

Canadian  
Forces  
College

Collège  
des  
Forces  
Canadiennes



## Resurrecting Pegasus: The Canadian Requirement for a Joint Airborne Capability

Major Chris Boileau

**JCSP 46 DL**

**Solo Flight**

**Disclaimer**

Opinions expressed remain those of the author and do not represent Department of National Defence or Canadian Forces policy. This paper may not be used without written permission.

© 2021 Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada,  
as represented by the Minister of National Defence.

**PCEMI 46 AD**

**Solo Flight**

**Avertissement**

Les opinions exprimées n'engagent que leurs auteurs et ne reflètent aucunement des politiques du Ministère de la Défense nationale ou des Forces canadiennes. Ce papier ne peut être reproduit sans autorisation écrite.

© 2021 Sa Majesté la Reine du Chef du Canada,  
représentée par le ministre de la Défense nationale.

CANADIAN FORCES COLLEGE – COLLÈGE DES FORCES CANADIENNES

JCSP 46 DL – PCEMI 46 AD  
2019 – 2021

SOLO FLIGHT

**RESURRECTING PEGASUS:  
THE CANADIAN REQUIREMENT FOR A JOINT AIRBORNE CAPABILITY**

By Major C. Boileau

*“This paper was written by a student attending the Canadian Forces College in fulfilment of one of the requirements of the Course of Studies. The paper is a scholastic document, and thus contains facts and opinions, which the author alone considered appropriate and correct for the subject. It does not necessarily reflect the policy or the opinion of any agency, including the Government of Canada and the Canadian Department of National Defence. This paper may not be released, quoted or copied, except with the express permission of the Canadian Department of National Defence.”*

*“La présente étude a été rédigée par un stagiaire du Collège des Forces canadiennes pour satisfaire à l'une des exigences du cours. L'étude est un document qui se rapporte au cours et contient donc des faits et des opinions que seul l'auteur considère appropriés et convenables au sujet. Elle ne reflète pas nécessairement la politique ou l'opinion d'un organisme quelconque, y compris le gouvernement du Canada et le ministère de la Défense nationale du Canada. Il est défendu de diffuser, de citer ou de reproduire cette étude sans la permission expresse du ministère de la Défense nationale.”*

The Canadian military has repeatedly demonstrated a propensity to shed warfighting capabilities, only to later acknowledge the enormity of problems associated with divestment. The tactical aviation and air defence communities are familiar with this institutional decision-making pattern, with operational sacrifices often conceived during periods of fiscal austerity. A similar tale almost befell the Royal Canadian Armoured Corps as it was precariously close to losing main battle tanks despite the ongoing commitment to Afghanistan in the mid-2000s.<sup>1</sup> Maintenance of Canada's airborne capability has faced the challenge of fighting for relevance amidst questions that have been posed internationally since 1941, when the *Wehrmacht* reflected upon losses sustained in Crete.<sup>2</sup>

The arguments against maintaining airborne forces are grounded in a mixture of reality and contextual misunderstanding. Due to shifting Parliamentary priorities, there are omnipresent discussions within government relating to departmental funding. As a result, there is ongoing re-assessment as pertaining to the financial viability of employing standing parachute formations.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, advocates for removing the capability remain wedded to two ideas: one being the risk posed to transiting airborne forces, while the second is a marked dearth of mass-drops since that over the Rhine following the drive into Germany in 1945.<sup>4</sup> The dialogue on the latter is fundamentally flawed since it ignores salient examination of the effectiveness of joint conduct, organizational partnerships and flexible planning.

---

<sup>1</sup> Canada, Department of National Defence, *Fact Sheet: Renewing the Canadian Forces' Tank Capability* (n.p.: Defense-Aerospace.com, 12 April 2007). Accessed 18 May 2021. <https://www.defense-aerospace.com/articles-view/feature/5/81251/canada-explains-reasons-for-tank-purchase.html>

<sup>2</sup> Thomas J. Sheehan, *World War II Vertical Envelopment: the German Influence on US Army Airborne Operations* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: US Army Command and General Staff College, 2003). 27.

<sup>3</sup> David Johnson and John Gordon IV, *Reimagining and Modernizing US Airborne Forces for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (n.p.: War on the Rocks, 20 April 2016). Accessed 16 May 2021. <https://warontherocks.com/2016/04/reimagining-and-modernizing-u-s-airborne-forces-for-the-21st-century/>

<sup>4</sup> James King, *Yes, Mass Airborne Operations are a Thing of the Past* (n.p.: Modern War Institute at West Point, 10 December 2016). Accessed 18 May 2021. <https://mwi.usma.edu/yes-mass-airborne-operations-thing-past/>

This paper will advocate in favour of complete revitalization of an airborne capability, which would allow greater capacity to globally project power and achieve all of Canada's core defence missions. First, there will be an exploration of the benefits associated with adhering to joint doctrine and solidifying interoperability. Second, examination of the valuable contribution of airborne forces toward accomplishing interagency mandates. Lastly, discussion will shift to theorizing about the composition and structure of a future force.

### **The Necessity of Jointness**

What is often missed during discussions regarding the future of airborne operations is that these missions do not occur in a vacuum. In fact, the mass-drops associated with Overlord, Market Garden and Varsity during the Second World War were conducted as joint ventures amongst the service branches; defeating German fighters, anti-aircraft batteries, detection systems and artillery on route to objectives was a product of cooperation between naval, land and air forces.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, it can be anticipated that when confronted by rising powers or near-peers, a pan-domain approach will be required to ensure success. Synchronization across all relevant environments must be applied in order to mitigate the jeopardy faced by projecting airborne forces.<sup>6</sup>

To marginalize the technological and qualitative superiority of the United States and its allies, a number of nations have established robust anti-access / area-denial (A2/AD) capabilities.<sup>7</sup> Tehran has sought to exert pressure internationally by threatening shipping in the

---

<sup>5</sup> Thomas J. Sheehan, *World War II Vertical Envelopment: the German Influence on US Army Airborne Operations* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: US Army Command and General Staff College, 2003). 58.

<sup>6</sup> John Gordon IV, et al., *Enhanced Army Airborne Forces: A New Joint Operational Capability* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2014). 74.

<sup>7</sup> Michael E. Hutchens, et al., *Joint Concept for Access and Maneuver in the Global Commons* (n.p.: Joint Forces Quarterly 84, 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2017). 135.

vicinity of the Strait of Hormuz. Beijing has developed a networked anti-ship and anti-air throughout the South China Sea in order to deter incursions against an ever-growing territorial claim. While maintaining a sophisticated air defence network over Russia, the Kremlin has utilized cyber warfare and massed indirect fires to deny manoeuvre for Kiev's forces in the contested regions of eastern Ukraine.<sup>8</sup> Surface-to-air missiles, pervasive sensors, fifth-generation aircraft and proliferation of man-portable weapons have created layered A2/AD defences that would dissuade penetration by strategic, paratrooper-laden aircraft alone.<sup>9</sup> However, this belief does not take into account the corresponding advances that have been made in joint warfighting to counter these systems.<sup>10</sup> Assets on sea, in the air and on land can participate in suppressing enemy launch vehicles and sites. Electronic warfare can disrupt and degrade command, control and communication. Beyond-the-horizon data networking, target acquisition and a myriad of kinetic systems can achieve effects that would pave the way for an airborne operation. The reasons for continuing the parachuting capability remain legion: to seize vital ground, sever supply lines or even counter sensitive sites such as those hosting weapons of mass destruction.<sup>11</sup>

Through *Strong, Secure, Engaged (SSE)*, the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) remains committed to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) "and coalition efforts to deter and defeat adversaries, including terrorists, to support global stability."<sup>12</sup> The immediate focus of the alliance is that of the Russian Federation. Since the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula, war with Georgia and saber-rattling across continental Europe, members have begun contributing to

---

<sup>8</sup> James King, *Yes, Mass Airborne Operations are a Thing of the Past* (n.p.: Modern War Institute at West Point, 10 December 2016). Accessed 18 May 2021. <https://mwi.usma.edu/yes-mass-airborne-operations-thing-past/>

<sup>9</sup> Michael E. Hutchens, et al., *Joint Concept for Access and Maneuver in the Global Commons* (n.p.: Joint Forces Quarterly 84, 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2017). 135.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. 136.

<sup>11</sup> Canada, Department of National Defence, *B-GL-300-001/FP-001 Land Operations* (Ottawa, ON: DND Canada, 2008). 8-7.

<sup>12</sup> Canada, Department of National Defence, *Strong, Secure, Engaged* (Ottawa, ON: Minister of National Defence, 2019). 82.

deterrence through the Baltics and Poland. It has been assessed that Russian forces could reach capitols in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania within 36-60 hours of crossing their lines of departure.<sup>13</sup> As such, the fact that the United States can place an airborne brigade within 45 minutes through forcible entry operations, accentuates the importance to such rapidity.<sup>14</sup> Demonstrations of capability and force, such as the airborne Swift Response series of exercises, are determined by the Russian government as being a meaningful display of NATO cohesion and resolve.<sup>15</sup> Maintaining interoperability with American and European partners on parachuting operations is important in order to leverage cohesive use of strategic aircraft, command nodes and logistical infrastructure. Having been integrated to the Enhanced Forward Presence initiative since the 2016 Warsaw Summit, Canada could look to further contribute capability in a light, airborne role.<sup>16</sup> This could work in a similar fashion to that of the Dutch, who have nested a brigade under the leadership of a German rapid reaction division.<sup>17</sup> Ottawa is not alone in facing budgetary constraints amidst the post-Cold War peace dividend and ongoing pandemic, nor unique in lacking global airlift. What is shared however, is a common defence goal in Europe.

Irregular warfare on the African continent since the collapse of the colonial empires provides useful examples of achievable capability for a medium power such as Canada. The CAF has never possessed an airborne unit in actuality, greater than an enlarged battalion. As previously mentioned, this could fit within a coalition-based formation for open, symmetric conflict with antagonistic states. Nevertheless, smaller operations by French and Rhodesian

---

<sup>13</sup> Bryan Frederick, et al., *Assessing Russian Reactions to US and NATO Posture Enhancements* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2017). 25.

<sup>14</sup> Research Division, NATO Defence College, *The Future of Airborne Forces in NATO* (Rome, IT: NDC Conference Report, July 2013). 2.

<sup>15</sup> Bryan Frederick, et al., *Assessing Russian Reactions to US and NATO Posture Enhancements* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2017). 64.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. 16.

<sup>17</sup> Research Division, NATO Defence College, *The Future of Airborne Forces in NATO* (Rome, IT: NDC Conference Report, July 2013). 5.

parachutists have modelled what a sub-unit deployment could look like, and how it fits within the SSE framework of “international peace operations and stabilization missions.”<sup>18</sup> During the Rhodesian Bush War in the 1970s, faced with a mounting insurgency that could melt away into difficult terrain, the Fire Force was conceived.<sup>19</sup> Using a combination of helicopters and cargo aircraft, small units would react to contact reports from ground units and parachute into dense topography around the enemy positions. In this way, the Fire Force would encircle combatants and using close-air support, pursue their destruction within the cauldron.<sup>20</sup> More recently, French Foreign Legion and paratroopers conducted a night-time, battalion-sized drop against Islamic militants in Mali. As a mechanized force approached the city of Timbuktu, the airborne element descended upon the lines of retreat and communication to seal-off the area.<sup>21</sup> Using speed and surprise against a highly-mobile, irregular opponent proved to be decisive in re-capturing the area for their host-nation allies. One of the difficulties faced by coalition forces in Afghanistan was preventing insurgent egress from areas of operation. Airborne insertions are a method with which to fix an adversary in place; as such, this nimble, joint technique could be adopted to further expand airborne utility.

### **Embracing a Comprehensive Approach**

The concept of projecting force through airborne operations is one that has utility beyond the spectrum of conflict. Indeed, the “Canadian Army will increasingly operate across a variety

---

<sup>18</sup> Canada, Department of National Defence, *Strong, Secure, Engaged* (Ottawa, ON: Minister of National Defence, 2019). 82.

<sup>19</sup> Justin Baumann, *Developing an Experimental Joint Airborne Division for Hybrid Warfare and Great Power Competition* (n.p.: Small Wars Journal, 12 September 2020). Accessed 17 May 2021. <https://smallwarsjournal.com/index.php/jrnl/art/developing-experimental-joint-airborne-division-hybrid-warfare-and-great-power-competition>

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Michael Shurkin, *France’s War in Mali: Lessons for an Expeditionary Army* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2014). 16.

of mission sets, once considered nontraditional, to achieve GC objectives.”<sup>22</sup> The value of maintaining an agile, self-sufficient and rapidly-deployed formation can be found domestically and abroad in joint, whole-of-government (WoG) environments. Whether conducted in concert with diplomatic efforts, in partnership with other civilian agencies or in support of humanitarian assistance, parachuting operations remain an important and unique capability within the CAF.

The CAF is dedicated to being able to provide assistance to “civil authorities and nongovernmental partners in responding to international and domestic disasters or major emergencies.”<sup>23</sup> Accessibility amidst civic strife or natural catastrophes can impair effective military response. Infrastructure may be damaged, ports of entry denied and when discussing relief efforts, isolation or austerity of the region may become a significant barrier to efficacy.<sup>24</sup> Medium-weight forces, such as those found within the Canadian Mechanized Brigade Groups, require large transport capacity, secure lodgment and lengthy transportation periods to a theatre of operations.

Ottawa has re-affirmed support for the United Nations and promotion of human rights, effective governance and the rule of law.<sup>25</sup> This outlook on foreign policy has resulted in the ongoing commitment to partnered peacekeeping and stabilization efforts in remote areas of the world. In seeking to effectively answer challenges in failing states, Canada’s allies have shown the value of aligning the projection of airborne forces and diplomacy. By September 1994,

---

<sup>22</sup> Canada, Department of National Defence, *Advancing with Purpose: The Canadian Army Modernization Strategy* (Ottawa, ON: HQ Canadian Army, December 2020). 8.

<sup>23</sup> Canada, Department of National Defence, *Strong, Secure, Engaged* (Ottawa, ON: Minister of National Defence, 2019). 82.

<sup>24</sup> John Gordon IV, et al., *Enhanced Army Airborne Forces: A New Joint Operational Capability* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2014). 4.

<sup>25</sup> Canada, Office of the Prime Minister, *Minister of Foreign Affairs Mandate Letter* (Ottawa, ON: Government of Canada, 13 December 2019). Accessed 17 May 2021. <https://pm.gc.ca/en/mandate-letters/2019/12/13/minister-foreign-affairs-mandate-letter>.



multinational efforts to reinstate the deposed Haitian president had been met with little success. During Operation Uphold Democracy, the United States subsequently planned a forcible entry into Port-au-Prince by the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division.<sup>26</sup> Adding to the political pressure being applied to the regime in Haiti, the threat posed by thousands of paratroopers transiting to their objectives in the capitol forced capitulation of the unelected military junta. Subsequently, the permissive arrival of a global coalition via air and sea ports was enabled without significant loss of life.<sup>27</sup>

Overseas relief with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can also be coupled with technological developments within the field of parachuting and aerial delivery. Attention can be turned to the effects that Western allies have had in delivering aid to war-torn areas, where ground-based distribution of supplies would be difficult or prohibited. The Defense Logistics Agency has provided parachutes and containers, including GPS-guided assets, to more accurately send food, water and medical aid to disparate populations and refugees in Syria.<sup>28</sup> It also negates the inconvenience of waiting for conditions in the field to be rendered safe for NGOs or security teams. In 2014, the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) took part in similar relief efforts in rugged mountain ranges for the Yazidis;<sup>29</sup> in this case, they solely provided an

---

<sup>26</sup> Research Division, NATO Defence College, *The Future of Airborne Forces in NATO* (Rome, IT: NDC Conference Report, July 2013). 2.

<sup>27</sup> John Gordon IV, et al., *Enhanced Army Airborne Forces: A New Joint Operational Capability* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2014). 9.

<sup>28</sup> Dianne Ryder, *DLA division uses parachutes, partnership to support humanitarian aid* (n.p.: DLA Public Affairs, 4 April 2017). Accessed 17 May 2021. <https://www.dla.mil/AboutDLA/News/NewsArticleView/Article/1139701/dla-division-uses-parachutes-partnership-to-support-humanitarian-aid/>

<sup>29</sup> RCAF Press Release, *Air Task Force-Iraq takes part in Sinjar mountains offensive* (n.p.: Skies Magazine, 27 January 2015). Accessed 17 May 2021. <https://skiesmag.com/press-releases/airtaskforceiraqtakespartinsinjarmountainsoffensive/>

armed escort for the Australians to conduct the operation, but it showcased tasks that could be completed with extant airlift.

Capstone guidance also highlights the requirement for CAF provision of assistance for government agencies in order to protect Canadian nationals overseas.<sup>30</sup> This is an area for which there has been public scrutiny in the past, as emergency deployment to evacuate citizens has often come from allied countries. Ten years ago, when Libya erupted in turmoil, hundreds of Canadians sought refuge with European partners.<sup>31</sup> A readily-available airborne response could be tailored to support noncombatant evacuation operations, especially as it pertains to deteriorating security environments prior to full-blown war. France has proven capable of unilaterally sending soldiers into Africa over the past several decades, so too has Belgium. In 1964, when the Republic of the Congo was being gripped by armed insurrection, an airborne regiment was dispatched into the contested region to stave-off marauding rebels and thereby saved thousands of hostages.<sup>32</sup> With a significant number of citizens living in the Middle East and Africa, areas where logistical restraints and open conflict would make mass withdrawal challenging, Canadian interests would be promoted by re-forming a light airborne unit.

With a marginal permanent presence in the North, the CAF will undoubtedly find itself working in concert with federal and provincial authorities in relation to Arctic operations. In order to be successful, it will be necessary to plan, communicate and act in concert with such

---

<sup>30</sup> Canada, Department of National Defence, *Strong, Secure, Engaged* (Ottawa, ON: Minister of National Defence, 2019). 17.

<sup>31</sup> Canadian Press, *Almost all Canadians rescued from Libya by allies: feds* (n.p.: cp24.com, 19 May 2012). Accessed 17 May 2021. <https://www.cp24.com/mobile/almost-all-canadians-rescued-from-libya-by-allies-feds-1.611410?cache=wpwecmoua?clipId=86116>

<sup>32</sup> David Johnson and John Gordon IV, *Reimagining and Modernizing US Airborne Forces for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (n.p.: War on the Rocks, 20 April 2016). Accessed 16 May 2021. <https://warontherocks.com/2016/04/reimagining-and-modernizing-u-s-airborne-forces-for-the-21st-century/>

entities as the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in varying capacities.<sup>33</sup> These requirements include constabulary tasks, sovereignty patrols, defence operations and search and rescue (SAR).<sup>34</sup> The nature of the environment, infrastructure limitations, weather patterns and vast size make operations extremely difficult. Due to these factors, airborne contingencies offer enduring solutions to complicated responses by the CAF in the Arctic. Contemporary major air disaster (MAJAD) relief and SAR are provided by parachutists from the Canadian Army Advanced Warfare Centre and the RCAF, acting in a joint capacity. As demonstrated by the Boxtop 22 and Flight 6560 crashes, Arctic SAR efforts may be measured in days rather than hours;<sup>35</sup> the need for having swift insertion methodology is as relevant as ever, especially given that the flight times over the northern territories exceed the operational range of most rotary-wing assets.<sup>36</sup> *SSE* also points to the need to defend Canadian authority over the Arctic.<sup>37</sup> In the context of rising threats from China and Russia surrounding the opening of economic transit routes and resource extraction, Canada will need to assert itself with greater force than what may be currently available through the Canadian Rangers or law enforcement. As previously stated, the geography and isolation of the Arctic precludes costly and unsustainable mechanized basing in the North. Furthermore, the swathes of unoccupied tundra do not necessitate a large, dispersed force to simply occupy terrain. Operating from a centralized location, a lighter airborne organization

---

<sup>33</sup> Canada, Department of National Defence, *Strong, Secure, Engaged* (Ottawa, ON: Minister of National Defence, 2019). 79.

<sup>34</sup> Canada, House of Commons, *The State of Readiness of the Canadian Forces* (Ottawa, ON: NDDN Committee Report, December 2012). 14.

<sup>35</sup> Gary Watson, *Rescue at the top of the World* (n.p.: Skies Magazine, 28 October 2016). Accessed 18 May 2021. <https://skiesmag.com/news/rescue-top-world/>

<sup>36</sup> David Pugliese, *Situation Report: Canadian Army Commander Lt.-Gen. Wayne Eyre Shares His Vision of the Future Army* (n.p.: Esprit de Corps, 22 May 2020). Accessed 17 May 2021. <http://espritdecorps.ca/feature/situation-report-canadian-army-commander-lt-gen-wayne-eyre-shares-his-vision-of-the-future-army>

<sup>37</sup> Canada, Department of National Defence, *Strong, Secure, Engaged* (Ottawa, ON: Minister of National Defence, 2019). 79.

would be more suited to conducting specific missions to protect or seize critical locations.<sup>38</sup> Even in disparate places such as Churchill or Resolute Bay, these forces could then remain sustained by the RCAF and Royal Canadian Navy.

### **Responsive Structuring**

The Canadian Army has been moving toward a leaner, more adaptable, modern structure.<sup>39</sup> Strategic guidance has been to “improve and expand light forces capability.”<sup>40</sup> While transitioning from the war in Afghanistan to a broader emphasis on full-spectrum operations, parachuting has remained relevant alongside nascent airmobile proficiency.<sup>41</sup> This relevancy has been due to the inherent flexibility in light forces afforded across multiple environments. Limited infrastructure is usually prohibitive to vehicular movement and precludes rapidity of deployment.<sup>42</sup> With that in mind, there has been no commensurate undertaking to create a functional and deployable airborne capability through reorganizing the existing order of battle. While each of the three established infantry regiments employs a parachute sub-unit within their light battalions, this reality offers less utility than what had been afforded to the Canadian Airborne Regiment (CAR).<sup>43</sup> These companies operate independently of one another and do not collectively train, nor deploy on either exercises or operations; rather, they fall under their regimental chains of command and participate in the rotational Road to High-Readiness process

---

<sup>38</sup> Research Division, NATO Defence College, *The Future of Airborne Forces in NATO* (Rome, IT: NDC Conference Report, July 2013). 3.

<sup>39</sup> Canada, Department of National Defence, *Strong, Secure, Engaged* (Ottawa, ON: Minister of National Defence, 2019). 33.

<sup>40</sup> Canada, Department of National Defence, *Advancing with Purpose: The Canadian Army Modernization Strategy* (Ottawa, ON: HQ Canadian Army, December 2020). 14.

<sup>41</sup> Canada, House of Commons, *The State of Readiness of the Canadian Forces* (Ottawa, ON: NDDN Committee Report, December 2012). 15.

<sup>42</sup> John Gordon IV, et al., *Enhanced Army Airborne Forces: A New Joint Operational Capability* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2014). 70.

<sup>43</sup> Bernd Horn, *Bastard Sons: An Examination of Canada's Airborne Forces, 1942-1995* (Kingston, ON: Royal Military College of Canada, 28 April 2000). 373.

with their own formations. Despite being positioned across the country, from Alberta to Quebec, these units all leverage the same operational airlift.

In order to adequately resurrect and maintain an airborne capability within Canada, the CAF should centralize and grow the existing parachuting community as a light infantry regiment in Petawawa. For the purposes of maintaining brevity and conciseness relating to operational functions and effects, discussions surrounding the political aspects of the disbandment of the CAR, internecine regimental strife and organizational details will not be addressed in this paper.

This vision could be achieved with either raising a completely new unit, or giving a unique role to The Royal Canadian Regiment in Garrison Petawawa. The eastern Ontario location would keep the entirety of the force within proximity of both rotary-wing and fixed-wing airlift squadrons. It would also require the organization to return to full-complement: at disbandment, the CAR was only a battalion in strength and had been stripped of the artillery and engineer support which had once been integral.<sup>44</sup>

To effectively project combat power, the unit would need to generate at least a company for expeditionary operations, with the caveat that reinforcements from the remainder of the unit would be made available. NATO recognizes that outside from Washington, few other countries are capable of operating beyond battalion-strength.<sup>45</sup> Examples from the Rhodesian and French experiences lend credence to the reality of independent sub-unit parachuting;<sup>46</sup> joint mass-drops with allies would remain as normal. Investments in a number of capabilities however, would

---

<sup>44</sup> Bernd Horn, *Bastard Sons: An Examination of Canada's Airborne Forces, 1942-1995* (Kingston, ON: Royal Military College of Canada, 28 April 2000). 262.

<sup>45</sup> Research Division, NATO Defence College, *The Future of Airborne Forces in NATO* (Rome, IT: NDC Conference Report, July 2013). 3.

<sup>46</sup> David Johnson and John Gordon IV, *Reimagining and Modernizing US Airborne Forces for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (n.p.: War on the Rocks, 20 April 2016). Accessed 16 May 2021. <https://warontherocks.com/2016/04/reimagining-and-modernizing-u-s-airborne-forces-for-the-21st-century/>

need to simultaneously occur to both increase survivability of the airborne force, and allow it to manoeuvre against near-peer adversaries. Anti-tank and anti-air platforms, indirect fire and engineering support would all need to be developed and re-integrated. Moreover, acquisition of air-dropped light armour, portable unmanned aerial sensors and tactical-level electronic warfare capabilities would all be necessary to fight on the modern battlefield.<sup>47</sup> While in the Persian Gulf, the Americans realized that divestment of their airborne armour left vanguard forces exposed to Iraqi tanks.<sup>48</sup> Acquiring these technologies would promote the viability of forcible entry, while maintaining relevance against hybrid threats from multiple domains originated through state and non-state opponents. This force package is not beyond the capacity of the Canadian defence budget, though it must be prioritized.

## **Conclusion**

To concurrently address the central tenets of *SSE*, including enacting Canadian policies across the spectrum of conflict both at home and abroad, reinvesting in a joint airborne capability should be considered. Doing so would allow the CAF to become more responsive and flexible during periods of crisis, while reinforcing existing critical coalition partnerships and promoting integration with other government agencies. The airborne legacy within the country has undoubtedly been mixed, yet an effects-based analysis shows the value of configuring a light, parachute-capable formation for expeditionary and Arctic deployment. The manner in which the capability endures provides neither functionality nor sustainability. Through consolidation and reprioritization, building an airborne force that is capable of operating within a pan-domain

---

<sup>47</sup> David Johnson and John Gordon IV, *Reimagining and Modernizing US Airborne Forces for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (n.p.: War on the Rocks, 20 April 2016). Accessed 16 May 2021. <https://warontherocks.com/2016/04/reimagining-and-modernizing-u-s-airborne-forces-for-the-21st-century/>

<sup>48</sup> John Gordon IV, et al., *Enhanced Army Airborne Forces: A New Joint Operational Capability* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2014). 9.

environment would cement the ability to rapidly project power in an uncertain future. In the face of emerging asymmetric threats and strategic pivots, the adaptability and utility that would or could be provided, cannot be understated.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Baumann, Justin. *Developing an Experimental Joint Airborne Division for Hybrid Warfare and Great Power Competition*. n.p.: Small Wars Journal, 12 September 2020. Accessed 17 May 2021. <https://smallwarsjournal.com/index.php/jrnl/art/developing-experimental-joint-airborne-division-hybrid-warfare-and-great-power-competition>
- Canada, Department of National Defence. *Advancing with Purpose: The Canadian Army Modernization Strategy*. Ottawa, ON: HQ Canadian Army, December 2020.
- Canada, Department of National Defence. *B-GL-300-001/FP-001 Land Operations*. Ottawa, ON: DND Canada, 2008.
- Canada, Department of National Defence. *Fact Sheet: Renewing the Canadian Forces' Tank Capability*. n.p.: Defense-Aerospace.com, 12 April 2007. Accessed 18 May 2021. <https://www.defense-aerospace.com/articles-view/feature/5/81251/canada-explains-reasons-for-tank-purchase.html>
- Canada, Department of National Defence. *Strong, Secure, Engaged*. Ottawa, ON: Minister of National Defence, 2019.
- Canada, House of Commons. *The State of Readiness of the Canadian Forces*. Ottawa, ON: NDDN Committee Report, December 2012.
- Canada, Office of the Prime Minister. *Minister of Foreign Affairs Mandate Letter*. Ottawa, ON: Government of Canada, 13 December 2019. Accessed 17 May 2021. <https://pm.gc.ca/en/mandate-letters/2019/12/13/minister-foreign-affairs-mandate-letter>
- Canadian Press. *Almost all Canadians rescued from Libya by allies: feds*. n.p.: cp24.com, 19 May 2012. Accessed 17 May 2021. <https://www.cp24.com/mobile/almost-all-canadians-rescued-from-libya-by-allies-feds-1.611410?cache=wpwecmoua?clipId=86116>
- Frederick, Bryan, et al. *Assessing Russian Reactions to US and NATO Posture Enhancements*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2017.
- Gordon IV, John, et al. *Enhanced Army Airborne Forces: A New Joint Operational Capability*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2014.
- Horn, Bernd. *Bastard Sons: An Examination of Canada's Airborne Forces, 1942-1995*. Kingston, ON: Royal Military College of Canada, 28 April 2000.
- Hutchens, Michael E., et al. *Joint Concept for Access and Maneuver in the Global Commons*. n.p.: Joint Forces Quarterly 84, 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2017.
- Johnson, David and Gordon IV, John. *Reimagining and Modernizing US Airborne Forces for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. n.p.: War on the Rocks, 20 April 2016. Accessed 16 May 2021.



<https://warontherocks.com/2016/04/reimagining-and-modernizing-u-s-airborne-forces-for-the-21st-century/>

King, James. *Yes, Mass Airborne Operations are a Thing of the Past*. n.p.: Modern War Institute at West Point, 10 December 2016. Accessed 18 May 2021. <https://mwi.usma.edu/yes-mass-airborne-operations-thing-past/>

Pugliese, David. *Situation Report: Canadian Army Commander Lt.-Gen. Wayne Eyre Shares His Vision of the Future Army*. n.p.: Esprit de Corps, 22 May 2020. Accessed 17 May 2021. <http://espritdecorps.ca/feature/situation-report-canadian-army-commander-lt-gen-wayne-eyre-shares-his-vision-of-the-future-army>

RCAF Press Release. *Air Task Force-Iraq takes part in Sinjar mountains offensive*. n.p.: Skies Magazine, 27 January 2015. Accessed 17 May 2021. <https://skiesmag.com/press-releases/airtaskforceiraqtakespartinsinjarmountainsoffensive/>

Research Division, NATO Defence College. *The Future of Airborne Forces in NATO*. Rome, IT: NDC Conference Report, July 2013.

Ryder, Dianne. *DLA division uses parachutes, partnership to support humanitarian aid*. n.p.: DLA Public Affairs, 4 April 2017. Accessed 17 May 2021. <https://www.dla.mil/AboutDLA/News/NewsArticleView/Article/1139701/dla-division-uses-parachutes-partnership-to-support-humanitarian-aid/>

Sheehan, Thomas J. *World War II Vertical Envelopment: the German Influence on US Army Airborne Operations*. Fort Leavenworth, KS: US Army Command and General Staff College, 2003.

Shurkin, Michael. *France's War in Mali: Lessons for an Expeditionary Army*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2014.

Watson, Gary. *Rescue at the top of the World*. n.p.: Skies Magazine, 28 October 2016. Accessed 18 May 2021. <https://skiesmag.com/news/rescue-top-world/>