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CANADIAN ARMED FORCES IN THE ARCTIC: SOVEREIGNTY AND SECURITY IN NEW CAPABILITIES

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Exercise Solo Flight

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EXERCISE *SOLO FLIGHT* – EXERCICE *SOLO FLIGHT*

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Maj W.L. Thomey

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Introduction

"You don't defend national sovereignty with flags, cheap election rhetoric or advertising campaigns. You need forces on the ground, ships in the sea, and proper surveillance."¹ Those words echoed by Prime Minister Harper in 2005, while speaking in Winnipeg, epitomized the Canadian government's stance on the Arctic and how the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) plays a vital role in establishing Canadian sovereignty. In the Canada First Defence Strategy (CFDS), the Harper government clearly articulates the importance of defending national sovereignty in the Arctic and lays out a plan to increase the CAF capabilities in order to achieve the desired effect in the vast expanse of the Canadian North.² To this end, the Harper government made a commitment to Canadians and its allies that Canada will increase its military capabilities in the North in order to ensure its own sovereignty, but also to pull its weight as an equal partner by strengthening safety and security in the Arctic.

The Harper government made ship building a priority by establishing the National Ship Building Strategy and by placing the Arctic Offshore Patrol Ships (AOPS) as the first ships to be constructed, backing up his northern rhetoric with actions.³ It is these ships and their associated helicopter air detachments will provide a much needed capabilities that will defend Canadian sovereignty, provide security, enforce environmental regulations, monitor shipping activities and support Search And Rescue

¹ P. Whitney Lackenbauer, "From Polar Race to Polar Saga: An Integrated Strategy for Canada and the Circumpolar World", in *Canada and the Changing Arctic: Sovereignty, Security and Stewardship* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2011), 93.

² Department of National Defence, *Canada First Defence Strategy* (Ottawa: Canada Communications Group, 2008), 8.

³ Public Services and Procurement Canada, "Shipbuilding projects to equip the Royal Canadian Navy and the Canadian Coast Guard National Shipbuilding Strategy: February 2012 to December 2015 status report," last modified [or accessed] 06 April 2017, <https://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/app-acq/amd-dp/mer-sea/sncn-nss/rapport-report-20151231-3-eng.html#a1>.

(SAR) efforts domestically and internationally. When the AOP Ships are operational in Arctic waters by the end of 2018, it will assist in fulfilling the mandate set out in the CFDS; however, these vessels need to be employed appropriately in order to maximize its capabilities and opportunities.

It is the purpose of this paper to examine how these new Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) ships will impact domestic and international relations surrounding the Arctic. It is necessary to examine the definition of sovereignty, international agreements and CAF capabilities in Canada's North, in order to understand the challenges of operating effectively in the Arctic. With the procurement and operational implementation of the AOPS in Arctic waters, the Canadian government is sending a message to the international community that it is prepared to defend and secure the land and waterways in Canada's North. This same message of northern commitment is also being received by the domestic audience as these highly capable ships will represent a dramatic increase to Canada's ability to support its northern populations.

Although the Trudeau government has not released the government's Defence Policy Review (DPR) at the time of writing, the increase of commercial activity, oil and gas exploration and international interest in the Arctic, are all important reasons why the RCN's AOPS capabilities will be critical in achieving the overall strategy of protecting and securing the region for the benefit of all Canadians. The Harper government's commitment to increase northern CAF capabilities will be realized in the near future with the RCN's ships along with its helicopter air detachments and they will provide the multi-mission abilities that has been lacking in Canada's North.

Definition of Sovereignty

In order to understand why the Canadian government must commit valuable resources to demonstrate its presence in the Arctic, it is necessary to examine how the international community defines sovereignty. The Westphalian treaty of international relations recognizes the sovereignty of states as equals to maintain their own laws and govern their population without external interference; as well as, the ability to claim territory.⁴ An associate professor at the University of Waterloo and fellow with the Arctic Institute, P. Whitney Lackenbauer describes the principles of De jure and de facto rules as two philosophies under which a nation can establish its sovereign claims. De jure sovereignty is the internationally legal recognized right to exercise control over a specific area, where de facto rule is the actual ability to exercise control and influence over a specific territory.⁵

The Canadian government maintains its claim to the De jure principle in Canada's Arctic by declaring its land borders, territorial waters, airspace and underwater continental shelf in accordance with historical agreements between Britain, Denmark, Norway and the United States along with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).^{6, 7} By the ways in which the citizens of the North continue to follow Canadian laws and be governed by its representatives, they are reinforcing Canadian de facto rule in the Arctic.

⁴ Andreas Osiander, "Sovereignty, International Relations and the Westphalian Myth," *International Organization* 55, no. 2 (Spring 2001): 258-259.

⁵ P. Whitney Lackenbauer, "From Polar Race to Polar Saga"...,96.

⁶ The United Nations, *United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea* (New York: The United Nations Press, 1982), 199.

⁷ P. Whitney Lackenbauer, "From Polar Race to Polar Saga"...,73.

Canada's claim to the Arctic Archipelago has largely gone unchallenged with its Arctic neighbours, save a small uninhabited island between Canada and Greenland, and an international water boundary in the Beauford Sea with the US.⁸ The remoteness and harshness of the land leaves Canada in a strong position to assert its sovereignty claim; however, in order to strengthen this position in the Arctic, Canada needs to be able to demonstrate its ability to protect their declared regions, provide security and govern the people living there.⁹ The Canadian government is aware of these stipulations on its territorial claims in the Arctic and by increasing the presence of the CAF they can defend their legal position against any other sovereign state that would make claim to the same territory.

International Agreements

As a ratified member of the UNCLOS resolution, Canada abides by the regulations set out by the UN resolution but they also abide by the recommendations from the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf and Territory Legibility (CLCS), which specifies the international agreed upon territorial limitations that each nation can claim. This is significant as it is the only internationally recognized independent body whose recommendations form the basis on legal territorial claims, thus their recommendations can be legally binding for Arctic nations including Canada.¹⁰ One

⁸ Michael Byers, *Who Owns the Arctic? Understanding Sovereignty Disputes in the North* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre Publishers Inc, 2009), 22-36.

⁹ Rob Huebert, "Canada and the New Emerging International Arctic Security Regime," in *Arctic Security in an Age of Climate Change*, ed. James Kraska (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 194-205.

¹⁰ Klaus Dodds, "Flag Planting and Finger Pointing: The Law of the Sea, the Arctic and the Political Geographies of the Outer Continental Shelf," in *The Politics of the Arctic*, ed. Gier Honneland (Northampton: Edward Elgar Publishing Inc., 2013), 496-505.

of the most important issues under UNCLOS for Canada is the establishment of straight baselines to determine the boundaries for territorial waters.¹¹

The straight baseline principle is determined by connecting adjacent coastal land masses, joining the islands or coastlines together with a line drawn between them to establish a defined baseline.¹² With the straight baseline configuration the multiple Northern island chains that make up the Arctic Archipelago are connected together and thus form the claim to Canada's territory in the north.¹³ By agreeing to the straight baseline definition of territorial waters, Canada claims that the main entrances to the North West Passage are internal waters and not an international straight which does not require Canadian permission to enter.¹⁴

The straight baselines drawn on maps that connect the low water shoreline is then extended 12 nautical miles out to sea and that is what Canada and other UNCLOS nations consider internal territorial waters. It also has implications for such things as the Economic Exclusion Zone (EEZ) which gives Canada the internationally recognized exclusive right to any economic benefit relating within the water column and the sea bed below.¹⁵ By signing on to the UNCLOS Canada has laid its international De jure claim to the Arctic in accordance with the straight baseline calculations. The De jure rule to the Arctic has committed Canada to have the responsibility to establish de facto rule in its North. If Canada cannot effectively protect and govern its territorial claims then its De

¹¹ Jan Prawitz, "Regional and Subregional Denuclearization," in *The Arctic Challenge: Nordic and Canadian Approaches to Security and Cooperation in an Emerging International Region*, ed. Kari Mottola (Boulder: Westview Press Inc., 1988), 227-229.

¹² The United Nations, United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea..., 24.

¹³ Rob Huebert, "Canadian Arctic Sovereignty and Security in a Transforming Circumpolar World," in *Canada and the Changing Arctic: Sovereignty, Security and Stewardship* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2011), 16.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹⁵ The United Nations, United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea..., 24.

Jure rule will not be recognized internationally and thus the Arctic will be open to other nations who lay claim to it.¹⁶

As a founding member of the Arctic Council, Canada signed on to the 1996 Ottawa Declaration to protect the Arctic's sensitive environment, establish cooperation between Arctic nations and to engage the indigenous populations on issues that affect them.¹⁷ By firmly establishing its interest in the Arctic through the Arctic Council, Canada has also reaffirmed its De jure position internationally and thus its claim to the territorial land, sea and seabed is defensible. However, these territorial claims are facing challenges from some members of the international community such as the United States (US) as their interests can conflict with Canada's in the North. Critics such as Peter Dutton from the China Maritime Studies Institute in the Center for Naval Warfare Studies of the US Naval War College, has argued against UNCLOS straight baseline principles.¹⁸ Specifically, he argues, that nations such as China that manipulate the same baseline formula to pursue their national interests in the South China Sea, making territorial claims well outside of their region, thus the US does not agree to the straight baseline principle.¹⁹

An associate director of the Centre for Military and Strategic Studies, Rob Huebert, explains that both the US and China have demonstrated their national interests will trump any international agreements on international straits, thus waterways such as Canada's North West Passage are vulnerable to international interference unless the

¹⁶ P. Whitney Lackenbauer, "From Polar Race to Polar Saga," ..., 95-113.

¹⁷ Franklyn Griffiths, "Towards a Canadian Arctic Strategy", in *Canada and the Changing Arctic: Sovereignty, Security and Stewardship* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2011), 183-210.

¹⁸ Peter Dutton, "Three Disputes and Three Objectives: China and the South China Sea," *Naval War College Review* 64, no. 4 (Autumn 2011): 42-64.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 46.

Canadian government can demonstrate its ability to protect, secure and govern the defined internal waterway.²⁰

Huebert argues Canada has a vested interest in ensuring that the North West Passage and the rest of its Arctic claim has international recognition so it can implement environmental, economic and security policies that will benefit the local populations, as well as the rest of Canadians.²¹ An example of these policies would be the enforcement of more robust shipping standards for vessels that intend to cross through the North West Passage.²² These more robust standards are established so that ships may travel the ice flow riddled waters safely without causing an environmental catastrophe or requiring a large SAR effort which would demand a high amount of resources and intensive effort that Canadian taxpayers would be funding.

The US does not recognize the UNCLOS straight baseline agreement and although they obey the majority of the UNCLOS agreements, they have yet to ratify the UN treaty.²³ The US defines territorial waters as 12 nautical miles from each individual island and outcropping of land, not to be connected as a baseline, thus it does not recognize the North West Passage as Canada's internal waters and instead believes that it is an international straight.²⁴ However, given the strong bi-lateral partnership in securing North America this issue is solved diplomatically.

²⁰ Rob Huebert, "Canadian Arctic Sovereignty and Security in a Transforming Circumpolar World," ...,46-50.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 46-50.

²² Alexei Yu. Roginko and Matthew J. LaMourie, "Emerging Marine Environmental Protection Strategies for the Arctic," in *The Politics of the Arctic*, ed. Gier Honneland (Northampton: Edward Elgar Publishing Inc., 2013), 263-270.

²³ Rob Huebert, "Canadian Arctic Sovereignty and Security in a Transforming Circumpolar World," ...,46-50.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 46-50.

CAF Capabilities in Canada's North

The CFDS defines the priority that the previous government placed upon the Arctic and outlines the resources that will be committed to protecting and securing the North. It explains how the Canadian government will establish its de facto rule within the North by utilizing a Whole-of-Government (WoG) approach to ensure that all government departments are synchronizing their Arctic activities to maximize their effects.²⁵ As P. Whitney Lackenbauer explains, one of the most effective strategies that the government of Canada has implemented is the Canadian Ranger and Junior Ranger Programs.²⁶ Through this federally funded program local indigenous populations enroll in the CAF as reservists to engage in securitizing the Arctic through the utilization of patrols on snowmobiles or dogsleds. Thus the Canadian government can both demonstrate that it can provide security to areas where the Rangers patrol and promote the governmental system to which the indigenous population abides by.²⁷

With many Canadian Rangers Patrols established in Canada's North, it is relatively easy to have de facto rule in the areas immediately surrounding the Ranger Patrol base; however, given the massive inhabited expanse of the Arctic it is unrealistic to expect that the Rangers can patrol the entire Arctic, nor can they alone protect it against foreign threats. Several Canadian federal agencies have been charged with protecting and securing the Arctic alongside the CAF and they include the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA), Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) and the Canadian Coast Guard (CGG). By having these agencies

²⁵ Department of National Defence, *Canada First Defence Strategy...*, 7-10.

²⁶ P. Whitney Lackenbauer, *The Canadian Rangers: A Living History* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013). 284-333.

²⁷ Whitney P. Lackenbauer and Adam Lajeunesse, "To Canadian Armed Forces in the Arctic: Building Appropriate Capabilities," *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* 16, no.4 (2016): 33-35.

working together, the federal government's WoG approach is able to provide a modest capability in Canada's North.²⁸

One of the ways in which Canada defends its sovereignty in the North is through the use of aircraft from the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF). The most evident example of this is through the use of its CF188 Hornet fighter aircraft that remain on high alert 24/7 to intercept any foreign threat from their bases in Cold Lake, Alberta and Bagotville, Quebec. In a bi-lateral command structure with the United States, the North American Aerospace Defence Command (NORAD) is an exclusive partnership between the two nations that takes on the responsibility for the air defence of North America.²⁹ This bi-lateral command structure is unique in North America and it allows for the rapid coordination and interception of any air targets that threaten North America by assessing all of the air threats and choosing what military aircraft are in the best position to intercept the threat.

One of the most common air threats that NORAD faces is the harassing flights by Russian military aircraft. The Russian government will periodically test the defences of NORAD with flights within the Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ) while still remaining outside territorial airspace of the US and Canada.³⁰ In this way both countries are working together with the goal of mutual security and sovereignty assurance in the Arctic. However, the President of the Society for Military and Security Studies at the University of Calgary Mercedes Stephenson argues that Canada has surrendered its

²⁸ P. Whitney Lackenbauer, "Sovereignty, Security and Stewardship: An Update", in *Canada and the Changing Arctic: Sovereignty, Security and Stewardship* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2011), 227-234.

²⁹ P. Whitney Lackenbauer and Matthew Farish, "Cold War on Canadian Soil: Militarizing a Northern Environment," *Environmental History* 12, no. 3 (2007): 927-937.

³⁰ Luis Martinez, "Russian aircraft fly close to Alaska for 4th Time in 4 Days," last modified [or accessed] 21 April 2017, <http://abcnews.go.com/International/russian-aircraft-close-alaska-4th-time-days/story?id=46939351.htm>.

ability to unilaterally act in the Arctic by joining in such a tightly woven command organization.³¹ He argues that Canada does not have the capabilities to act independently in the Arctic and that due to the sheer size and military range of capabilities of the US; it dominates the bi-lateral relationship. Thus, he argues, Canada remains heavily under the influence of the US government for security in the North and therefore, Canada is surrendering some independence in the Arctic for mutual security.³²

Although Mercedes Stephenson's assessment about the absolute independence of a nation's air defence, as P. Whitney Lackenbauer points out, the US and Canada are so tightly linked in their mutual support of each other's ideologies that this bi-lateral partnership works as neither one of the them must sacrifice their core principles.³³ Both members of the partnership understand its importance to the collective security of North America and because of the openness, close coordination of the military assets in North American airspace is possible. Each country maintains its own independence on threats that are posed within their territorial airspace and can conduct their own military operations in support of their national interest over their territory. Given the long history of US and Canadian government cooperation, this bi-lateral command partnership provides enough independent authority for each country to exercise its sovereignty over its territory in the Arctic, while still being able to provide mutual security for North America.

Along with the CF188 aircraft the RCAF also provide other capabilities that strengthen Canada's claim in the Arctic. The CP140 Aurora provides long range

³¹ Mercedes Stephenson and Barry Cooper, "The End of Canadian Sovereignty?" *Fraser Forum*, (March 2003): 10-11.

³² *Ibid.*, 10-11.

³³ P. Whitney Lackenbauer, "Sovereignty and Security in the Canadian North: (Re)Learning the Lessons," *Canadian Issues*, (Winter 2013): 7-9.

surveillance on any foreign or domestic threats by having the ability to identify and track contacts overland, on water and underwater (where not frozen). Complementing technologies such as satellites, this versatile aircraft is one of the most effective and efficient ways of detecting changes in the patterns of life and identifying and tracking any contacts of interest. Transport aircraft such as the CC130 Hercules and CC177 Globemaster aircraft are able to ferry vital supplies and people to far northern places such as Resolute Bay or Alert, NU. These versatile aircraft support the Canadian government's WoG approach in the north by ensuring that the military and civilians can continue to operate these remote bases in the Arctic thus ensuring a federal government presence on the lands in the far North.³⁴

In the Arctic it is the CAF who is responsible for the majority of heavy lifting and reacting on behalf of the federal government to the most difficult of circumstances when emergencies occur. In the event of an aeronautical accident or an emergency at sea, it is the CAF's responsibility to respond with its SAR assets like the CC130 Hercules aircraft or CH139 Cormorant helicopters with Search and Rescue Technicians (SAR Techs) onboard. This is the federal SAR responsibilities that the Canadian government has agreed to provide to the provinces and territories.³⁵ When there are missing persons or medical evacuations in remote communities in the Arctic, the primary responsibility to respond to this type of emergency is placed upon the provincial governments and territories.³⁶

³⁴ Rob Huebert, "Canada and the Newly Emerging International Arctic Security Regime", in *Arctic Security in an Age of Climate Change*, ed. James Kraska (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 214-217.

³⁵ Department of National Defence, B-GA-209-001/FP-001, *Canadian Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue Manual* (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2014) 52.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 50-52.

It is only when these provinces and territories request assistance from the CAF can assets be committed to affect an overland SAR or medical evacuation.³⁷ In this way the provincial, territorial governments are able to provide a response to the citizens in the Arctic when they are in need and do not have the capabilities necessary. This emergency response provides the citizens of the Arctic reassurance that the collective government can provide for their security needs, thus it assist in the advancement of continued support for the provincial, territorial and federal governments under which they are governed. By committing these resource intensive military assets to the safety and security to the citizens of the North, the Canadian government is further demonstrating its de facto rule in the Arctic.

In the CFDS the capability gaps in the North have been singled out for improvement. New infrastructure, procurement of ships and further funding for the Canadian Ranger and Junior Patrols were key parts of the strategic document.³⁸ One of the critical capability gaps identified by the CFDS was a lack of ice breaking ships that were capable of patrolling the waters in the Arctic during the period of increased traffic in the Arctic. To address this capability gap, the federal government announced that it would invest in the construction of a deep water port facility in Nanisivik, NU and the procurement of six new RCN warships capable of patrolling in the North.³⁹ These new AOP Ships (now named Henry DeWolf Class) would provide the ability for Canada to protect and secure the territorial waters outside the North West Passage during the months that is it navigable as the ship will be able to break up to a meter of ice with its reinforced hull construction and thus can sustain Arctic operations.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 50-52.

³⁸ Department of National Defence, *Canada First Defence Strategy...*, 3-10.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 3-10.

The concept of operations for these vessels is to be capable of conducting sea-borne surveillance of all Canadian waters to enforce sovereignty and cooperate with Other Government Departments (OGD) in order to provide awareness of activities in Canadian water's.⁴⁰ They are capable of operating in the Arctic between the months of June to October when the ice conditions make it possible for the ship to navigate in the Arctic. The six ships will provide a robust capability to operate and sustain up to a 120 day deployment at one time in the Northern Arctic Ocean.⁴¹ These vessels are going to provide a significant increase in capability and presence in the Arctic where previously, the CAF was only able send its warships into the Arctic open ocean due to the lack of ice strengthened hulls on those vessels.

AOPS will also provide a helicopter air detachment onboard which will be able to conduct a multitude of roles from ice and ship surveillance to medical evacuations and SAR. The type of helicopter will be on the AOP Ships when they conduct their armed surveillance roles up North has not defined; however, the Harry DeWolf Class vessels are being manufactured to be able to embark and operate a CH148 Cyclone helicopter from their flight deck.⁴² The Cyclone helicopter air detachment provides an unprecedented increase in capability to what was previously available as its ability to conduct long range surface surveillance patrols with an above water/underwater search capability and a crew capable of conducting a healthy SAR response.

⁴⁰ Canadian Armed Forces, Chief of Maritime Staff, "Statement of Operational Requirement: Arctic/Offshore Patrol Ships," (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 2008).

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² P. Whitney Lackenbauer, "Sovereignty, Security and Stewardship: An Update" ..., 227-234.

The CH148 will have an ability to fly during the day and night, in icing conditions with a crew of four personnel and has a range of 450 km.⁴³ The Cyclone will have a long range radar capable of detecting vessels and tracking them over very long distances, which when correlated with the organic ships situational awareness picture, will provide the surveillance capability that is desired in the Arctic waters. The helicopter also has Electro-optical Infrared forward mounted camera system and night vision device systems, thus the helicopter is capable of conducting covert surveillance under the most challenging of conditions.

The helicopter is capable of conducting the surveillance and detection of submarines patrolling the Arctic waters, as the Cyclone is equipped with both a tethered sonar array and a sonobuoy processing capability which will permit long range detection of a submarine in waters that can prove difficult for submarine detection.⁴⁴

As with the CH124 Sea King, the CH148 Cyclone will also provide a stable platform to conduct naval boarding party overwatch operations from. In a similar fashion to the way the Law Enforcement Detachments (LEDs) from the United States Coast Guard embark on Canadian warships during *Op CARIBBE* activities, the RCMP will have the capability to embark on the AOP Ships and helicopters to provide the jurisdiction for the prosecution of searches and seizures of illegal drugs, human smuggling and other illegal activities in Canadian waters.⁴⁵ In a similar way, the AOP Ships will also be able to embark members from the DFO which can monitor any fishing

⁴³ Royal Canadian Air Force, "CH148 Cyclone," last modified [or accessed] 06 October 2016, <http://www.rcaf-arc.forces.gc.ca/en/aircraft-current/ch-148.page>.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*,

⁴⁵ Government of Canada, "Canadian Warships Assist in Narcotic Seizures on Op CARIBBE," last modified [or accessed] 29 March 2016, <http://news.gc.ca/web/article-en.do?nid=1043429>.

or environmental infractions and initiate investigations and provide justification for any enforcement activities as required.

Both of these activities are not as effective without an embarked helicopter to provide the rapid response and long distance covert surveillance capabilities. These OGDs embarked upon the AOP Ships provide examples of how the WoG approach from the CFDS will be able to achieve its northern mandate of effective protection, security and governance in the Arctic.

A critical deficiency in the Arctic is the lack of CAF SAR assets in the North capable of rapid response in the event of an emergency. As previously stated, the provincial and territorial governments are responsible to conduct SAR efforts in their regions; however, when these agencies cannot provide the necessary assets to affect the SAR under challenging conditions, they frequently request for assistance from the CAF. This was the case in in Labrador, NL when a 14 year old teenager Burton Winters, was reported missing on his snowmobile in 2011 and due to a series of unfortunate events, the SAR support from the CAF was not able to be fulfilled until after he was already missing for several hours resulting in the loss of the young man's life from exposure.⁴⁶ As the nearest SAR Canadian Forces Base (CFB) that is able to respond with a fixed wing SAR asset is Trenton, ON or Greenwood, NS and the nearest capable rotary-wing assets being located in Greenwood, NS or Goose Bay, NL.

The transit distances from these southern locations make it very difficult for any type of rapid SAR response in the Arctic; therefore, having a CH148 Cyclone embarked on a Harry DeWolf class ship that is already in the Arctic waters between the months of

⁴⁶ The Firth Estate, "Lost on the Ice," last modified [or accessed] 23 March 2012, <http://www.cbc.ca/fifth/episodes/2011-2012/lost-on-the-ice>.

June to October will be able to reduce the time it would take to have a SAR asset on-scene considerably. Given the two hour on standby time for a primary SAR squadron outside the normal working hours, it may take three to four more hours for a CC130 Hercules SAR aircraft to reach the scene of an emergency in the far North. Between the months of June to October when more people are on the open water, if the AOP Ships are in the area, the response time can be cut down by hours when minutes count.

The ability for a helicopter to respond to an emergency in the Arctic when time is critical is something that the territorial governments in the Yukon, North West Territories and Nunavut have been asking for years.⁴⁷ Due to the large amounts of resources necessary compared to the small amount of SAR events, it has been decided by successive governments that they will accept the increased risk to the people of the North and not place permanent primary SAR assets in the Arctic (440 Sqn being a secondary SAR asset). However, once the AOP Ships begin to patrol the Arctic waters with the CH148 Cyclone embarked, the CAF can now have an aviation asset in the North capable of rapid response to an emergency.

This capability would be further enhanced if the CAF decided to embark two SAR Techs on the AOP Ships. By plugging in the AOP Ships with an embarked helicopter into the primary SAR response network, it will provide the federal government with the ability to provide an improved SAR response to the citizens of the Arctic without having to invest in the significant amount of resources that would be necessary to establish a similar capability at a land based location. This would allow the government

⁴⁷ Sima Sahar Zerehi, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation News, "Nunavut Officials Press for Arctic Search and Base," last modified [or accessed] 07 March 2016, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/arctic-search-and-rescue-needs-1.3477252>.

to further prove to the domestic and international audiences that they can provide security for their citizens in the Arctic and solidify their claim to the North.

Given the increased amount of commercial sea and air traffic, the SAR capability that the AOP Ships deliver will be in high demand as a standby asset in the Arctic.⁴⁸ With the ability for the AOP Ships to embark specialized equipment such as the Major Air Disaster (MAJAID) response kit, the CAF will be able to provide a robust response to a commercial vessel in distress in international waters or a commercial airliner crash in the higher latitudes. Thus, the multi-role Harry DeWolf class vessels will provide reassurance to its international Arctic partners that Canada will be able to respond with a robust rescue capability if their vessels or commercial aircraft find themselves in distress in the Arctic.

Some commentators have argued that having a primary SAR asset, land based in the Arctic is not an effective use of resources, as they could be more gainfully employed in the domestic South where the majority of the SAR call outs come from.⁴⁹ Although this argument is valid given a limited number of SAR assets to cover all of Canada, by adding the AOP Ships with the CH148 Cyclone helicopter air detachment the CAF is able to effectively add another SAR asset without jeopardizing the ability to respond to a SAR event in the domestic South. Another positive development of having this SAR capability in the North during the months that the AOP Ships are in the Arctic waters patrolling, they are the same months that the citizens in the North are taking to the water in their own vessels to conduct their traditional fishing or seal hunting. These are also the same months for increased commercial activity in the Arctic waters. Thus, the months

⁴⁸ James Kraska, "The New Arctic Geography and U.S. Strategy," in *Arctic Security in an Age of Climate Change*, ed. James Kraska (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 260-266.

⁴⁹ P. Whitney Lackenbauer, "Sovereignty, Security and Stewardship: An Update" ..., 227-234.

between June and October will be the months where having a CAF SAR presence in the North will be most effective for overwater rescues.

Instead of risking SAR techs lives by jumping into the near freezing Arctic Ocean from a fixed wing platform, the CAF will have another rapid response option of deploying the CH148 Cyclone for the SAR during the months AOP Ships are in the Arctic. The tragic loss of SAR Tech Sgt Janick Gilbert during the rescue of a father and son in a small fishing boat on October 28, 2011 off the coast of Igloolik, NU serves as a reminder that although SAR Techs are incredible at what they do, we cannot expect them to do the impossible.⁵⁰ Thus the CAF is able to offer an alternative when citizens of the North's lives are in danger without excessively endangering the lives of the RCAF SAR Techs. Given this seasonal rapid response SAR capability, the populations in the North will have confidence in the CAF's ability to provide an overwater rescue capability during the busy summer and fall months. This confidence will contribute to the motivation of the peoples in the North that their safety and security will be provided by the Canadian government and thus further reaffirming their identities as Canadian citizens to domestic and international audiences.

⁵⁰ Canadian Armed Forces, Royal Canadian Air Force, "SAR Technician, A Cat, Epilogue, Flight Safety Investigation Report," last modified [or accessed] 16 April 2014, <http://www.rcaf-arc.forces.gc.ca/en/flight-safety/article-template-flight-safety.page?doc=sar-technician-a-cat-epilogue-flight-safety-investigation-report/hkz4cca>.

Conclusion

The Harper government's CFDS made a great deal of pledges to reinforce the federal government's commitments in the Arctic. By strengthening the CAF capabilities in the North the Canadian government furthers its ability to demonstrate it can protect, secure and govern in the North. Canada's long standing claim on the Arctic Archipelago has been recognized internationally as its sovereign territory through the UNCLOS resolutions and its further commitment to Arctic organizations such the Arctic Council; however, these claims are not without controversy and disagreement between even the closest of neighbours. Canada must continue to assert itself in the Arctic and demonstrate that it has a vested interest in the activities occurring in its Northern Territories and Provinces. To that end, with the investment of the AOP Ships and their embarked helicopter air detachments, Canada is demonstrating that it is placing a priority on Arctic operations and this message is meant for domestic as well as international audiences. As a part of the WoG approach the CAF needs to employ the AOP Ships and helicopter crews to their maximum potential by incorporating them in protecting the sea approaches from threats, enforcing Canadian laws / environmental regulations and incorporating them into the primary SAR network. By utilizing the ships and helicopters in these roles, Canada will be defending its sovereignty, securing its natural resources and caring for its citizens. Canada will be reinforcing its claims in the Arctic and will actually have the capabilities to back up its rhetoric.

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