demonstrating that the waters are historical waters. Next was the requirement for Canada to prove that it has exercised complete control over these waters and other states involved would have to acquiesced this claim. This is not likely since those states are the ones challenging the claim. The last legal manoeuvre by the government of Canada in 1986 was to close off the Canadian Arctic Archipelago using straight baselines herby delineating internal waters.[29] Unfortunately Canada made this claim after it had signed the United Nation Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) in 1982, which states in article 8(2) that …a state cannot close an internal strait by declaring baseline.[30] An additional requirement by UNCLOS was that Canada has 10 years to chart the northern waters and has the option to extend territorial claims to 150 nautical miles if the area is determined to be part of the continental shelf. Both Russia and Denmark have completed their surveys and have claimed the region around the North Pole. The US has also completed its survey. While Canada has allocated 70 million dollars to the project; it remains well behind schedule. The embarrassing part of this issue is that Canada will most likely have to contract ships from Denmark, Russia or the US to conduct this survey.

Would it matter if the Northwest Passage becomes an international strait?

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[29] Ibid p88

[30] UNCLOS Art 8, http://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/part2.htm, 16 March 2006

Not really. Canada has given itself the right to impose and enforce marine pollution regulations. This was achieved by the inclusion of article 234 in UNCLOS regarding ice covered area.[31] This legalised the Canadian Arctic pollution protection act of 1970, allowing for the protection of the waters in the Canadian Arctic Archipelago.

The last two agreements that regulate operations in the North are the Icebreaker agreement and the Arctic Canada Traffic Management Zone (NORDREG). In 1988, US and Canada agreed to disagree on the status of the Northwest Passage. In order to continue ice operations in the North, the US agreed to ask Canada permission to transit the Northwest Passage and Canada in turn agreed not refuse.[32] NORDREG was also put in place to provide control of vessels transiting the Canadian Arctic. Unfortunately the participation to this system is voluntary.

In order to better understand how maritime security is done in an ice environment one must look at what the US, Danish and Norwegian icebreaking programme consist of.

**The Other Players**

The US Coast Guard (USCG) has an impressive icebreaking program. In addition to the inland icebreaking services, the USCG has three "polar" class icebreakers capable of operating in the high North all year. While their primary mission is to assist shipping and conduct research, they have been designed in a joint effort by the Coast Guard and the Navy. The icebreakers carry a Seal dive team onboard.[33] The icebreaker fleet is empowered with constabulary powers to enforce US Laws and is under the command and control of the US Department of Homeland

[31] UNCLOS art 234, http://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/part12.htm, 13 March 2006

[32] Canado-american Treaties…

[33] USCGC Healy home page, http://www.uscg.mil/pacarea/healy/,

Defence. As a branch of the Navy, the USCG assets are available for transfer to NORTHCOM when required.

The Norwegian have one destroyer size icebreaker. It is equipped with 57MM gun and the command and control equipment to be directed or to control military operations. The Norwegian government also leases seven frigate-sized, ice-capable vessels with a primary role of a constabulary navy. The ships are all well equipped to do this job. Finally, Norway has recently acquired three *Nordkapp* class ice-strengthened vessels. These are corvette size and are well armed with 57 mm gun and penguin II missiles.[34] The Norwegian Coast Guard is an integrated part of the Armed Forces and it comes under the military chain of command. In addition the Norwegian Coast Guard "Act" provides the power of a civilian police authority.

Denmark has expended significant effort to provide maritime security and sovereignty to Greenland. All government vessels are part of the Navy and are considered warships. On a permanent basis, corvette size vessels, patrol the western side of Greenland, their roles include: search and rescue, fisheries enforcement and ice reconnaissance. They are well armed for their tasks and size.[35] At least two *Adglek* cutters are also on active service in Greenland waters at any time. These vessels are a specialised adaptation of the Standard Flex 3000 frigates designed with a double skin ice-strengthened hull capable of operating in over 80 cm of solid ice.[36] Finally, Denmark had the submarine S325 *Kronborg*, which was transferred from Sweden in 2001 and fitted with air independent propulsion.[37] Although this programme ended in 2004, it was a cause for concern in Canada.

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[34] Sanders Stephen, Commodore, Jane's Fighting Ships 2005-2006, Sentinel House, Surrey UK, 2005

[35] CASR Canada's Arctic Sovereignty: Denmark's claims in the Arctic, April 2005, http://www.sfu.ca/casr/id-arcticviking3.thm, 16 March 2006

[36] Ibid

[37] Ibid

The Canadian government has expended significant effort to discuss issues related to the Arctic. Unfortunately, they have not been as effective in implementing a maritime security framework for the North.

**Political Will to Defend the North**

Over the years the Canadian government has expended a lot more effort in making security commitments in the North than actually providing associated funds or programs. For the most part Canadian government efforts have been reactive to events initiated by other countries. Great relations and cooperative efforts have existed between the US and Canada. For example; when Japan invaded the Aleutian archipelago the US needed a way to move ammunition, personnel and supplies to Alaska to prepare an effective defence. Canada agreed to provide the land required to create the Alaska Highway (1964 km in Canada / 324km in Alaska). During the Cold War, US concerns over the possible attack from over the North Pole, Canada allowed the US to position the Distant Early Warning (DEW) radar line in the North.

In the 1987 White Paper the Canadian government appeared serious about committing resources to address responsibility to patrol the North, when it planned on the purchase of 12 nuclear powered submarines.[38] This would have provided Canada with the ability to not only patrol but also to monitor Allied activities via a underwater management scheme to prevent collisions. With the end of the Cold War and excessive costs this project was cancelled. By 1989, the navy abandoned its northern deployment (NORPLOYS). These had seen the deployments of one to three warships yearly into the Arctic since 1971.[39] In the 1990s the

[38] Department of National Defence, Challenge and commitment, a defence policy for Canada, 1987, p23
[39] Hubebert Rob, Renaissance in Canadian Arctic Security… p21

government also considered a different way to monitor the Northwest Passage in the form of a passive listening device, but this too failed due to lack of funding.

In the 1990s, significant government downsizing saw a drastic budget cut to all government departments. In order to maintain core capabilities most departments greatly reduced or simply dropped their efforts in the north as a cost saving measures. These departments included the RCMP, Coast Guard, Fisheries, Transport and of course DND.[40]

The 1994 White Paper only made one direct reference to Arctic security when it stated that the Canadian Forces would be capable of "…mounting effective responses to emerging situation in our maritime areas of jurisdiction, our airspace, or within our territory".[41] This policy implied a capable maritime response in the North; however, no funding or project was put in place to rectify the capability shortage.

In 2002, the defence minister supported the Canadian Forces Northern Area (CFNA) command, by re-initiating the Joint northern exercise *Narwhal*. *Narwhal 1*, in 2002, saw the maritime presence consisting of two Maritime Coastal Defence Vessels (MCDVs) followed two years later by *Narwhal 2,* in 2004, with *HMCS Montreal*, a Canadian Patrol Frigate.

For the first time in many years, in 2005, the Arctic regained a place in the political discussions within Ottawa. In the 2005 Canada's International Policy Statement (IPS) senior political and military leaders accepted the need to re-examine Canadian Arctic security. The Defence and Diplomacy subdocument went further and acknowledged the neglect of the Canadian North and demonstrated the urgent need to develop a framework and to improve capabilities before 2015.[42] The Navy, now faced with a change from the core navy requirement

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[40] Ibid p.22

[41] Department of National Defence, 1994 Defence White Paper, p15

[42] Departement of National Defence Canada's International Policy Statement: A role of pride and influence in the world Defence, 2005, p 17-19

policies, while also facing un-funded capital replacement of core capability (the navy's priorities), commissioned a technical report by the Operational Research Division under the review of the Director of Maritime Strategy.[43] The report acknowledged the changes in the Arctic and the new security requirements, but concluded that the Navy would not require any northern capabilities or changes to the current priorities or core naval procurement for the next 25 years. It is possible; however, that this report was self serving to ensure the limited amount of naval funding was not diverted from core capabilities procurement to this emerging task.

However, it was clearly demonstrated that the Navy will have a significant role to play in the Arctic during the life spans of the next generation of platforms. Given the time procurement takes and the expected service life of our platforms, the next AOR will be expected to still be in service in 2050, while the single class surface combatant could see service until well beyond 2060. This topic will be expanded later in the paper under the operational issues. Not surprising by, both *Leadmark*, *the navy's strategy for 2020* and *Securing Canada's Frontiers, Charting the course from Leadmark* only have token implied statements regarding the Arctic.

Past governments have failed to put in place appropriate funding to develop and implement current and future policies. With the new Conservative government it is important to look at the election promises regarding the security of the North and the initial indication from them as the governing party.

[43] Christensen Kyle, Arctic Maritime Security and Defence: Canadian Northern Security Opportunities and Challenges, Directorate of Maritime Strategy, 2005

## EXECUTING MARITIME SECURITY IN THE NORTH

### The New Conservative Government

During the 2006 election campaign, the conservative Party's platform included an aggressive plan for the permanent presence of the Canadian Forces in the North. On 22 December 2005, Mr Harper announced that if he was elected Prime Minister he would increase surveillance; deploy more troops, icebreakers and military aircraft in the Arctic. He also went on to outline detail plans to build a sensor net for monitoring foreign ships and submarines, to commission three armed icebreakers capable of carrying troops, to build Canada's first Arctic deepwater port near Iqaluit and finally to open a new military training facility on Cambridge Bay on the Northwest Passage (location of the previous military Arctic survival training camp). This program would cost an estimated 5.3 billion Canadian dollars over five years. [44] Mr Harper stated: " As prime minister, I will make it clear to foreign governments — including the United States — that naval vessels traveling in Canadian territorial waters will require the consent of the government of Canada,"[45]

Following the election, in his first speech as Minister of National Defence, the Honourable Gordon O'Connor outlined the initial building block to implement this policy. In his announcement on the 23 February 2006, he indicated that his government would implement a policy of "Canada First". This would mean a defence strategy that strengthens our national sovereignty at home and abroad. He indicated that his government would make new Navy, Army and Air Force investments in Canada's North.

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[44] Comte Michel, Conservative Leader Harper Assets Canada's Arctic Claims, Defense News, http://www.defensenews.com/story.php?F=1429085&C=america, 13 March 2006

[45] Ibid

Having determined the legal and political requirements for maritime security assets it is important to review the Canadian inventory and finally a proposed way ahead for the Canadian Government.

**Existing Capabilities**

Existing capabilities within the Canadian government fleets are very limited. The Canadian Coast Guard has the only ice capable ships. The fleet consists of one heavy icebreaker commissioned in 1969 and five medium icebreakers commissioned between 1978-1987. All, with the exception of the *Henry Larsen* (1987) are approaching the end of their useful life.[46] The Coast Guard also has 12 ice strengthened vessels to support winter operations in main Canadian ports and waterways. The Coast Guard has not been able to gain Cabinet approval to begin a ship replacement program. The existing icebreaker fleet has no mandate to maritime security; rather, its role is defined as support to transport Canada and is under the command of the department of Fisheries and Ocean. While the icebreakers with their red and white colors are one of the most tangible signs of Canadian sovereignty, their mission does not include this tasking.

While the RCMP has a strong presence in the Arctic communities as a contracted police force, it does not have any maritime capabilities. The closest maritime emergency response team is located in Montreal.

The navy has been operating in the summer months in the Arctic when the ice conditions have been favourable. The navy has very little capability to operate in ice. Neither destroyers

[46] Departement of Fisheries and Ocean Canada, Icebreaking program, http://www.ccg-gcc.gc.ca/ice-gla/fleet_e.htm, 16 March 2006

nor frigates have the capability to operate in ice and are limited in sea ice to 10 centimetres. Both the AORs and MCDVs have a first year ice capability, but not to exceed 30 cm thickness.[47]

Given the poor existing Arctic maritime capability of the Canadian fleet and the overwhelming ability for other nations to operate in Canada's North, Canada must acquire the means to show its resolve, to fulfill its requirement for search and rescue, and to be able to uphold and enforce Canadian and international laws.

**Proposed Future**

In order to address the security threats of yesterday and today, the existing fleet of CCG icebreakers require the capability to transport RCMP, Canadian Special Forces JTF2 or troops. Being the only platform capable of operating in the North, the CCG icebreakers also require to ability to become the Government's "Command" platform for operations. This function will require a basic suite of Command and control equipment to be installed to provide direct communication with the Maritime Security Operation Centers (MSOC) on both coasts. Also Canada's Special Forces and RCMP reaction teams have specialised crafts that the CCG ships will have to be capable of carrying in the event of operations. Compatibility study of the JTF and RCMP specialised rigid hull inflatable boats (Rhibs) and shipboards cranes must be completed.

Given the age of *CCGS Louis St Laurent,* the proposed program announced by the defence minister to purchase of three "armed" icebreakers must be "fast tracked". The project should look at Class 1 icebreakers to replace the aging icebreaking fleets. These ships, like the USCG, should be designed with the ability to deploy troops, Special Forces and RCMP. The ships should be manned and operated by the CCG and be fitted with the appropriate command and

[47] Christensen Kyle, Arctic Maritime Security and Defence… p54

control equipment to operate under military control, if required. Some light armament should be available (.50 Cal) to assist operations when required.

As described in the paper, the navy, being responsible for maritime security will require the ability to operate in all three oceans. In order to fulfill this requirement, at least two of the navy's proposed AORs should be ice-strengthened and the Finnyards design of an icebreaking stern should be incorporated. These vessels would then be able to provide sustainment, transport and a command and control platform for any joint military operations. These would become key joint assets in the event of a serious disaster in the North.

In the future at least four of the navy's future single class surface combatant ships should be ice-strengthened to allow for presence and patrol in the Northwest Passage on a regular basis during the shipping season.

Finally, in order for the government's to demonstrate that they are serious about the North, the Canadian Forces must establish a more permanent presence. The establishment of a permanent port near Iqualuit and the establishment of a naval station with a core group of regular forces augmented by "special" Northern Naval reservists (ie: not focussed MCDVs, but rather on Northern operations) would provide year round naval presence in the region.

**CONCLUSION**

In 2005, the Canadian Government acknowledged that it had neglected the maritime security of the North. In addition, Canada's legal basis for establishing claims to the Northwest Passage is very weak. Lieutenant Commander Guy Killaby, a legal officer working for DND, argued that Canada has long been able to maintain its legal position only at the pleasure or

sufferance of our Arctic neighbours.[48] The demand on natural resources and the abundant wealth of the Arctic Archipelago will require Canada to monitor and manage the exploration and exploitation very closely. With new fleets of ice capable vessels from around the globe growing and the eventual opening of the Northwest Passage to shipping will see a significant increase in traffic in the North.

Despite these new requirements there is still a lack of a clear vision and policy for the maritime security framework for the Arctic. Canada needs the means to defend and uphold Canadian sovereignty and security to enforce both Canadian and international Laws within its EEZ and territorial waters of the Arctic. Other Nations, like Denmark and Norway have understood the importance of sovereignty. New icebreakers capable of operating in the North must be acquired by Canada as soon as possible and the new AOR project must investigate and incorporate into some ships the full ice capability to operate in the north for "most" of the year. The longer term project of frigate replacement must look at a designated number of ships to be multiyear ice capable. The navy must look beyond 25 years given its current procurement cycle. The platforms being designed today will be what the government have to work with for the next 50 years.

Canada will need to demonstrate more than political neglect if it hopes to defend the beguiling beauty of its vast Arctic land and waters. Canada needs to act now.

[48] Great game in a cold climate… p39

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