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## THE CANADIAN RANGERS: THE RIGHT FIT FOR CANADA

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**THE CANADIAN RANGERS: THE RIGHT FIT FOR CANADA**

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Rangers are our guiding light, our pathfinders, those eyes and ears and hearts and souls of the North that provide us the protection. To me, that role will never change, simply because it's been so successful. - Brigadier-General David Millar, Commander Joint Task Force (North) (2009)<sup>1</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

According to land mass, Canada is the second largest country in the world with approximately 9.98 million square kilometers of terrain. It has a population of around 35 million, which, when combined with its territory, equates to approximately 3.3 people per km<sup>2</sup>.<sup>2</sup> This statistic is slightly misleading, however, as Canada is a modern country that boasts several large urban centers, each over a million people. Nevertheless, most of these people live within 100 kilometers of the U.S. border, thus, leaving large tracks of its land, especially in its northern reaches, almost uninhabited. Canada is surrounded by oceans on three of its sides, the Pacific to the west, the Atlantic to the east, and the Arctic Ocean to the north. To its south and northwest, it has the longest international border in existence with the United States of America. In other words, Canada is a vast country that is, for the most part, sparsely populated. To put Canada's size somewhat into perspective, its four western provinces are about the same geographical size as Western Europe with approximately 386 million less people.

Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King put it best when he said: "Some countries have too much history; Canada has too much geography."<sup>3</sup> With a country this large to protect, one would expect that Canada would have a similarly large military; however, this is simply not the case. Currently Canada possesses an active service of 68,250, a reserve force of

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<sup>1</sup> Whitney Lackenbauer, *The Canadian Rangers: A Living History*, UBC Press, Vancouver, 2013, 437

<sup>2</sup> [www.brocku.ca/international-services/international-student-guide/general-information-on-canada-http](http://www.brocku.ca/international-services/international-student-guide/general-information-on-canada-http):

<sup>3</sup> Kenneth C. Eyre, *Forty Years of Military Activity in the Canadian North, 1947-1987*, *Arctic* Vol. 40, No. 4, December 1987, 293

around 26,000 (not including the supplementary reserves), and a Canadian Ranger force of around 5000, while it spends less than one per cent of its annual GDP on defence.<sup>4</sup> While Canada's military is a professional force that is fairly well-equipped and highly trained, its Regular Force is simply too small to carry out all the tasks assigned to it and provide adequate surveillance, reconnaissance, and security across much of the remote reaches of the country. This is especially true in its north.

There are many reasons why Canada does not possess a larger, full-time military with the multifaceted array of systems, platforms, and personnel to adequately monitor and defend its complete domain, especially its northern and remote reaches. A small population base, topography, continentalism, and a historic lack of will within the Canadian populace, are a few of the most prominent. Sir Wilfrid Laurier might have summed up Canadian's views on defence best when he wrote "You must not take the Militia seriously, for though it is useful to suppressing internal disturbances, it will not be require for the defense of the country."<sup>5</sup> In fact, much of our domestic military strategy is dominated by two major factors. First, we are the northern neighbours of the world's leading superpower, the United States, which does most of the heavy lifting when it comes to the defence of the continent. This makes it "virtually impossible to separate strategic threats to the United States from strategic threats to Canada," strategist Ken Eyre notes. "The two are inextricably interwoven."<sup>6</sup> This provides most Canadians with some sense of security, at least where continental defence is concerned, as the US spends hundreds of billions annually on ensuring that the US, and therefore North America, is protected against any

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<sup>4</sup> [www.brocku.ca/international-services/international-student-guide/general-information-on-canada-http:](http://www.brocku.ca/international-services/international-student-guide/general-information-on-canada)

<sup>5</sup> Douglas Bland. "Everything Military Officers Need to Know about Defence Policy-Making in Canada." In *Canadian Strategic Forecast 2000: Advance or Retreat? Canadian Defence in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, edited by David Rudd, Jim Hansen, and Jessica Blitt. Toronto: Canadian Institute of Strategic Studies, 2000, 18.

<sup>6</sup> Kenneth C. Eyre, *Forty Years of Military Activity in the Canadian North, 1947-1987*, Arctic Vol. 40, No. 4, December 1987, 294

large-scale attack. Second, Canada's vast size and the inhospitable climate and terrain of its northern territories, which also happen to represent its most unprotected border, have historically left little chance of anyone invading from that direction.

The object of this paper is not to expressly discuss Canadian's views on northern defence (although I will touch on some of them), or to study continentalism or the effects that the US has had on Canadian domestic defence policy in the North. Furthermore, I will not focus on such things as Arctic Offshore Patrol Ships with ice-breaking capabilities, or the pros and cons of nuclear powered submarines to cover the underwater approaches to Canada's northern waters.<sup>7</sup> What I will do is touch on how Canada projects a military presence over the vast tracks of sparsely populated regions of its country. More specifically I take a closer look at the Canadian Rangers and the role that they play in Canada's defence and surveillance in isolated and remote parts of the country. I will critically examine the Canadian Rangers, their origins, their role, mission, and the tasks that they are assigned. I will discuss how they have evolved into their modern day alignment and whether, in their present configuration they are the right fit for Canada going forward. To draw my assessment, I compare them to Australia's NORFORCE, an organization that has remarkably similar origins and composition to the Canadian Rangers, but one that has evolved to have a more tactical role within the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and in the defence of Australia's Northern Territory. In conclusion, I demonstrate why the Canadian Rangers have been, and remain the better fit for Canada, while offering suggestions about where they should go from here into the future.

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<sup>7</sup> For introductions to these topics, see Franklyn Griffiths, Rob Huebert, and P. Whitney Lackenbauer, *Canada and the Changing Arctic: Sovereignty, Security and Stewardship* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2011); Ryan Dean, "Arctic Offshore Patrol Ships: Adrift in Inflationary Waters," *Canadian Naval Review* forum, 2 October 2015, <http://www.navalreview.ca/tag/ryan-dean/>; and Adam Lajeunesse, *The Canadian Armed Forces in the Arctic: Purpose, Capabilities, and Requirements* (Ottawa: Canadian Defence and Foreign Affairs Institute, May 2015),

## CHAPTER 1 – THE CANADIAN RANGERS

When the Canadian Rangers are discussed in the modern media, if mentioned at all, they are usually depicted as a ‘good news’ story, one of red hoodie-wearing Aboriginal people involved in a quasi-military organization which aides in nation-building in the North and that provides a social and economic benefit to northern, remote, and isolate communities across our country. Throughout their recent history, however, there remains discussions, both in government, the military, and across mainstream media forums,<sup>8</sup> about whether the Canadian Rangers should be equipped with more than antiquated rifles and whether their role should be expanded into one of true ‘defence’ of the North.<sup>9</sup> To understand how their role should, or should not change in the future, it is first important to understand the origins and evolution of this unique military formation.

The Canadian Rangers of today evolved from an organization known as the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers (PCMR) of the Second World War. In 1941, Axis advances in the Far East drew the attention of Canadian defence planners towards British Columbia and although there were infantry battalions stationed at Prince Rupert, New Westminster-Vancouver, and Victoria-Esquimalt, the people of British Columbia felt these were inadequate to protect their homes and loved ones against a possible Japanese invasion; thus, they put pressure on the government to do more. As the Axis powers advanced in 1942 the pressure mounted as the Prime Minister was inundated with request, letters, and editorials demanding that he do more especially to protect those communities along the British Columbian coast where any Japanese threat was likely to materialize. Rightly at that time the government of Canada had to carefully balance the human and material resources available for the defence of the coast of British Columbia while remaining

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<sup>8</sup> Macleans, Rogers Media Inc. June 8, 2015. Volume 128. Number 22, 9

<sup>9</sup> Whitney Lackenbauer, *The Canadian Rangers: A Living History*, UBC Press, Vancouver, 2013, 454-60

focussed on the defeat of Germany, yet still demonstrate a commitment to those communities that may be exposed to the possible threat of a Japanese invasion. As would become a theme throughout the history of the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers and the Canadian Rangers after them, the government needed a solution that would both be economical and one which would conveniently, and without the use of any serious amount of regular troops, provide coverage over large tracks of isolated land in the best manner possible. Defence officials recognized that there were a great number of locals, including war veterans, loggers, miners, fisherman, and those too young or too old to serve in the regular forces who would likely volunteer for such an assignment and would be useful auxiliaries, supporting a main military force, very similar to the British “Home Guard.”<sup>10</sup> Thus, on 3 March 1942 the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers were created.<sup>11</sup>

“Their operational role was (to be) threefold,” historian Whitney Lackenbauer observes. “First, the Rangers had to “possess up-to-date, complete and detailed knowledge of their own area,” which they could provide to Pacific Command Headquarters and to local military commanders if required. Second, as the eyes and ears in their areas, they would report suspicious vessels and any unusual occurrences that might be subversive or fifth-column activities. Third, in case of emergency they would repel and enemy invasion or attack from the sea or air, by themselves or in conjunction with Active Army units.”<sup>12</sup>

The PCMR were founded on the principle that they would be an unpaid volunteer force that would parade and train on their own time, use their own equipment, and would require very little Regular Force support. Once established, they were to fall under the direction of Pacific

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 28-31

<sup>11</sup> David B. Clark, *Pictorial History of the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers: British Columbia's Guerrilla Army 1942-1945*, Victoria, BC 2013, 3

<sup>12</sup> Whitney Lackenbauer, *The Canadian Rangers: A Living History*, UBC Press, Vancouver, 2013, 35



Command and; thus, their creation and organization was handed over to one of Pacific Command's staff officers, Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Taylor.<sup>13</sup> The army envisaged the Rangers as a group of hardy woodsmen with excellent knowledge of their local areas, lightly trained as a guerrilla force that would observe, report on, and repel (or at least delay) any Japanese incursion until the regular forces stationed in British Columbia could be brought to bear. The volunteers were given guerrilla training which was conducted, for the first sixteen months after their creation, by Brendan Kennelly, a former guerrilla warfare specialist with the Irish Republican Army, and later by Yank (Bert) Levy, who had previous military experience in Palestine, Spain, Nicaragua, Trans-Jordan, and Mexico.<sup>14</sup>

While the concept of the PCMR was initially to be focussed on coastal communities where the threat of a Japanese invasion was the most likely, within two weeks of the news of the creation of the PCMR hitting the local newspapers requests for Ranger units flooded in throughout the province, with over 4000 volunteers across 40 company locations signing up. At its height in 1943, the PCMR accounted for 529 officers and 14,320 other ranks and covered the territory from the Queen Charlotte Islands (now Haida Gwaii), along the coast of British Columbia, throughout that provinces interior, into the Yukon Territory all at a miniscule cost to the federal government and military.<sup>15</sup>

After the defeat of Germany in Europe and with the Japanese surrender on 2 September 1945, senior army officials in Ottawa recommended standing down the PCMR. This recommendation went against the advice of Pacific Commander-in-Chief, Major-General F.F.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 33

<sup>14</sup> David B. Clark, *Pictorial History of the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers: British Columbia's Guerrilla Army 1942-1945*, Victoria, BC 2013, 168

<sup>15</sup> P. Whitney Lackenbauer, "Guerrillas in our Midst: The Pacific Coast Militia Rangers, 1942-45." *BC Studies* 155 (December 2007). 95-131

“Worthy” Worthington, who saw the continuing value of the PCMR in a post-war Canada. Against his protests, however, the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers were stood down in the fall of 1945, having served their country proudly if quietly, throughout the war.<sup>16</sup>

With the Second World War over and the PCMR stood down, it did not take long before protecting the remote parts of Canada, especially the North, emerged as a significant consideration. While there were vague rumblings of what would later develop into a Cold War between the United States and Russia, in the mid 1940’s it was more the question of Canadian sovereignty in Canada’s north that came to the fore. At first it was not the threat of an enemy, but rather the war time activities of allies, namely the United States in northern Canada that raised the anxieties of Canadians with respect to their sovereignty.<sup>17</sup> American wartime megaprojects such as the Alaska Highway, the Northwest Staging Route, and the Canol pipeline<sup>18</sup> created the feeling that the American mentality of continental defence might possibly outweigh Canadian sovereign rights in the North regardless of Canada’s wishes. War ended in 1945, however, the American soldiers who had been stationed in Canada’s north went home and Ottawa quickly reinforced the her rights in the area, reimbursing the US for the infrastructure it had built and temporarily allaying Canadian citizen’s fears if not quite solving the problem in her northern and remote areas.<sup>19</sup>

The departure of the Americans left a military a vacuum in these remote areas. Canada did not possess the military strength or the financial resources to permanently station adequate

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid

<sup>17</sup> Bernd Horn, “Gateway to Invasion or the Curse of Geography? The Canadian Arctic and the Question of Security, 1939-1999,” in *Canada and Arctic Sovereignty and Security: Historical Perspectives* ed. P.W. Lackenbauer (Calgary: Centre for Military and Strategic Studies. 2011), 34-38

<sup>18</sup> Whitney Lackenbauer, *The Canadian Rangers: A Living History*, UBC Press, Vancouver, 2013, 58

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 60

numbers of full-time soldiers into these areas in order to fill the void left by the Americans.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, with sovereignty concerns still fresh in everyone's mind and the potential of Canada's north possibility becoming a future battleground between two superpowers as the wartime alliance between the communist East and the democratic West unravelled and the Cold War began to heat up, army officials decided to resurrect the Ranger concept in 1947 as a possible method to keep an eye on things where no other military forces existed.<sup>21</sup> This time the organization would be known as the Canadian Rangers, with the idea that it would be a restricted Canada-wide corps under the reserve militia as part of "a low-cost Cold War security strategy."<sup>22</sup>

In war they were to have the following duties:

- a. Provision of guides to organized troops within own area.
- b. Coast watching.
- c. Assistance to the RCMP and/or Provincial Police in the discovery, reporting and apprehension of enemy agents or saboteurs.
- d. Immediate local defence against sabotage by small enemy detachments or saboteurs and to assist and augment civilian protective arrangements against saboteurs, within the area in which the organization is authorized to operate.
- e. Reporting, locating and rescue work, including first aid treatment in connection with aircraft distress.

In peacetime, they would have a similar but more limited role:

- a. Provision of guides to troops on exercises, when required.
- b. The preparation of local defence schemes referred to in (d) above.
- c. Collection of detailed information concerning their local area likely to be of assistance to them in carrying out their roles in war and the documenting of such information with any necessary sketches.
- d. Provision of rescue parties for civilian or military purposes, where required.<sup>23</sup>

The Rangers were intended to act as the 'eyes and ears' of Canada's military in remote areas of Canada, act as guides for the Regular Force, and form a guerilla force against the possible

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<sup>20</sup> Whitney Lackenbauer, Working Papers on Arctic Security No. 6 "If It Ain't Broke, Don't Break It: Expanding and Enhancing the Canadian Rangers, UBC Press, 2013, 1

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 2

<sup>22</sup> Ibid

<sup>23</sup> Whitney Lackenbauer, The Canadian Rangers: A Living History, UBC Press, Vancouver, 2013, 74-75

Russian invaders during wartime. In short, the role of the new Canadian Rangers remained strikingly similar to the PCMR of the Second World War.

Much like the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers, this new version of the Ranger concept saw Rangers relying heavily on their own personal resources to carry out their mission. While the military provided them with a .303 Lee Enfield rifle and an annual allotment of 200 rounds of ammunition, they were expected to use their own clothing and equipment and to move and operate in their local areas with very little support from the Regular or Reserve Force.

Amazingly, seventy years later the role and mission of Canadian Rangers has not changed from when it was first formed in 1947. The 'Role' of the Canadian Rangers today remains "to provide a military presence in sparsely settled northern, coastal and isolated areas of Canada that cannot conveniently or economically be provided for by other components of the Canadian Forces."<sup>24</sup> Their 'Mission' is to "provide lightly equipped, self-sufficient, mobile forces in support of the Canadian Armed Forces sovereignty and domestic operation tasks."<sup>25</sup> Much like the role and mission, the tasks of the Canadian Rangers have only slightly evolved over the past seven decades even though the global climate and the expected threat to Canada has changed drastically throughout that same time period. The current national task list for the Canadian Rangers includes the following:

1. Conduct and Provide Support to Sovereignty Operations:
  - a. Conduct surveillance and sovereignty patrols as tasked.
  - b. Participate in CF operations, exercises and training.
  - c. Report suspicious and unusual activities.
  - d. Conduct North Warning site patrols as tasked.
  - e. Collect local data of military significance.
2. Conduct and Provide Assistance to CF Domestic Operations:

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 1

<sup>25</sup> Chief of Defence Staff, 20 April 2004, Annex A, 1

- a. Conduct territorial, coastal and inland water surveillance as required/tasked
- b. Provided local knowledge and Canadian Ranger expertise (guides and advice).
- c. Provide assistance to Other Government Departments
- d. Provide local assistance and advice to Ground Search and Rescue operations.
- e. Provide support in response to natural disasters and humanitarian operations

3. Maintain a CF presence in the Local Community:

- a. Instruct and supervise the Junior Canadian Rangers Program.
- b. Participate in/support events in the local community.

Although proposed in 2003, it was not until 2008 that the wartime tasks (listed below) were officially stricken off of the Canadian Ranger task list due to the level of training required to prepare for them that the CRPGs could not deliver:

4. Tactical Military Training:

- a. Immediate local defence tasks such as containing or observing small enemy detachments pending the arrival of other forces.
- b. Vital Point Security (dams, mines, or oil pipelines)
- c. Assisting Federal/Provincial/Territorial/Local Police in the discovery, reporting and apprehension of enemy agents, saboteurs, criminals, or terrorists.
- d. Aide to the Civil Power.<sup>26</sup>

Although the tasks assigned to the present day Canadian Rangers remain striking similar to the PCMR of the Second World War and the Canadian Rangers of 1947, the Canadian Rangers of today have continued to evolve from the time they were first formed. Since 1998, the Canadian Rangers have been grouped into five separate Canadian Ranger Patrol Groups (CRPGs). 1 CRPG, whose headquarters is located in Yellowknife, NWT, is the largest and is responsible for administering the Canadian Ranger program in Canada's three northern

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<sup>26</sup> Chief of Defence Staff, Revised – Role, Mission and Tasks of Canadian Ranger, 11 July 2008, Annex A

territories. 2 CRPG has its headquarters in St. Jean, Quebec and looks after the Canadian Rangers in northern Quebec. 3 CRPG maintains its headquarters in Borden, Ontario and is responsible for the province of Ontario. 4 CRPG has its headquarters in Victoria, British Columbia and is responsible for the administration and training of all Canadian Rangers in Canada's four western provinces. 5 CRPG maintains its headquarters in Gander, Newfoundland and is responsible for the Canadian Ranger program across Newfoundland and Labrador. Presently, there are approximately 5000 Canadian Rangers in 200+ remote communities across Canada. With a large aboriginal population, Rangers speak more than 26 languages and dialects. Much like the PCMR of the Second World War, they bring a multitude of non-traditional skills to the military from their civilian employment and their normal walks of life. Unlike the rest of the Canada's military, however, they are considered trained upon entering the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) for the skills and the knowledge of their local areas that they already possess. Accordingly, they only receive additional training to enhance their interoperability with the other components of the CAF. Today, they are paid when on active duty and when on training, much in the same manner as a part-time and/or Class A reserve soldier. Normally this equates to around twelve days of pay annually, but this can vary significantly depending on the training and operational tasks that are assigned to a Canadian Ranger over the course of a year. Rangers are also now compensated for the use of their equipment on training or operations through the payment of an Equipment Usage Rate (EUR) that pays them a daily amount when they are required to use their own equipment, such as their snowmobiles, all-terrain vehicles, or small watercraft to carry out tasks that the CRPGs assign to them.<sup>27</sup>

For the past two decades the Canadian Rangers have factored heavily in the Canadian federal government's northern strategy; however, this was not always the case. With their re-

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<sup>27</sup> [www.Army-armee@forces.gc.ca/canadianrangers](http://www.Army-armee@forces.gc.ca/canadianrangers)

creation in 1947, the Canadian Rangers represented a small but concrete example of what Canada was physically doing on the ground to allay their American allies' fears of an exposed northern flank to a possible Soviet invasion. The American continentalist approach to national defence left little doubt in Canadian politicians' minds that they needed to ensure that they remained a good ally to the United States throughout the Cold War,<sup>28</sup> for if they did not, there was little doubt that the American's would act to protect the continent (including on or over Canadian territory), regardless of how Canadians felt about it. When the Soviet threat changed with the introduction of long range intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) and then waned with the end of the Cold War, so too did the need for and attention paid to the Canadian Rangers. "By the 1960's the Rangers factored little in Ottawa's defence plans," Lackenbauer notes. "Northern residents with armbands and rifles could hardly fend off hostile Soviet bombers carrying nuclear weapons. Defence officials turned to technological marvels like the Distant Early Warning (DEW) Line to protect the continent."<sup>29</sup> With the shifting priorities of defence planners in Ottawa, only the low cost of the Canadian Rangers - both financially and in Regular Force manpower - that enabled them to survive, if in some instances only on paper.<sup>30</sup>

By 1970 the Canadian Ranger organization was largely inactive across the country. It was only after the American ice-strengthened tanker *Manhattan's* voyages into the Northwest Passage in 1969-70 that the Canadian federal government expressed renewed interest in Canadian Arctic sovereignty. Along with other measures, they saw the Canadian Rangers, with their local ties to the northern communities and their comprehensive knowledge of their local areas, as an excellent tool to help facilitate additional training exercises in the North by southern

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<sup>28</sup> Natalie Mychajlyszyn, *The Arctic: Canadian security and defence*, Parliamentary Information and Research Service Publication PRB 08-13E, 24 October 2008, 1

<sup>29</sup> Whitney Lackenbauer, *Working Papers on Arctic Security No. 6 "If It Ain't Broke, Don't Break It: Expanding and Enhancing the Canadian Rangers*, UBC Press, 2013, 3

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*

Canadian troops. Again, because of their cheap cost they fit the bill for the federal government.<sup>31</sup> Thus, the Canadian Rangers continued to survive, if not always remaining healthy.

In 1985, after the US Coast Guard icebreaker, *Polar Sea* transited the Northwest Passage; once again Canadians became concerned for their Arctic sovereignty.<sup>32</sup> Brian Mulroney, the Canadian Prime Minister at the time, promised big-ticketed military items such as nuclear-powered submarines and Polar Class icebreakers to increase Canada's Arctic presence (both of which have yet to be delivered) He also saw the Canadian Rangers as a key 'grass-roots' way to demonstrate Canadian sovereignty in the North, also ensuring that Northerners (and particularly Aboriginal peoples) were actively engaged in Arctic defence.<sup>33</sup> Lackenbauer notes that, "until that time, defence assessments had focused on the Rangers' military utility in a changing political climate; however, other aspects of the organization made it even more attractive."<sup>34</sup>

Over the last twenty-five years the climate of protecting the security and sovereignty of Canada's North has evolved faster than ever before. With climate change, the ice that covers much of the North year round is becoming ever thinner, making Canada's northern territory more easily accessible for longer periods of time each year. Environmental concerns brought on by a projected vast increase in international shipping in the area, coupled with the discovery of great caches of natural resources, such as oil and diamonds, in Canada's North has, once again, reinvigorated Ottawa's interest in asserting its sovereign rights.<sup>35</sup> Thus, since the end of the Cold War there has been a fundamental shift in Canada's Arctic strategy, with "sovereignty, rather

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid

<sup>32</sup> Ibid

<sup>33</sup> Ibid

<sup>34</sup> Ibid

<sup>35</sup> Rob Huebert, *The Newly Emerging Arctic Security Environment*, Canadian Defence and Foreign Affairs Institute, Calgary, Alberta, March, 2010, 6



than traditional forms of military security, now (serving as) the primary focus of Canadian defence activities in the Arctic.”<sup>36</sup>

The Canadian Rangers, Canada’s ‘eyes and ears’ in its remote and isolated areas, have a significant role to play in the new Arctic environment. Not only were the Canadian Rangers already located in and training around the areas that the Canadian government wanted to watch and influence, but they also acted as an intimate liaison between the military and, by association, the federal government, and the peoples of Northern Canada. For example, when “Aboriginal leaders called for the demilitarization of the arctic on social and environmental grounds, they always applauded the Rangers as a positive example of Northerners contributing directly to sovereignty and security. Media coverage began to emphasize the tremendous benefits of the Rangers in Aboriginal (particularly Inuit) communities. Now the Rangers enjoyed tremendous appeal as an inexpensive, culturally inclusive, and visible means of demonstrating Canada’s sovereignty.”<sup>37</sup>

In the 1990’s, when the Canadian federal government targeted the Canadian Armed Forces for significant budget cuts, they left the funding for the Canadian Rangers intact, recognizing the importance of the Aboriginal-military partnership that the Canadian Rangers provided and even creating the Junior Canadian Ranger Program in 1998 in order to promote the transmission of life, traditional, and Ranger skills to northern youth.<sup>38</sup>

As noted earlier, the Canadian Rangers’ tasks have now moved away from training in traditional war-fighting skills. Where once the Canadian Rangers were meant to provide a ‘home-grown’ guerrilla force meant to engage and delay an enemy invader, their training is now

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<sup>36</sup> P. Whitney Lackenbauer, *Canada’s Northern Defenders: Aboriginal Peoples in the Canadian Rangers, 1947-2005*, 173

<sup>37</sup> Whitney Lackenbauer, *Working Papers on Arctic Security No. 6 “If It Ain’t Broke, Don’t Break It: Expanding and Enhancing the Canadian Rangers*, UBC Press, 2013, 3

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*

focussed on aiding in Domestic Operations, such as providing support to their local communities and the Canadian Armed Forces during forest fires, floods, and providing expertise in Ground Search and Rescue (GSAR) operations. Certainly they still provide an ‘eyes and ears’ function, passively gathering information concerning their local areas that may be of a military interest and they continue to act as guides for the CAF in the remote parts of the country. More importantly, they provide the bridge between the military, the federal government and the northern peoples. Helping Canadian nation-building and teaching and mentoring the Northern youth through the Junior Canadian Ranger Program are now seen as just as an important assigned task as any other. Even their uniforms demonstrate this fundamental shift in their role, going from the traditional dry-bak heavy canvas uniform of the PCMR to one of highly visible red hoodies, combat pants, and black army combat boots. Most modern Canadian Ranger training now focusses around reconnaissance and mobility in support of domestic operations, getting somewhere in all weather conditions through difficult terrain, while all the time expanding their knowledge of their local area. The Canadian Rangers are usually trained as part of a community-based patrol, comprised of up to 34 personnel, but they are often employed supporting other CAF sub-units as individuals or in pairs, when they act as guides and provide specialized local knowledge. In short, the Canadian Rangers are a unique organization within the Canadian Armed Forces whose flexibility, dispersion, and connection to local remote communities are its greatest assets to the CAF and the federal government.

## CHAPTER 2 – AUSTRALIA’S NORFORCE

As a country, Australia shares various similar physical and social traits to Canada. Both are large, ‘First-World’ countries with relatively small populations that include vast, sparsely-populated tracts of land. Parts of both countries have extreme climates and both have an extensive and exposed northern border largely populated by indigenous peoples. They also possess organizations within their armed forces, the Canadian Rangers and the North West Mobile Force with similar origins, compositions, and tasks.

The North West Mobile Force or NORFORCE traces its history back to three unique units that were created during the Second World War. These units, like the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers, were created in response to the potential threat of a Japanese invasion in Australia’s north. The first and probably the most commonly known was the 2/1st North Australia Observer Unit (2/1st NAOU). The 2/1 NAOU were also known as the “Nackeroos” and were formed on 11 May 1942 by Maj W.E.H “Bill” Stanner, a former anthropologist, in just twelve weeks following the bombing of Darwin by Japanese aircraft on 19 February of that same year.<sup>39</sup>

Much like the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers of British Columbia, the men whom “Stanner required were to have a bush background and an adventurous spirit, with initiative, resourcefulness, intelligence, and the ability to act independently.”<sup>40</sup> Unlike the PCMR, the Australian military also wanted its recruits for this unit to be between 20 and 40 years of age, possess good horsemanship skills, and be in excellent health. In practice, these criteria were treated only as a loose guideline as the youngest member of the NAOU, Don Cook was just 15 years old when he signed on.<sup>41</sup> The war establishment called for a total of 450 all ranks with 29

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<sup>39</sup> Paul A. Rosenzweig, EVER VILIGANT, The Regimental History of the North West Mobile Force, NORFORCE 1981-2001. Darwin 2001, 2

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 3

<sup>41</sup> Ibid

officers and 421 other ranks. A footnote indicated that they could employ native people as necessary.<sup>42</sup> The NAOU was organized in three field companies which were deployed to allow roving horse patrols and the manning of Observations Posts at the entrances of rivers in the Northern Territory of Australia that were considered tactically important.<sup>43</sup> Historian Paul A. Rosenzweig observes that “Stanner’s concept was for a ‘bush commando’, a ‘phantom’ unit which could deal with the immense problem of reconnaissance and surveillance across the north of Australia – a far-ranging and mobile force, self-sufficient so it would not be restricted by long and awkward lines of supply, to watch for and report on enemy activity.”<sup>44</sup>

The second unit that NORFORCE was founded on was the Northern Territory Special Reconnaissance Unit (NTSRU). The NTSRU was raised in 1941 by Flight Lieutenant Donald Thomson. Like Stanner, Thomson was an anthropologist, and like the Nackeroos, the NTSRU’s role was very much one of patrolling the northern bush and providing surveillance and observation along key waterways and possible Japanese landing points; however, the approach of the NTSRU was very different from that of the 2/1 NAOU.<sup>45</sup>

Thomson had lived in Arnhem Land during 1935-36 and when the Director of Special Operations heard about Thomson’s experiences he decided to use the local Aborigines to provide early warning of Japanese landing in the area. The NTSRU was formed almost exclusively of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, as the Aborigines in Arnhem Land had historically been the most successful of dissuading outsiders from entering their historic homeland; in fact, a number of ‘intruders’ had been killed as recently as the early 1930’s. As well, military officials were concerned about their own lack of knowledge of the area in which the Aborigines lived and

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid, 3

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 4-5

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 6

<sup>45</sup> Arnhem Squadron Capability Brief – Maj Tom Green, August 2015, 5

they, as well as a percentage of the Australian population, were concerned about the sympathies of the Aborigines if, in fact the Japanese landed.<sup>46</sup>

In the end, Thompson recruited 49 Aborigines for the NTSRU with the understanding that the unit would serve as the nucleus for a larger force of Aborigines if the need arose. The NTSRU's primary concern was surveillance; however, it was also responsible for the protection of the east flank of Darwin.<sup>47</sup>

The third and probably the least recognized foundation unit was the Darwin Mobile Force (DMF), which was raised in 1939 and tasked with surveillance and protection of Darwin and its surrounding region. The DMF, originally an Artillery unit (which had the distinction of being the first Permanent Military Force unit to be raised in the Army), was later changed to the Darwin Infantry Battalion during the Defence of Darwin in 1942, and was again renamed the 19<sup>th</sup> Battalion, 2<sup>nd</sup> AIF in 1943 before being deployed to Papua New Guinea.<sup>48</sup> The first military force to bear the actual name NORFORCE was the Division-sized Northern Territory Force which commanded the DMF, 2/1 NAOU, and the NTSRU, which was based in and around Darwin during the same period.<sup>49</sup>

When the Second World War ended, so too did the perceived need for units such as the DMF, NTSRU, and the 2/1 NAOU. Much like the PCMR in Canada, they were stood down at the end of hostilities and there was a period when the defence and surveillance of the northern part of Australia was left to its own devices. This kind of thinking changed with the end of the Vietnam War, however, when Australian defence planners replaced "Australia's Forward

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid

<sup>47</sup> Ibid

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, 6

<sup>49</sup> Ibid

Defence Strategy” with one of continental or ‘home’ defence which would carry through the 1980s.<sup>50</sup>

Much the same as Canada had come to realize, Lieutenant General Phillip Bennett AO DSO noted in April of 1982 that “much of the mineral wealth (of Australia) was in the underdeveloped north and northwest and although it is improving, the infrastructure of these areas is still limited.”<sup>51</sup> He further formalized his concept of Australia’s defence of the North by stating that “the development of a comprehensive ground surveillance screen in the North and Northwest composed primarily of local residents with a thorough knowledge of their locality and environment is a project the Army will pursue throughout the 1980s and beyond.” This concept was not necessarily new as Major General Donald Dunstan CB, CBE recalled his concerns with respect to the vulnerability of northern Australia dated from a visit he had to Canada’s Yukon in 1970 where he specifically considered the Canadian Ranger concept as a possible viable solution to Australia’s similar concerns:

I was interested in a Canadian arrangement for surveillance in their far north by hunters and others who were given some limited support in exchange for reporting any unusual activity. Their problem was not unlike ours in terms of a vast, sparsely populated area. Work on the idea started after Cyclone Tracy had destroyed the accommodation and equipment for the two Army Reserve units in Darwin. These were not re-activated pending our examination of the requirement. This was an opportunity to make changes.<sup>52</sup>

In June 1980 Major Alan Pike met with Major-General Ron Grey (Field Force Commander) and Colonel Mike Jeffery (Director Special Action Forces) to discuss the implementation of a plan to convert the 7<sup>th</sup> Independent Rifle Company to a reconnaissance and surveillance role, while using the local knowledge of Northern Territory residents. Along these

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<sup>50</sup> Paul A. Rosenzweig, *EVER VILIGANT*, The Regimental History of the North West Mobile Force, NORFORCE 1981-2001. Darwin 2001, 10

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>52</sup> Lieutenant General Sir D.B. Dunstan, personal communication, 5 September 1994.

lines, on 1 July 1981 NORFORCE was officially stood up, following a similar formula to the NTSRU before it, with a small contingent of regular force, ‘full-time’ soldiers commanding and training a larger ‘part-time’ volunteer Aboriginal reserve force.<sup>53</sup>

By October 1981 NORFORCE had completed its first four-month training period, before deploying on two, two-week six-man vehicle mounted patrols into the Kalumburu and Broome-Derby regions.<sup>54</sup> While experiencing minor growing pains, the NORFORCE concept proved a success and the Australian Defence Force followed it in 1985 with the creation of two similar organizations, the Pilbara Regiment and the 51<sup>st</sup> Battalion Far North Queensland Regiment, which when combined with NORFORCE continue to meet the bulk of Australia’s requirement for surveillance and reconnaissance, or ISTAR (Information, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance), in the north and north-west of Australia.<sup>55</sup>

Currently NORFORCE is a regular and reserve unit with an established strength of around 600 personnel. Its area of operations covers 1.8 square kilometres, or nearly one quarter of Australia’s land mass, from Broome in the west to the Gulf of Carpentaria in the east. This also includes 11,000 kilometres of coastline, waterways, rivers, and streams.<sup>56</sup> Its role “is to conduct surveillance and reconnaissance in the Northern Territory and that part of Western Australia north of the local government boundary for the Kimberley region.”<sup>57</sup> The regular force personnel, which make up approximately ten percent of the unit strength, provide nearly all of the higher command, planning, and administrative support, as well as providing a pool of experienced instructors. The Reserves provides the bulk of the patrol capability, as well as some

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<sup>53</sup> Paul A. Rosenzweig, *EVER VILIGANT*, The Regimental History of the North West Mobile Force, NORFORCE 1981-2001. Darwin 2001, 27-34

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, 36

<sup>55</sup> Arnhem Squadron Capability Brief – Maj Tom Green, August 2015, 7

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid*, 10

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*

of the specialist functions for the unit. NORFORCE maintains between 40 and 60 percent Aboriginal soldiers and about 10 percent females soldiers. NORFORCE conforms to the Australian Defence Force's policy with respect to the employment of women in combat-related roles, and thus does not employ its female members as patrol members.<sup>58</sup>

NORFORCE is organized into four surveillance squadrons, each with responsibility for operations in a different region: Darwin, Arnhem, and Centre in the Northern Territory and Kimberly Squadron in Western Australia. It also maintains an Operational Support Squadron and a Training Squadron that are based out of Larrakeyah Barracks in Darwin along with its regimental headquarters.<sup>59</sup>

The unit's mission is "to provide situational awareness to the national surveillance plan and support other Australian Defence Force units and Government of Australia agencies."<sup>60</sup> It does this through three main facets: presence, patrolling, and community engagement.

NORFORCE has been assigned the following tasks:

1. The conduct of surveillance and reconnaissance throughout the area of operations;
2. The acquisition and maintenance of military geographic information of the area of operations;
3. The provision of information for and assistance to other Australian Defence Force units deployed in the area of operations;
4. The mounting of patrols in Squadron areas of responsibility;
5. The development and maintenance of military skills relevant to achieving wartime tasks in the area of operations;
6. Employing the special skills and knowledge of the local population;
7. The maintenance of a capability to provide assistance to State, Territory and Federal authorities as directed in accordance with extant defence policies; and,
8. Liaison with the civil community.<sup>61</sup>

While "NORFORCE's Concept of Operations was initially based upon an appreciation of likely 'targets' within the Area of Operations, of national, local or military significance, and

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid, 9

<sup>59</sup> Australia. <http://www.nafomag.com/2015/02/border-security-in-australia-norforce.html>

<sup>60</sup> Arnhem Squadron Capability Brief – Maj Tom Green, August 2015, 11

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, 12



becoming intimately familiar with the environs of such targets, - the current focus for NORFORCE is very much on surveillance – seeing without being seen,” Rosenzweig notes.<sup>62</sup> While NORFORCE personnel carry sufficient firepower, including semi-automatic weapons, claymore anti-personnel mines, and smoke grenades, NORFORCE patrols are primarily covert in nature. “Their patrols are trained to ‘melt into the shadows’ once compromised by an ‘enemy’ party.”<sup>63</sup> Thus, while they are trained in wartime skills and operations, they are employed with the view that they will only fight in order to extract themselves from an enemy encounter.

The covert ISTAR task assigned to NORFORCE and their ability to ‘fight’ for information if required represents a significant deviation from the tasks assigned to the Canadian Rangers. In the next chapter, I examine this and other significant differences between NORFORCE and the Canadian Rangers while assessing which organization might best fit Canada as it moves forward in the new global security environment.

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<sup>62</sup> Paul A. Rosenzweig, *EVER VILIGANT*, The Regimental History of the North West Mobile Force, NORFORCE 1981-2001. Darwin 2001, 70

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid*, 69

### **CHAPTER 3 – CANADIAN RANGERS OR NORFORCE: A BETTER FIT FOR CANADA?**

Canada's Canadian Rangers and Australia's NORFORCE possess several uncanny similarities: the threat of a Japanese invasion during the Second World War leading to their creation; their benign neglect by the military as strategic assessments changed during the Cold War; a growing military recognition that their respective country's northern borders were exposed towards the end of the Cold War; and the remoteness, hostile environments, and extreme distances across which they operate. Both are unique units that employ a core of full-time staff in the command and administrative functions to train and administer a large part-time force. They possess a high concentration (between 40-60 percent) of Aboriginal members, they are dispersed across huge distances, and both bring the secondary benefit of 'nation-building'. Furthermore, both organizations have similar roles, missions, and tasks. Even the mottos of the two organizations are uncanny in their similarities: "Ever Vigilant" for NORFORCE and "Vigilans" for the Canadian Rangers. However, it is in their differences, especially in how they fulfill their roles, that sets them apart and ultimately may answer the question of which model might better serve Canada's future interests, given the multitude of voices urging that the Canadian Rangers should take on an increasing role in safe-guarding Canada's sovereignty.

NORFORCE personnel are first and foremost soldiers. When recruited, they are subjected to 'basic training' which is followed up with formalized training in weapons, patrolling, observation posts, survival, watercraft, medical, and communications. Those members that are selected receive leadership training and they attend formalized ADF sanctioned courses.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>64</sup>Paul A. Rosenzweig, EVER VILIGANT, The Regimental History of the North West Mobile Force, NORFORCE 1981-2001. Darwin 2001, 51-70

Patrolmen within NORFORCE are treated, paid, and trained in a similar fashion as Canada's Class A/part-time reserve soldiers. This is not the case for the Canadian Rangers. When enrolled (which is done on authority of the Commanding Officer of the CRPG rather than the Canadian Armed Forces Recruiting Centers), Rangers are already considered 'trained' because of their skill and knowledge of local communities and surrounding areas that they already possess. Canadian Rangers are considered a "special component" of the Reserve Force and while they are encouraged to attend a week-long Canadian Ranger Basic Military Indoctrination (CRBMI) Course after entering into military service it is not mandatory. The CRBMI provides new Canadian Rangers with an introduction to various military skills, such as communications, navigation, drill, first aide, weapons handing, and Ground Search and Rescue techniques. This course is intended to create a better understanding within the Canadian Rangers of how the military conducts its business, so that Rangers can participate more effectively when working with their counterparts in the Regular and Reserve Forces, rather than trying to ensure that Rangers master the skills that they are taught. The formalization of this course is still being completed with the 'official' pilot course being run in the spring of 2016 more than seven decades after the creation of the organization which affirms the lack of emphasis that the Canadian Armed Forces have placed on training Canadian Rangers in military skills. As well, the Patrol Commanders in each of the Canadian Ranger Patrol locations are voted in by their patrol members, rather than selected by the military. Patrol leaders are 'encouraged' to attend a week-long leadership course (Canadian Ranger Patrol Leadership Course – CR PLC). Once again, this is not a mandatory requirement to hold the position of Patrol Commander. This course is designed to teach the Patrol Commanders the NATO orders format, expose them to the requirements of running rifle ranges and planning exercises, as well as to provide them with tips

and basic skills on how to manage their patrols within their communities. Like the CR BMI, the pilot course for the CR PLC is set to run in the spring of 2016.<sup>65</sup>

By contrast, continuation training for NORFORCE continues on an on-going basis. NORFORCE patrolmen meet on Tuesday nights, weekends, and/or for extended concentrations to conduct on-going training certification.<sup>66</sup> As well, prior to deploying on a two-week training or operational patrol, the squadrons bring their patrolmen together for a one to two week concentration in order to re-certify their patrolmen and ensure that their skills are current prior to deploying them on the land.<sup>67</sup>

Because the Canadian Rangers, are considered already trained, most of their new skills come from active participation in patrol exercises or operations. The concept of the Canadian Rangers is based on mobility, moving somewhere by a multitude of modes of transport including snowmobiles, All-Terrain-Vehicles (ATV), or boats, and providing local knowledge and/or passive intelligence on the route or area in which they are operating. Thus, when they travel on an exercise with a Canadian Ranger Instructor (CRI), the younger or less experienced members of the Ranger patrol learn from the more experienced/longer-serving members of the patrol. The CRI, who is usually an experienced Combat Arms NCO, also shares his knowledge with the patrol on Order Of March priorities, bivouac selection, and camp routine. He also mentors the patrol's leaders on their writing and giving of orders and the administration of their patrol. For their part, the Canadian Rangers pass on their knowledge of the land to the CRI, which better enables him to administer and operate with their patrol. Other than when teaching on the formal courses listed above, the CRI acts as more of a supervisor/mentor to the Canadian Rangers, while

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<sup>65</sup> Canadian Ranger National Working Group, October 2015, Victoria, BC.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, 57

<sup>67</sup> Arnhem Squadron Capability Brief – Maj Tom Green, August 2015

also providing the pay, additional logistics, and fulfilling the administration needs of the patrol, such as enrollments and keeping the patrol information up to date.<sup>68</sup>

As noted above, NORFORCE patrolmen are treated in the same manner as any other reserve soldier in the ADF, with the same expectations for service and course completion.<sup>69</sup> Language, cultural, and formal educational barriers, however, means that some remote patrolmen experience distinct difficulties when faced with standard military teaching methods and tests. Therefore, NORFORCE trainers sometimes employ more creative approaches and/or waivers to ensure that their patrolmen achieve the required ADF standard.<sup>70</sup> Nonetheless, in general NORFORCE patrolmen still need to meet the medical and training standard in order to be employed as a patrolman.

The Canadian Ranger Patrol Groups encounter similar difficulties when training Canadian Rangers. With over 125 different dialects and varying degrees of cultural and formal educational barriers it would be difficult to get every Canadian Ranger to meet a standard designed to employ southern reserve soldiers. Thus, the Canadian Rangers are, for the most part, exempt from the requirement to meet formal military standards as a prerequisite for employment. The most obvious examples of this is the absence of any Compulsory Retirement Age (CRA) for Canadian Rangers, while regular and reserve soldiers in the Canadian Armed Forces must retire at age 55 (unless they seek an exemption until age 60).<sup>71</sup> As well, Canadian Rangers do not have to meet a medical standard to be employed. CFAO 11-99 simply states “that a Canadian Ranger must be physically able to carry out the duties of a Canadian Ranger”<sup>72</sup> in order to be employed

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<sup>68</sup> 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian Ranger Patrol Group – Terms of Reference Canadian Ranger Instructor, 2014

<sup>69</sup> Paul A. Rosenzweig, EVER VILIGANT, The Regimental History of the North West Mobile Force, NORFORCE 1981-2001. Darwin 2001, 60

<sup>70</sup> Australia: <http://www.nafomag.com/2015/02/border-security-in-australia-norforce.html>

<sup>71</sup> CFAO 11-99

<sup>72</sup> Ibid

on an exercise or operation for the Canadian Armed Forces. While the CAF assumes some financial liability when Canadian Rangers with potential medical conditions are deployed on operations such as Ground Search and Rescue operations, this risk is left at the CRPG level to manage through their knowledge of their personnel and the potential medical liability. The upside of this lack of conformity is that Canadian Rangers can be deployed immediately on operations without formalized medical and dental screening which reserve soldiers must go through in order to keep themselves current and deployable. This gives Division Commanders flexibility when reacting to fast-moving situations in the remote parts of Canada where Canadian Ranger patrols exist.

Next to formalized training, the greatest area that the Canadian Rangers and NORFORCE deviate from one another is equipment. This deviation can be traced back to the Second World War and the concept behind the formation of the original organizations. The PCMR were given a hunting rifle, a dry-bak canvas uniform, an armband and little else (including no pay).<sup>73</sup> The three units that formed the basis of the modern day NORFORCE were given horses, supplies, and armaments to seek out and repel a possible enemy attack.

Today, while NORFORCE personnel patrols are not intended to perform offensive operations and the strength of their patrols remains their covert nature, the Regional Force Surveillance Units (RFSU) retain a high priority for the allocation of equipment due to their operational role. Accordingly, they are equipped with a mixture of standard and specialized equipment to carry out the tasks that are assigned to them, as well as to provide intimate patrol defence if required. These include the 5.56mm F88 Steyr individual weapon, F89 Minimi light support weapon, 7.62mm MAG 58 machine gun and M79 grenade launcher, “supplemented by

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<sup>73</sup> P. Whitney Lackenbauer, “Guerrillas in Our Midst: The Pacific Coast Militia Ranger, 1942-45,” *BC Studies* 155 (December 2007), 95-131.

grenades and M18-A1 Claymore anti-personnel mines – the last to be carried as a protective measure only.”<sup>74</sup> Along with the individual patrol’s weapons, each patrol can expect to carry specialized equipment such as specialized binoculars and telescopes, night vision equipment, various cameras, advanced GPS satellite navigation systems, HF radios and satellite phones for communication.<sup>75</sup> Additionally, the individual squadrons and Combat Support Squadron maintain various transportation methods ranging from zodiacs, aluminum boats, several variants of the Mercedes-Benz G-Wagon, motorcycles, Toyota Land Cruisers, and four charter boat-sized Regional Patrol Craft. Furthermore, patrolmen are inserted on patrols by various internal and external unit methods including by foot, driving over land, helicopters, aluminum boats, zodiacs, and LCM8 landing craft.<sup>76</sup>

The concept of equipping the Canadian Rangers is completely different from that of NORFORCE. True to the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers of the 1940’s, rather than being high on the military’s priority list for specialized equipment, the modern Canadian Rangers are still expected to provide the bulk of the equipment themselves when deploying on training or operations. Like NORFORCE they are inserted on exercises or operations by multiple methods; however, the Canadian Rangers are the only organization in the CAF who can and are expected to use their own equipment when performing the tasks that are assigned to them, providing their own snowmobiles, ATVs, toboggans, trucks, trailers, and boats. In exchange for using their own equipment, the Canadian Army pays them a daily Equipment Usage Rate (EUR).<sup>77</sup> This EUR covers the cost of wear and tear put on the vehicles while they are being used and is roughly comparable to what it would cost to commercially rent that particular vehicle for a day. As well,

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<sup>74</sup>Paul A. Rosenzweig, *EVER VILIGANT*, The Regimental History of the North West Mobile Force, NORFORCE 1981-2001. Darwin 2001, 76-77

<sup>75</sup> Australia: <http://www.nafomag.com/2015/02/border-security-in-australia-norforce.html>

<sup>76</sup> Ibid

<sup>77</sup> CFAO 11-99

if a Canadian Ranger damages his or her vehicle while on exercise or operation, they are reimbursed for repair costs. With respect to weapons, since 1947 the CAF has provided each Canadian Ranger with a Lee Enfield No. 4 .303 bolt-action rifle and an annual allotment of 200 rounds of ammunition. Because the Canadian Rangers are not expected to fight for information nor to act as a 'stay-behind' force in case of invasion, this service rifle is intended to be used for personal and patrol protection against large predators when on exercises, as well as for personal sustainment throughout the year. After 70 years with the Lee Enfield, the Canadian Rangers are slated to receive a new replacement rifle beginning in 2017. The C-19 will be a .308 bolt-action rifle based on the SAKO T3 CTR (Compact Tactical Rifle). Although a modern weapon, its intended use will remain the same.<sup>78</sup>

The Canadian Rangers also receive a distinctive uniform made up of red T-shirts, a red hoodie, combat pants, boots, socks, wind pants, and a red Gore-Tex jacket and fleece. These items are primarily meant to give the Canadian Rangers a sense of unity, identify them in their communities and to other CAF and Other Government Department members, and allow them to participate visibly in ceremonial events, such as Remembrance Day. They are expected to purchase and wear their own environmental clothing when participating in training or operations. Not only does this save the Canadian Armed Forces a great deal of money and logistical problems, but it also gives the Canadian Rangers the flexibility to wear what they know works in their particular environments, which remain some of the harshest in the world.

Beyond their rifle, annual allotment of 200 rounds of ammunition, and their minimal uniform, the Canadian Ranger Patrol Groups provide each patrol with some basic patrol stores to be used when out training, either on their own or with the Canadian Ranger Instructor and when deployed on operations, such as a Ground Search and Rescue. These include; GPS, compasses,

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<sup>78</sup> Canada: <http://www.Ottawacitizen.com/defencewatch/>



radios (Paracomm HF and TK-190 handheld), stoves, lanterns, tents (most provide their own), and an iridium satellite phone.

This way of equipping the Canadian Rangers represents a great strength over the NORFORCE approach. Having Canadian Rangers provide the bulk of their own equipment, including (and most importantly), their means of transport across the land and waters, saves the CAF hundreds of thousands of dollars annually in direct and secondary costs. If the CAF had to provide the Canadian Rangers with all required mobility assets, let alone additional patrol weapons, it would require a huge logistical chain, including the purchase, transport, and maintenance of hundreds of snowmobiles, ATVs, boats, trucks, and trailers across Canada. Furthermore, the military would have to ship these vehicles to the Canadian Ranger communities each and every time the CAF wanted to train or task the Rangers. The alternative would be to maintain caches of vehicles in specific locations across the northern, remote, or isolated parts of Canada, which would require contracts to house them, as well as a high maintenance bill to go in to inspect and maintain them. This approach also would entail a huge training bill for an organization whose greatest asset is its low operating cost. Currently, the Canadian Rangers do not require DND sanctioned courses and certificates to use their own equipment; however, if the CAF were to provide “CAF plated” equipment for them to use, then there would be an expectation that all Canadian Rangers would meet the standards of training on each piece of equipment with the same expectations enforced for all Regular and Reserve Force members. In other words the CRPGs would have to constantly run Light Over Snow Vehicle (LOSV), ATV, Safe Backing, Defensive Driving, Small Watercraft Handling, and additional weapons courses for all of their part-time Ranger personnel. Not only would this prove a huge undertaking, as the bulk of the training would have to be run in more than two hundred communities with Canadian

Ranger patrols, but keeping the Canadian Rangers certified/re-certified would prove impossible with the current CRPG structures and the expected annual number of days of pay per Canadian Ranger. Therefore, CRPG structures would have to grow proportionally to the requirement, as well as addressing the secondary effects that this would have on trying to keep current the administrative records of every Canadian Ranger's qualifications.

In my assessment, this explains why a squadron in NORFORCE only conducts approximately two training and two operational patrols each year, or about ten patrols annually across all of NORFORCE,<sup>79</sup> whereas as a CRPG can run more than one hundred patrol exercises, as well as Junior Canadian Ranger events, and other tasks/engagements.<sup>80</sup> Each NORFORCE patrol requires a great deal of planning, including insertion and extraction coordination, supply caching, rehearsals, as well as a two week work-up where individual patrolmen are often re-certified in their weapons handling and individual skills prior to deployment. By contrast, with the equipment already in place, a CRPG can task a Canadian Ranger Patrol a month prior to an exercise, show up in the community, issue orders, conduct last minute checks, and deploy on the land within 24 hours of arriving. Better yet, (depending on the capacity of the patrol in question), the CRPG can task a Canadian Ranger patrol to deploy for a 72-hour operation or exercise on their own without a full-time Canadian Ranger Instructor or other staff member being present.

Having the Canadian Rangers use their own equipment, (which is by definition, already in place within the community), combined with not requiring the formal training and certification of Canadian Rangers to carry out their tasks, offers greater flexibility than is the case with the patrolmen of NORFORCE. Although the downside of this is that the Canadian Rangers possess

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<sup>79</sup>Arnhem Squadron Capability Brief – Maj Tom Green, August 2015

<sup>80</sup> 4 CRPG 2014/2015 Operation Plan

fewer traditional “military” skills, but these considerations enable them to have a greater presence across their AO than the members of NORFORCE in their AO. The cost of having and maintaining Canadian Ranger equipment is minimal compared to that of NORFORCE which, when combined with the lack of the requirement to conduct certifying/recertifying training enables Canada to have more Canadian Rangers located in more communities, participating in more exercises more often.

The last major way in which the two organizations differ is the manner in which they are employed, especially with respect to their integration into their respective country’s Information, Surveillance, Target Acquisition, and Reconnaissance (ISTAR) plans.

NORFORCE is intimately integrated into the Australian Defence Force’s ISTAR plan for northern Australia. From its inception, NORFORCE was always intended to be a specialized force with specifically assigned ISTAR tasks.<sup>81</sup> Their operational patrols are deployed with precise areas to observe, with clear tasks and/or information to gather. “The key threats that NORFORCE is employed to deal with relate to maintenance of sovereignty and border protection,” Sergei desilva-Ranasinghe and Mitchell Sutton observe. “You’ll see things such as illegal fishing, (and) fishing within fish enclosure lines. There’s also the requirement to observe unattended airstrips for potential drug smuggling, and a number of other tasks such as reporting environmental damage from biohazard threats, chemicals, and other materials.”<sup>82</sup> Once NORFORCE personnel observe an illegal activity during an operational patrol, they pass that information back to NORFORCE headquarters that, in-turn, sends it on to the proper authorities. “We are essentially a queuing function for other government agencies to interdict, whether that’s

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<sup>81</sup> Paul A. Rosenzweig, *EVER VILIGANT*, The Regimental History of the North West Mobile Force, NORFORCE 1981-2001. Darwin 2001, 55-60

<sup>82</sup> Desilva-Ranasinghe, Sergei and Mitchell Sutton. Border security in Australia: NORFORCE patrols Australia’s top end. *Safety & Security International (S&SI)* 01/2015

parks and wildlife, Northern Territory Police, Customs and Border Protection, or other ADF assets,” Desilva-Ranasinghe and Mitchell Sutton explain. “In this regard, the benefit of the RFSUs is that they complement the air and maritime components of not only Air Force and Navy, but also border protection assets that just can’t do some of the jobs that we do.”<sup>83</sup>

My research suggests that NORFORCE’s annual training and patrolling plans are important at the highest levels of the ADF, and are integral to the Australian government’s sovereignty plans for the northern border of Australia. For NORFORCE to operate hand in hand with the other Australian government departments in order to aide those departments in fulfilling their mandates, NORFORCE needs to continually coordinate with those organizations to ensure that their operational objectives are in line with their partners. This ensures that their annual operating plan incorporates the requirement to fulfill those departments’ needs with respect to security concerns such as customs, border protection, and fisheries violations. In other words, NORFORCE’s annual deployment of its patrolmen is a well-conceived plan that fits within a larger ‘Whole of Government Approach’ to protect Australia’s northern border. The employment of the Canadian Rangers is not as well defined at the higher levels.

While the Canadian Rangers are assigned some of the same broader tasks as NORFORCE with respect to Canadian sovereignty, domestic operations, and support to the Regular and Reserve Force’s northern training objectives, they are not integrated at the same level or to the same extent as NORFORCE. “The (Canadian) government’s intermittent interest in Arctic sovereignty and security (has) generally dictated the military’s attentiveness to the Rangers (in theory and in practice) since the Second World War,” Lackenbauer argues. “As Canada (lurches) from sovereignty crisis to sovereignty crisis, military interest (in the Canadian

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid

Rangers rises and falls) accordingly.”<sup>84</sup> While Canadian Rangers participate annually in northern sovereignty patrols and multi-governmental operations, such as, Operation NANOOK and North Warning Site visits, there is no overarching plan for where the Canadian Rangers should and should not be operating and on what they should or should not be focussing. A general presence and a vague ‘eyes and ears’ role does not compensate for the lack of an integrated plan. South of the 60<sup>th</sup> parallel the integration of the Canadian Rangers in higher operational objectives seems a secondary concern at best. The Commanding Officers of the CRPGs decide the annual training focus, albeit with the sign-off of their Divisional Commanders, but it is a ‘bottom-up’ vice a ‘top-down’ approach.<sup>85</sup>

Throughout the whole of the Canadian Armed Forces even at the Division and Army levels there remains an alarming lack of knowledge about the Canadian Rangers, their role, and the ways in which they should and can be employed. While this knowledge gap has shrunk over the last decade, mainly due to the hard work of the CRPG’s Commanding Officers, there still remains a hesitation at the Army, Canadian Joint Operations Command (CJOC), and Division levels to employ the Canadian Rangers on domestic operations or to assign them specific operational tasks.<sup>86</sup> For example, while the Canadian Rangers routinely conduct Ground Search and Rescue operations across the remote parts of their AO and they are supposed to represent the CAF’s presence in the remote and isolated parts of Canada, they are not integrated into the Joint Response Co-ordination Centres (JRCC) response to missing persons, vessels, or aircraft. Furthermore, there is no thought at the higher levels of the military or government about how to integrate the Canadian Rangers into these or other types of operational tasks.

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<sup>84</sup>Whitney P. Lackenbauer. *If It Ain’t Broke, Don’t Break It: Expanding and Enhancing the Canadian Rangers*. Working Papers on Arctic Security No.6. Toronto: Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation and ArcticNet Arctic Security Projects, March 2013, 6

<sup>85</sup> 4 CRPG Annual Operation and Training Plan

<sup>86</sup> Ibid

In-part, the Canadian Rangers are not integrated more completely into Canada's operational sovereignty and surveillance plans because they are not tactically trained to conduct operational reconnaissance and surveillance tasks. To bring them up to a level where they could conduct tactical Observation Posts with operational or strategic goals (akin to NORFORCE) would require an increased training and equipment budget that the Canadian government is unlikely willing to pay. Accordingly, this begs the core question: what should, or should not the Canadian Rangers be doing and; therefore, how should they be equipped, trained, and organized going into the future?

## CHAPTER 4 – WHERE DO THE CANADIAN RANGERS GO FROM HERE?

With greater exposure over the last two decades, including the last three Canadian federal governments pushing the expansion and enhancement of the Canadian Rangers as an important aspect to their northern sovereignty strategy, the future identity of the Canadian Rangers remains a major question. “Northern Aboriginal groups tout the Rangers as a key component of an integrated Arctic strategy that can contribute positively to isolated communities,” Lackenbauer notes.<sup>87</sup> Some of their representatives, however, articulate vision based on the idea that “the military should hire full-time Rangers to alleviate unemployment in Arctic communities rather than paying transient southern troops to come north on sovereignty exercises.”<sup>88</sup> Some want the Canadian Rangers to be trained to work on Coast Guard ships, or to act as pilots, and in some instances to train as search and rescue technicians. Others want them to take on a bigger community support role, such as preparing solely for events such as the Yukon Quest dog sled race. Still other commentators feel that the Canadian Rangers should be better prepared to take on more of a combat role, with the military training and equipping them to fend off an improbable northern invasion into Canadian territory. Others plug their ability to help monitor for environmental disasters, support scientific research projects in the North, and/or help monitor an increase in the use of the North West Passage.<sup>89</sup>

Even within the Canadian military, debates continue about the proper focus of the Canadian Rangers. With a lack of clear ‘top-down’ direction on what the Canadian Rangers priorities should be, as recently as the October, 2015 Canadian Ranger National Working Group, the Canadian Ranger Patrol Group’s Commanding Officers and the Canadian Ranger National

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<sup>87</sup> Whitney P. Lackenbauer. *If It Ain’t Broke, Don’t Break It: Expanding and Enhancing the Canadian Rangers*. Working Papers on Arctic Security No.6. Toronto: Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation and ArcticNet Arctic Security Projects, March 2013, 12

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid*

Authority (CRNA) were debating where they should focus their attention in the coming years.<sup>90</sup> Some, such as 4 CRPG, have heightened the role of the Canadian Rangers in teaching basic winter survival techniques while increasing their interoperability with other CAF elements so that they can be called upon more often to assist with domestic operation tasks.<sup>91</sup> Other CRPGs are stressing the importance of ground search and rescue as the primary future role for patrols in isolated communities. For 1 CRPG, the main focus remains on the exercising of Canadian sovereignty and ongoing support to sovereignty patrols above the 60<sup>th</sup> parallel that the CAF conducts each year.

The main strengths of the Canadian Rangers in their present configuration remain their flexibility, their dispersion, and their low cost. With patrols in more than two hundred communities across Canada, the Canadian Rangers represent a military presence in the remote or isolated parts of every province and territory except New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island. The five Canadian Ranger Patrol Groups conduct over five hundred training exercises and/or operations annually, with a “force that is five times the size of (Canada’s) combat troop deployment to Kandahar yet costs less than the sticker price for three light-armoured vehicles,” (as journalist Don Martin succinctly stated in the *National Post*)<sup>92</sup> The Canadian Rangers are an intimate part of the CAF’s and federal government’s relationship and partnership with Aboriginal peoples, and they play an important socio-economic role in their communities. They provide meaningful ‘presence’ in remote communities across Canada and act as ‘eyes and ears’ for the military and federal government. The exercises that they conduct within their local areas, while not necessarily tactical in a military sense, increase the Canadian

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<sup>90</sup> Canadian Ranger National Working Group, October, 2015

<sup>91</sup> 4 CRPG Annual Operation and Training Plan

<sup>92</sup> Whitney P. Lackenbauer. *If It Ain’t Broke, Don’t Break It: Expanding and Enhancing the Canadian Rangers*. Working Papers on Arctic Security No.6. Toronto: Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation and ArcticNet Arctic Security Projects, March 2013, 5



Army's knowledge of these areas so that they are better able to respond to domestic operations and/or man-made disasters. Thus, to change the Canadian Rangers into a make-work force or to greatly increase their tactical role would fundamentally change who and what they have always been. In my assessment, this would represent a huge mistake.

As demonstrated earlier in this study, the gap in training and equipping a force that is required to act tactically is a large one. The bill for certifying/recertifying Canadian Rangers in tactical skills, as well as training them on war-fighting equipment, would destroy the organization through the cost in time and in dollars. No longer could people be recruited into the Canadian Rangers who have minor medical conditions, less than ideal physical fitness, or those who demonstrated difficulty with passing military standard tests due to education, language, or culture barriers, regardless of their knowledge of the land or ability to operate in extreme conditions. The equipment bill would be staggering. Furthermore, the consolidation of the Canadian Rangers into a smaller force (like NORFORCE) would decrease their coverage across Canada's remote areas, reducing from one of their greatest assets, their dispersion. This, in turn, would reduce their effectiveness on military, social, economic, and nation-building fronts, and would fly in the face of seventy years of history with no appreciable gains to any of the key stakeholders.

In order to increase the Canadian Rangers' effectiveness going forward, rather than trying to change what the Canadian Rangers fundamentally are, the Canadian Army must begin to take the Canadian Rangers more seriously, seeing beyond a 'good news story' and recognizing them as a true force multiplier. At present the Canadian Rangers are represented nationally in the Army by a small staff under the Chief of Staff Land Reserves (COS Land Res) known as the Canadian Ranger National Authority (CRNA). A part-time (Class A) reserve Lieutenant-

Colonel, full-time reserve Major, Captain, Master Warrant Officer, and Warrant Officer represent the Canadian Rangers interests at the Army level. None of the individuals presently serving at CRNA has ever served in a Canadian Ranger Patrol Group training Canadian Rangers, nor does the CRNA have any direct authority over the Canadian Rangers, as it does not have the ability to task the CRPGs. Rather the CRNA acts as a 'tech net' for the CRPGs and advises the COS Land Res who, in-turn, advises the Army Commander on Canadian Ranger issues and policies. The CRPGs report directly (and are tasked by) to their regional Division Commanders who report to the Army Commander on Ranger issues.

Due to the lack of knowledge across the CAF on the Canadian Rangers, most of the policies that the Canadian Rangers and CRPGs have to follow are based on general military policies that have been written with the Regular or Primary Reserve Force in mind. There is little CAF or Army policy that is Canadian Ranger-specific. This creates scores of instances where CRPGs are forced to ignore greater CAF policy in order to conduct training or operations with Canadian Rangers, following the 'spirit of the law' rather than the 'letter of the law.' To follow all the rules set in place for the rest of the CAF would bring an end to Canadian Ranger training altogether. Over the past eight years CRNA has worked diligently to close the gap between realities on the ground and what many of the CAF policies state. It has done this by beginning to write Canadian Ranger specific policy. Due to a small staff and remaining a low priority on the national agenda this has proven to be a slow and labour intensive undertaking (as is the case with all administrative changes in a large organization such as the Department of National Defence).

Therefore, the Canadian Armed Forces, Army Commander and, in-turn, the Division Commanders must take a more active role in providing direction to the Canadian Rangers going

forward. The CRPGs need to be provided specific annual tasks that align with the focus of the Army and their individual Divisions. They need to either be brought under the administrative (G1) and training (G3) functions of the Army to garner greater pull, or have a larger full-time or Regular Force staff dedicated to them (led possibly by someone post-command of a CRPG) and be given greater priority from the top down. For example, unlike NORFORCE, which was created in 1981, the CRPGs (who are themselves twenty years old) do not have their own cap-badge identifying them in their training role. Instead, Canadian Ranger Instructors and other headquarters staff must wear the cap-badges of the units they were employed at prior to coming to work at the CRPGs which takes away from the CRPG's unit identity and speaks to the lack of importance placed on the Canadian Rangers. The Canadian Rangers need to have Ranger-specific policy written for them supporting what they have done effectively for seven decades and they need to be incorporated in the training cycles of the regular and reserve force organizations that will be training and operating in the remote parts of the Canada. Organizations like the Arctic Response Company Groups within appointed reserve brigades, and the regular force units during pre-sovereignty patrol training as well as on all sovereignty tasks north of the 60<sup>th</sup> parallel, should include their respective CRPGs during the planning and execution phases of their exercises as a matter of course, rather than as an afterthought. The Canadian Rangers do not need a new role, but they need to be justified in the role they have already carried out for the past seventy years.

During domestic operations the Canadian Rangers are rarely used and, when they are used, they are usually kept on the periphery. Most of the time, this is due to a lack of knowledge on how they should best be employed. While strides have been made with respect to their use in Ground Search and Rescue Operations in and around their remote communities, little has been

done to include them in larger domestic operations centering on humanitarian assistance. Effort must be made to include the Canadian Rangers in the broader military's support to these types of operations where and when possible and not to exclude them simply from a lack of knowledge of their capabilities and limitations at the higher level. While local efforts have been made on this front from individual Division Commanders and CRPG CO's, there remains a general lack of knowledge in the CAF on the Canadian Rangers and what they can and cannot do and how and when they should be employed. The Army needs to set the conditions so that the Canadian Rangers are considered and included where and when it makes sense to do so rather than being treated like that cousin that everyone likes and is happy to see, but no one really knows how to treat. For example, they could be incorporated better with the JRCCs and their SAR role across Canada. This does not imply that they should take over the SAR role, but the Canadian Rangers should be considered as a support structure to SAR operations in remote areas which they know intimately and where they already operate efficiently and effectively.

## CONCLUSION

Canada is a vast country that is, for the most part, sparsely populated. It possesses a relatively small, fairly well-equipped, professional military that is mandated to provide surveillance, reconnaissance, and security over a huge area including its massive northern border, not only for its own defence, but also in order to remain a good neighbor to the world's leading superpower, the United States of America. One of the ways that Canada does this in an economical and representative manner is through the Canadian Rangers.

In the previous chapters I provided an overview of the Canadian Rangers, their history, and their role, mission, and tasks in comparison to Australia's NORFORCE. I have demonstrated that, although these two units have similar origins and tasks within their respective Defence Forces, they have different roles and structures out of conscious design due to the missions they are supposed to fulfill. I have demonstrated that the Canadian Rangers have been and continue to be the right fit for Canada, as their flexibility, dispersion, and low cost make them ideal to carry out the mandate that the Canadian government and Canadian Armed Forces has given them now and into the future. As historian Whitney Lackenbauer observes:

The Rangers' practical contributions to their communities - not only in the Far North but from coast to coast to coast - reflect roles and responsibilities that transcend the national, regional, and local scales. The benefits of the community - military relationship flow both ways: the military receives local expertise, traditional knowledge about lands and waters, and practical support for activities in "extreme environments." Local people benefit from modest pay, training and operational experience, leadership development, and public recognition of their contributions to sovereignty and security. "Both the Canadian Ranger and the Junior Canadian Ranger programs are strong and effective in the North and make a real contribution to local safety, national sovereignty and preservation of land skills," Jackie Jacobson, the representative for Nunakput, told the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly in 2008."<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid, 8-9

Finally, I have demonstrated that there is no great need for the Canadian Rangers to change fundamentally from the grassroots force that was formed years ago. Instead, the Canadian Armed Forces and specifically the Canadian Army needs to pay more attention to the Canadian Rangers so that their skills and knowledge can be used to the greatest extent without a fundamental shift in whom and what they are. Canadian Ranger-specific policy, greater understanding of their unique service and contributions, and a willingness to incorporate them into the Canadian Army's response to domestic operations when and where sensible, will not only justify their continued existence in their present form, but will also support the Canadian federal government's northern strategy, make the Canadian Army stronger, and, in the end, make Canada a safer place to live.

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