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**Research Essay**

**STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS -  
ARE WE READY FOR THE WIRED WORLD**

**Colonel Dennis C. Tabbernor, CD**

**National Securities Studies Course 1**

**Canadian Forces College**

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# STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS<sup>1</sup> - ARE WE READY FOR THE WIRED WORLD

## INTRODUCTION

In today's wired world,<sup>2</sup> an event that occurs on the other side of the globe can be seen on the television in the living rooms of Canadians as it happens. We can all recall the Gulf War when media reporters in Baghdad were reporting missile strikes almost before they were being reported to the President of the United States. We can also recall the faces of the United States Marines stealing ashore at night in Somalia being greeted by the glare of the spotlights of the world press. Today the NATO air assaults on Serbia are served to us with supper by CNN.

In our wired world, people are bombarded daily with subtle and not so subtle messages, mostly through the medium of television. Following the war in Grenada, Ike Pappas noted that:

Because of the growing importance of television as a source of information, most segments of the society are looking more and more to television in order to influence public policy or simply to project a positive image publicly. The military has been no exception in this effort...<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This paper, although addressing communications, will use the more familiar military term, public affairs. The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines communication as the act of imparting news and the science and practice of transmitting information.

<sup>2</sup> Janel M. Radtke. Strategic Communications for Nonprofit Organizations. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. 1998. xi. In this book (which is an American view but can be easily translated to fit Canada) Radtke states that "[o]ur society has more radio stations, television channels, magazines, newsletters, telephones, computers and fax machines than ever. Nearly two thirds of our homes receive cable television service and 89 percent own VCRs. Forty percent of all [U.S.] households own personal computers and millions of people regularly communicate using the Internet."

<sup>3</sup> Ike Pappas. "The Military and the Media in Central America." Essays on Strategy and Diplomacy- the Military and the Media. Number 2. Claremont, CA: The Keck Center for International Strategic Studies. 33.

For the Department of National Defence (DND),<sup>4</sup> ensuring that their message is heard amongst all the noise in a wired world is an important issue. According to marketing guru, Jay Levinson, "...a message needs to be received twenty-seven times before it actually registers with the recipient."<sup>5</sup>

In DND, communications and the information it carries can be an important part of information operations or a critical tool in the transmitting of messages to target audiences.<sup>6</sup> The management of this information may very well be critical to operations, the success of a particular project, or the well being of the organization. This will become more, not less, important as we move into the future. The long term strategy for DND states that:

By 2020, the global village will be realized through a wired world, instant communications and global corporations.

Human knowledge and technology will have expanded many times over, with critical advances in information technology, space and bio genetics.<sup>7</sup>

In today's wired world and in the future, DND can either control the message or be controlled by the message. At the strategic level, leaders have to be able to operate in an environment where the changes in technology will allow them to see and react to events as they are occurring, no matter where that may be in this world. One of the

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<sup>4</sup> I will use the term DND to also include the Canadian Forces (CF) unless used separately where required.

<sup>5</sup> Radtke, 76.

<sup>6</sup> A target audience is a specific group of people that may be defined by age, geographical location, organizational grouping, etc. One such target audience could be the members of the CF and another could be the families of the members of the CF.

<sup>7</sup> Shaping the Future of the Canadian Forces: Defence Strategy 2020 (Draft). Ottawa, Canada: The Department of National Defence. 24 March 1999, 4.

challenges they will face is deciding which of these myriad events are important and therefore need to be acted upon.

In this paper, I will demonstrate that despite some dramatic failures in the past, DND's approach to public affairs has developed in recent years and is now well positioned to engage its target audiences via the wired world. I will examine the importance of public affairs to DND, the DND public affairs strategy, guidelines for successful strategic communications, the military/media relationship, public affairs today, and the future of public affairs.

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS TO DND**

Today, information, and how it is dealt with, is an important part of every senior leader's job. Those leaders who have grown up in the age of typewriters, rotary dial telephones and newspapers are adapting to the wired world, some more successfully than others. Those who have grown up in the age of video games, computers, and cell phones understand the revolution that is occurring in the area of communications, but may not be comfortable with the rapid pace of change in the technology. However, to operate in today's world senior leaders have to adapt. General Michael J. Dugan, USAF (Retd) has noted in an article from his perspectives of the Gulf War that:

The information age has already had a dramatic impact on military cultures and military operations. Instant and worldwide communications - both for the collection and for the dissemination of information - have changed the pace and the rhythm of policy-making, be it foreign, defense, economic or military. No longer can a head of state and any of his or her subordinates have the luxury of days or even hours of advance notice of a significant event in the world. ... The

defence policy-maker and the military implementor of that policy find themselves operating in a demanding new environment.<sup>8</sup>

As the senior leaders of DND progress in their careers, it is imperative that they be able to cope with these rapid changes in technology. As Alan Hooper, a Royal Marine Officer, states:

The rapid development of communications, technology and society's increasing reliance on the news media for information means that PR<sup>9</sup> implications of command decisions need to be considered more and more. There is a requirement, therefore, to develop more awareness of this and to anticipate these implications rather than simply reacting to the initiative of the media.<sup>10</sup>

As well, for senior leaders to operate in this wired environment and ensure their message is transmitted and understood, they must understand public affairs. It is imperative that they have familiarized themselves with and practiced how to deal with public affairs, especially in a crisis. They must have an understanding of nomenclature and definitions. In addition, they must be able to understand the implications of the public affairs advice provided by their public affairs advisors.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> General Michael J. Dugan, USAF (Retd). "Perspectives from the War in the Gulf." Defence and the Media in Time of Limited War. Ed. Peter R. Young. London, England: FRANK CASS & CO. LTD. 1992. 176.

<sup>9</sup> PR is public relations or in Canadian terminology, public affairs.

<sup>10</sup> Alan Hooper. The Military and the Media. Aldershot, Hants, England: Gower Publishing Company Limited. 216.

<sup>11</sup> Alan Hooper has stated that "[a]t all levels the military commander requires a public relations officer who is able to provide him with sound, professional advice. The commander sander s2oe a9m(a)Tj10.02 0 0 100.02 426.76663 1

Within DND, public affairs is an area that has developed over the years. In the 1986 DND publication, Communications Strategy, public relations (public affairs) was described as "... the management function that evaluates public attitudes, identifies the policies and procedures of an individual or an organization with the public interest, and plans and executes a program of action to earn public understanding and acceptance."<sup>12</sup>

Eight years later, the Canadian Navy produced their 1994 Naval Vision to serve as the basis of a naval reference document and to provide information to Canadians, in and out of uniform who "... want to know more about their country's continuing requirement for capable maritime forces."<sup>13</sup> The Navy followed up this keystone vision document in 1997 by publishing Adjusting Course: A Naval Strategy for Canada. The rationale for publishing the paper, which laid out the naval strategy from the present to 2015, was to provide the Navy's "... professional consensus, and provide[s] a common frame of reference for consideration of maritime issues, hopefully as a catalyst for thought."<sup>14</sup> The document was published "... to **stimulate dialogue and to promote public understanding of our maritime security policies.**"<sup>15</sup>

Finally, in 1998 DND produced Defence Administrative Order and Directive (DAOD) 2008-0, Public Affairs Policy, which described public affairs as those "...activities related to informing internal and external audiences. It includes research

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<sup>12</sup> Communications Strategy. Ottawa: National Defence Headquarters. 1986. 1.

<sup>13</sup> The Naval Vision - Charting the Course for Canada's Maritime Forces into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. FMO Halifax, NS: Maritime Command Headquarters. 1994. Foreword.

<sup>14</sup> Adjusting Course: A Naval Strategy for Canada. FMO Halifax, NS: Maritime Command Headquarters. April 1997. Foreword.

<sup>15</sup> Adjusting Course: A Naval Strategy for Canada. Foreword. Bold emphasis is mine.

and analysis, communications advice and planning and the delivery of information programs."<sup>16</sup>

These four documents all have one element in common, and that is the assertion that the purpose of public affairs is to inform and educate the public. As stated in DAOD 2008-0:

... the role of Public Affairs (PA) is to promote understanding and awareness among Canadians of the role, mandate and activities of the CF and DND, and of the contributions that the CF and DND make to Canadian society and the international community.<sup>17</sup>

The importance of public affairs to DND cannot be overstated. The Navy has recognized the importance of public affairs to their long-term well-being as a viable element of the CF. They understand that the high standards of professionalism that the Navy espouses must be maintained. They also understand that this will only be accomplished if the Canadian public understands the requirement for a strong professional Navy. As they state in Adjusting Course: A Naval Strategy for Canada:

... the Navy's high standards of professionalism [must] be maintained, and its aging forces be replaced. ... **this is likely to be a hard sell with the Canadian public and the Media. The future debate cannot be left to the Navy's critics. ... The Navy's future battles will be lost *first* in the living rooms of the Canadian public.**<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Defence Administrative Order and Directive (DAOD) 2008-0, Public Affairs Policy, Ottawa: National Defence Headquarters. 1998, 2/10.

<sup>17</sup> (DAOD) 2008-0, 3/10.

<sup>18</sup> Adjusting Course: A Naval Strategy for Canada. Executive Summary. Italics are those of the original author, bold emphasis is mine.



The necessity of educating and informing the public is further emphasized by Janel Radtke who states that "[w]ith instant news from around the world at our fingertips, the sense that we are living in a global community grows every day. Yet, people lack the sense of common cause, community, and the *public* interest."<sup>19</sup>

To ensure that DND is heard in this wired world, it is imperative that their messages get through to the public or target audiences. The messages must be part of a coherent public affairs strategy that is well understood and followed by senior leaders. In the next portion, I will examine DND's public affairs strategy.

## **DND PUBLIC AFFAIRS STRATEGY**

In March of 1986, Gingko Design and Communications presented their results of a communications audit carried out for DND. This report identified a requirement for DND to "... adopt a more active approach to communications."<sup>20</sup> In 1986, DND published a communications strategy that reflected most of the recommendations found in the report. This communications strategy recognized that most Canadians did not perceive a threat to Canadian security. It also recognized that most Canadians, indeed others in the Western World, were questioning the need for a defensive, let alone offensive, military capability.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Radtke. 1998. xii. Italics are those of the author.

<sup>20</sup> Communications Strategy. Ottawa: National Defence Headquarters. 1986. i.

<sup>21</sup> Communications Strategy. 3-4.

This communications strategy stated that the department had taken a passive approach to public communications and had relied on the national news media to inform audiences on defence matters. It also noted that this approach was not meeting the needs of the government, the DND, the CF, and the Canadian public. The strategy enunciated a new communications approach that would "... stress that DND and the CF 'ensure the security of Canada and contribute to the maintenance of world peace.'"<sup>22</sup> The strategy also recognized that there was an "... absence of scientific research data on public attitudes and perceptions..."<sup>23</sup> and that absence posed problems when trying to develop messages for target audiences. Notwithstanding this lack of scientific data, a number of messages and themes were developed that could be modified as the scientific data became available, one example being:

The Government of Canada is committed to strengthening and modernizing the Canadian Forces; to improving their capacity to defend Canada; to enhancing Canada's reputation and credibility as a reliable partner in the global quest for peace and security, within the limits of available resources.<sup>24</sup>

The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the demise of the Warsaw Treaty Organization, and by extension Russian influence in the world, exacerbated the perception that militaries had become obsolescent. Indeed, the end of the bi-polar world<sup>25</sup> led many to believe that a 'peace dividend'<sup>26</sup> could now be paid as the threat of

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<sup>22</sup> Communications Strategy, 1.

<sup>23</sup> Communications Strategy, 17.

<sup>24</sup> Communications Strategy, 17. For other messages and themes, see the reference, pages 17-20.

<sup>25</sup> The bi-polar world is a term used to describe a world dominated by two super powers. In the context of this paper, the two super powers were the United States of America (USA) and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. At the end of the Cold War the remaining Super Power was the USA.

<sup>26</sup> It has been stated that the 'peace dividend' is a figment of someone's imagination and that in fact, from a Western perspective, the 'peace dividend' has been the 50 plus years of peace in Europe and the absence of a world war in that same timeframe.

the Cold War diminished. This New World order called for a new public affairs strategy.

Therefore, in 1990/91, DND produced a communications plan that acknowledged the

new realities in the world and in Canada. This plan stated in part that:

... public interest groups and the media are attempting to involve themselves more and more in influencing policy development concerning the Armed Forces. Resulting public debate has often been one-sided with little consideration for the complexity of the issues; moreover it is impacting negatively on our forces membership who themselves are unsure about their future and whether their contributions are still appreciated and supported by Canadians. The impact of all these factors demands new impetus be given to DND/CF public communications, both internal and external.<sup>27</sup>

This new communications plan was to "... provide a common orientation for DND/CF communications activities in order to foster and sustain internal and external public appreciation, pride, and support for the Canadian Forces."<sup>28</sup> The plan emphasized that the "... success or failure of our communications activities to sustain an understanding and supportive public will depend largely on the interest the senior leadership of the DND/CF give to them."<sup>29</sup>

This policy was eventually overtaken by events in Somalia in 1993. The Canadian Airborne Regiment had been deployed to Somalia as part of a United Nations sanctioned, United States of America led Combined and Joint Task Force (Unified Task Force -UNITAF).<sup>30</sup> Some members of the Regiment were implicated in the torture and subsequent death of a Somali teenager (Shidane Arone) and the shootings of a number of

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<sup>27</sup> Protecting The Present - Securing the Future. DND/CF Communications plan 1990-1991. Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 1.

<sup>28</sup> Protecting The Present - Securing the Future, 1.

<sup>29</sup> Protecting The Present - Securing the Future, 13.

<sup>30</sup> Dan Loomis. The Somalia Affair: Reflections in Peacemaking and Peacekeeping. Ottawa: DGL Publications, 1996. vii.

other Somalis. The resulting poor publicity, political machinations (including a desire by the senior leaders of DND to suppress the incident<sup>31</sup>), and the courts martial of a number of the soldiers of the Regiment, both officers and non-commissioned members<sup>32</sup> wrecked any plans to foster and sustain internal and external public appreciation and trust. It would take two major floods (the Saguenay in Quebec in 1996 and the Red River in Manitoba in 1997) and an ice storm in Eastern Canada in 1998 to restore the public's faith in the CF.

In 1998, the DND published its latest strategic public affairs policy, Defence Administrative Order and Directive 2008-0, Public Affairs Policy. This new policy's aims are to:

- inform Canadians of the policies programs, services, activities, operations and initiatives [of the DND and the CF] in a manner that is accurate, complete, objective, timely, relevant, understandable, and open and transparent within the law;
- take into account the views and concerns of the public when planning, developing and implementing policies, programs, services and operations;
- fully integrate PA [public affairs] into the decision-making process for policy development, program design, service delivery and military operations; and
- coordinate PA planning and program delivery, including internal communications, within a planned, corporate framework based on a

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<sup>31</sup> In his book, Tested Mettle, Scott Taylor tells a story of cover up, half-truths and lies surrounding the events in Somalia. He states that these resulted from personal and political considerations. Scott Taylor and Brian Nolan. Tested Mettle. Ottawa, Canada: ESPRIT DE CORPS BOOKS, 1998, Chapter 6.

<sup>32</sup> Dishonoured Legacy - The Lessons of the Somalia Affair. Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Deployment of Canadian Forces to Somalia. Ottawa, Canada: Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 1997. For more information on the deployment of the Airborne Regiment to Somalia and the events leading up to and after the death of Shidane Arone, the reader is directed to the report. As well, the reader may find a more balanced handling of the Somalia deployment in Loomis' The Somalia Affair: Reflections in Peacemaking and Peacekeeping.

partnership among commanding officers (COs), DND managers and professional PA practitioners.<sup>33</sup>

Along with this overarching policy on public affairs, DND published six other supporting documents that deal with: Accountability and Responsibility (DAOD 2008-1); Media Relations and Public Announcements (DAOD 2008-2); Issue and Crisis Management (DAOD 2008-3); Public Affairs, Military Doctrine and CF Operations (DAOD 2008-4); Public Affairs Planning and Program Delivery (DAOD 2008-5); and Internet Publishing (DAOD 2008-6). As the titles indicate, these DAODs each deal with a specific area of the strategic public affairs plan enunciated in DAOD 2008-0.

More recently, the senior leaders at DND recognized in the document, Shaping the Future of the Canadian Forces: Defence Strategy 2020 (Draft), the importance of public affairs to the strategic well being of the Department. They stated that “[p]ublic understanding of Defence’s contributions, however, depends on DND/CF’s ability to communicate effectively and engage Canadians in defence and security matters.”<sup>34</sup>

The present public affairs strategy has developed from the Gingko report of 1986 to the recent DAODs. The new strategy is more detailed in its direction and more adequately reflects the wired world and the requirement for the chain of command to be

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<sup>33</sup> DAOD 2008-0, 3.

<sup>34</sup> Shaping the Future of the Canadian Forces: Defence Strategy 2020 (Draft), 3.

involved in public affairs. However, having and understanding a new strategy is only one part of the process. Senior leaders must also understand how to get messages across to their target audiences. In the next section, I will present guidelines for developing effective communications at the strategic level.

## SUCCESSFUL COMMUNICATIONS AT THE STRATEGIC LEVEL

The success of public affairs at the strategic level cannot be left to good luck and the public media. At the strategic level,

... communications is about mission and message. It is about the world in which we live. It is about change of and attentiveness to the world as well. It is the art of expressing our values and solutions so that people who need to know will *understand* what we are saying. But it is also about the science of transmitting information so that people who need to know will see what we mean and *hear* what we've said.<sup>35</sup>

To ensure that the DND message is getting through to the target audience a communications plan must be developed, delivered, and evaluated. This communications plan can not be a stand-alone document, but must be integrated into the overall strategic vision of DND. Once the plan is developed, discipline must be maintained in its delivery to ensure the message is getting through. As stated by Radtke:

While you and your colleagues may get tired of the same message, don't assume that your audience has assimilated it. According to marketing guru Jay Levinson, a message needs to be received twenty-seven times before it actually registers with the recipient. Indeed, commercial companies spend millions of dollars to reinforce slogans and jingles that are heard and seen again and again, and only after much exposure does the individual remember the words and attribution. **So much more so for messages dealing with complex social issues.** Once you've come this far, you owe it to your organization, to your mission, and to your

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<sup>35</sup> Radtke, xi. Italics are those of the author.

stakeholders to use message discipline to enforce "staying on message" by everyone connected to your organization."<sup>36</sup>

To ensure that a strategic public affairs plan is achieving its goal, it has to be properly developed and delivered. Radtke has laid down seven steps to assist in developing and delivering a successful strategic public affairs plan. These will be briefly examined below.

**Develop a Mission Statement.** The first step is the development of a well-enunciated mission statement. (In DND, this mission statement is called a vision statement. I will use the term vision throughout the rest of the paper.) "A [vision]<sup>37</sup> statement has to focus on what the institution really tries to do... The [vision] is something that transcends today, but guides today, informs today."<sup>38</sup> The vision statement should answer the following three questions:

- What are the opportunities or needs that we exist to address? (the *purpose* of the organization)
- What are we doing to address these needs? (the *business* of the organization) and
- What principles or beliefs guide our work? (the *values* of the organization)<sup>39</sup>

The DND vision statement, as detailed in the document Shaping the Future of the Canadian Forces: Defence Strategy 2020 (Draft), states that:

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<sup>36</sup> Radtke. 76. Bold emphasis is mine.

<sup>37</sup> The original text uses the term 'mission'.

<sup>38</sup> Peter F. Drucker. Managing the Non-Profit Organization. 1992, pp. 4, 141, as quoted in Janel M. Radtke. Strategic Communications for Nonprofit Organizations. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. 1998, 1.

<sup>39</sup>Radtke, 2.

The Defence Team will generate, employ and sustain high quality, combat capable, inter-operable and rapidly deployable task tailored forces. We will exploit leading-edge doctrine and technologies to accomplish our domestic and international roles in the battlespace of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and be recognized, both home and abroad, as an innovative, relevant knowledge-based institution. With transformational leadership and coherent management, we will build upon our proud heritage in pursuit of clear strategic objectives.<sup>40</sup>

The DND/CF vision statement meets the criteria stated by Radtke as to purpose, business, and values.

**Identify and Know Your Audience.** The second step is to identify and know your audience or public. "As the 'general public' numbers over 5 billion people, trying to reach everyone seems silly at best, certainly not strategic, and definitely not something most organizations can afford."<sup>41</sup> To properly reach the desired audience, an organization has to understand that there are different target audiences and that the message has to be tailored to each audience.

In the document Shaping the Future of the Canadian Forces: Defence Strategy 2020 (Draft), the senior leaders of the DND identified the major stakeholders (target audiences) and their expectations of the DND. These were the Canadian public, the Government of Canada, other federal departments, Parliament, and our allies in NORAD and NATO.<sup>42</sup> As well, DAOD 2008-0 addresses the requirement to ensure that internal audiences within the DND receive the required information.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Shaping the Future of the Canadian Forces: Defence Strategy 2020 (Draft), 8.

<sup>41</sup> Radtke, 37.

<sup>42</sup> Shaping the Future of the Canadian Forces: Defence Strategy 2020 (Draft), 3.

<sup>43</sup> DAOD 2008-0, 7.



In the analysis of stakeholders<sup>44</sup> prepared by the senior leaders of DND, it was recognized that Canadians "... want an institution that they can depend on to protect and promote things they value. Canadians want Defence to be open, responsible and provide value-for-money. They also expect Defence, particularly the CF, to set a high standard."<sup>45</sup> This analysis also recognized that Canadians "... clearly believe Canada has something to offer the world and, in many ways, look to the CF as a symbol of the positive contribution we [Canada] can make."<sup>46</sup> The analysis of stakeholders and audiences, however, needs to be further refined and I will address this in the next section on targeting the message.

**Targeting the Message.** The "... message can be the key to success. While the organization's goals and objectives are the foundation of its communications plan, the message is the heart of its efforts to reach its target audiences."<sup>47</sup> In developing the message an organization should pay attention to the development of the theme of the message, deciding on how to frame the message, creating an umbrella message, examining language and symbols to ensure they are understood by the target audiences, and ensuring message discipline.<sup>48</sup>

Many of us confuse messages with sound bites, tag lines, slogans or statements about our organization. While a message may reflect these things - or occasionally incorporate them - it is something much more fundamental and substantive. Indeed, the message is what inspires and anchors sound bites, slogans and tag lines.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Stakeholders are one part of your target audiences.

<sup>45</sup> Shaping the Future of the Canadian Forces: Defence Strategy 2020 (Draft), 3.

<sup>46</sup> Shaping the Future of the Canadian Forces: Defence Strategy 2020 (Draft), 3.

<sup>47</sup> Radtke, 59.

<sup>48</sup> Radtke, 59-60.

To be effective the message should contain three elements. Firstly, what it is or an explanation of the problem. Secondly what it means or what exactly it tells the target audience. And thirdly, what to do or what you want the target audience to do as a result of hearing the message.<sup>50</sup> The target audience must understand the message so that they will accept what is being said and not ignore it or reject it out of hand. To ensure this, the message may have to be tailored for each respective target audience. For example, a message concerning a particular policy may need to be addressed differently for an internal audience as opposed to an external audience. As well, it must be understood that there will be differences within your internal and external audiences. Such variables such as age, gender, ethnic background, education, area of residence all affect how target audiences react to messages. Therefore, in targeting your message, all these variables should be examined and factored in as required.

A case in point: in June 1998, the DND introduced a pilot retention programme to address a critical shortage of pilots in the CF. This programme offered a 'Pilot Terminable Allowance'<sup>51</sup> (signing bonus) for those pilots willing to extend their service for a fixed period of service of five years.<sup>52</sup> The rationale for this programme was not well understood by non-pilots and in some cases by pilots.<sup>53</sup> This was a case where the message could have been better tailored for each specific target audience.

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<sup>49</sup> Radtke, 59.  
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<sup>50</sup> Radtke, 67-69.  
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<sup>51</sup> CANFORGEN 059/98, CAS 033, 022202Z JUN 98, PILOT RETENTION PROGRAM -

**How to communicate Your Message.** Fourthly, you must decide how you are going to communicate your message. This requires you to decide on the strategies that fit most closely with the target audience. Then it is necessary to decide how the message is going to be disseminated, that is what communication vehicle will be used to deliver the message.<sup>54</sup> In today's wired world, there are many options to chose from. The table below<sup>55</sup> illustrates some of the vehicles available to carry the message.

	<b>Traditional</b>	<b>Mass Media</b>	<b>New Technology</b>
<b>Print</b>	Newsletters	Magazines	Fax on demand
<b>Face-to-face</b>	Meetings	Press briefings	Groupware
<b>Audio only</b>	Phone calls	Radio	Auditorium Teleconferencing
<b>Audio and video</b>	Videotapes	Television	Videoconferencing
<b>Computer-facilitated</b>	Word processing	Wire services	Internet/CD-ROM

All of these methods may not be useful at the strategic level. It would then be necessary to chose the most appropriate vehicle to address the target audience. Within DND, leaders must also remember that it is necessary to ensure the accuracy and currency of the information included in a message as employees and members are accountable to their chain of command for the message delivered to an audience.<sup>56</sup>

**When and Where to communicate the Message.** The fifth step is to "... think through the 'where and the when' of the plan. The strategies your organization decides to

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explain to the rest of his Wing that they were not being unfairly treated as a result of the Pilot Retention Programme. The Wing Commander indicated that his day had not been a pleasant one.

<sup>54</sup> Radtke, 81.

<sup>55</sup> Radtke, 87.

<sup>56</sup> DAOD 2008-0, 6.

pursue must be organized in a way that will fulfill your communications objectives and create new momentum for your issues...."<sup>57</sup> This step should include the best timeframe or dates to deliver the message to the target audiences. Once these timeframes have been established you can then select timeframes and dates for follow up message. It is important to remember that "...a message needs to be received twenty-seven times before it actually registers with the recipient,"<sup>58</sup> and therefore discipline is required to ensure that the message in fact gets through to the intended audience.

In delivering the message, it is important to remember the following:

- Stay on the message no matter which vehicle or strategy you choose;
- Use vehicles that reinforce each other and build momentum;
- Track what tasks need to be done, by when and by whom; and
- Take advantage of current events but always have your plan.<sup>59</sup>

**How to Make the Plan Happen.** Once the plan is put into operation and is being delivered to the target audience, the sixth step is to ensure that the plan will in fact be successful and achieve the desired outcomes. There are four areas that are critical to the success of the plan:

- Organizational buy-in;
- Expertise;

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<sup>57</sup> Radtke, 143.

<sup>58</sup> Radtke, 76. This is the third time that you have heard this message; 24 to go.

<sup>59</sup> Radtke, 153.

- Time; and
- Money.

If any of these four components is missing, the communications plan will eventually run into trouble. It doesn't take a lot of effort to ensure that a solid foundation is in place; it only takes some attention to detail and, as with any plan, some effort on the part of the individual(s) spearheading the communications effort within the organization.

During this step, it is essential that the strategy is well understood by those who are ensuring the delivery of the message. It is necessary that they see the link with the communications plan and the mission, goals and objective of the organization.<sup>60</sup>

**Follow Up.** The seventh and last step in your communications strategy, the follow-up, may in fact be the most difficult. The following questions need to be asked:

- Was the target audience in fact the one you wanted?
- Did you achieve the desired results? Is there a noticeable change?
- Did you change the attitude or behavior of your target audience and was it the amount of change you had desired?
- Was the target date achieved?

Learning whether something worked and, if possible, why it worked is critical to success in the long run – that is, success can be replicated and repeated. Understanding why a strategy didn't achieve the anticipated results is just as important in order to fine-tune future strategies or, if necessary, revise your plan.<sup>61</sup>

Evaluating your organization's communications efforts will not be easy, but it is necessary to being effective in the long run.<sup>62</sup>

One way to measure the effectiveness of your communications strategy is through

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<sup>60</sup> Radtke, 157 - 158.

<sup>61</sup> Radtke, 174 - 175.

<sup>62</sup> Radtke, 184.

the use of polls. A good example of this method of measurement was a poll conducted by POLLARA Strategic Public Opinion & Market Research for DND in December 1998.

The following is an example of the type of responses a poll can provide:

**Performance of the Canadian Forces.** Eighty five percent of Canadians agree that the CF is doing a good job in the performance of its duties. Only 9% believe that the CF is not doing a good job, while 6% do not know. Young Canadians aged 18-24 (88%) are among the most likely to think the CF is doing a good job. This view is even more prevalent among young men (91% vs. 84% of young women).<sup>63</sup>

Polls such as this provide an organization feedback from their target audiences. In this case, it should be noted that gender and age groups have different perceptions. These types of response can only reinforce the requirement to tailor the message for the target audience.

Radtke is but one source that can provide advice for the development of a communications strategy. Barry McLoughlin, a noted communications trainer and consultant, has put together a booklet of tips to help senior leaders ensure that their message gets across to the required target audience. These tips complement the seven steps enunciated by Radtke. The tips that McLoughlin feels are important for successful communications are:

- **Be Pro-Active:** Anticipate how the story will play. You can lead the news and get out ahead of the story. However, ...if it's a negative story which only touches on your organization, don't turn up the heat on yourself by entering the fray.
- **Reach out:** Contact opinion leaders and credible third-party advocates who can make your case for you.

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<sup>63</sup> Canadians' Opinions on the Canadian Forces (CF) and Related Military Issues. Ottawa: Department of National Defence, December 1998, 4. This document is a poll conducted for DND by POLLARA Strategic Public Opinion & Market Research.

- **Respond Rapidly:** Don't let attacks go unchallenged.
- **Frame the Issue(s):** Be the first to frame the issue or others will do it for you.
- **Manage the Tone:** Avoid sounding arrogant, and avoid tactics such as treating opponents with contempt, or questioning their motives.
- **Adopt a Front Door Approach:** Open the front door for the media, or they'll find the side window or back door and "get the story" anyway.
- **Admit mistakes:** If you make a mistake, admit it immediately and make the issue what you're doing to ensure it doesn't happen again.
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- **Communicate internally:** If you're making a major announcement, make sure you tell employees or campaign workers before they hear about it from the media.
- **Be First With Any Bad News:** Be the first to announce all bad news and avoid the media feeding frenzy which will develop if they discover it first.
- **Communicate Early and Often:** The moment something happens, get in the drivers seat with the media by communicating quickly, accurately and often.<sup>64</sup>

Senior leaders who utilize the tips provided by McLoughlin and build their strategic communications plan keeping in mind Radtke's seven steps will have a good understanding of the public affairs process and their place in it. As well, they will also have a good understanding of the skills required to address public affairs concerns. The whole process of strategic communications can be summed up as “who says what through which channel to whom under what circumstances for what purpose with what effect.”<sup>65</sup> In leaving this section, it is important that we now look at one of the most

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<sup>64</sup> Barry McLoughlin. Communicate With Power 2000 - Encountering the Media Pocket Tips Booklet. Washington, D.C. McLoughlin Multimedia Publishing Ltd. 1998. 11-12.

<sup>65</sup> R. Braddock. “An Extension of the Lasswell Formula.” Journal Of Communication, 8, 1958, 88-93, as prepared by Robert Rice, “Target Audiences in Communication”, April 1999. These were slides prepared for the National Security Studies Course.

important elements of successful strategic communications, and that is the relationship between the military and the media.

## **THE MILITARY AND THE MEDIA**

To ensure that the right message reaches the right target audience the DND has a number of internal resources<sup>66</sup> that can be utilized to reach the internal DND target audience. However, to reach external audiences, DND, like most other organizations, relies heavily on the media.

The relationship between the military and the media has not always been an amicable one. The media has often perceived the military as too secretive and not always forthcoming. This was particularly evident during the events surrounding the Canadian Airborne Regiment and the incidents in Somalia. The media, on the other hand, have been seen by the military as too demanding and not concerned about military security requirements. Peter Young has stated that:

The question of how to reconcile the competing demands for secrecy on the one hand and the public's right to know on the other is fast emerging as a major question of our times. It is a question made all the more acute when we consider that the media now caters to one of the most sophisticated global audiences that, in Western liberal democracies, has come to expect both sides of every argument presented to them as a right.<sup>67</sup>

When the media thinks that they have been mistreated or misled by the military their level of trust in what the military has to say is severely diminished. Recent conflicts, where the military has attempted to manipulate the media to achieve strategic

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<sup>66</sup> Internal resources are such things as CANFORGENs (Canadian Forces wide messages), The Maple Leaf (the DND internal newspaper) and the chain of command.

<sup>67</sup> Peter R. Young, ed. Defence and the Media in Time of Limited War. London, England: FRANK CASS & CO. LTD. 1992. 1



objectives, have often increased this distrust between the two. To overcome this level of distrust takes time and honesty on both sides. Ike Pappas states that since the Grenada invasion

...the relationship between the military and the media has improved. But it is naïve to think that an end has come to the adversary role of the media. The military and the media have different missions. What honestly may appear to the military as information that should be withheld for reasons of security may as honestly appear to the media as information which the [American] people have a right to know. We come from the same society, we on both sides, the media and the military. We are equally patriotic, I believe, but sometimes our missions may lead us to different conclusions on how best to serve our country.<sup>68</sup>

This differing understanding of how best to serve the needs of a country can inhibit the senior leaders' ability to communicate with their external audiences, especially during times of limited conflict. The media have been and will continue to be interested in and report on conflicts in the world. One only has to turn on the television and watch the extensive coverage of the recent conflict in Serbia to understand the extent of the media coverage. The voracious appetite of the 24-hour news channels and their requirement to fill the airtime with gripping news stories exacerbates this desire for news coverage. As well because these limited conflicts

...will be so constrained in order to avoid uncontrollable escalation, ... they will pose no threat to the survival of the citizen or the state. ... In the absence of any direct threat to national survival, then, the citizen will have the luxury of making up his or her own mind on the merits of any conflict.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Pappas, 36.

<sup>69</sup> Peter Young and Peter Jesser. The Media and the Military - From the Crimea to Desert Strike. New York: St Martin's Press. 1997. 291.

In these circumstances, the media become more important to the senior leaders.

General Peter Gration, the Chief of the Australian Defence Force, recognized this fact in 1992 when he stated:

There is inevitably going to be extensive media coverage of any modern conflict. The public will demand it; it is an essential part of maintaining support for our efforts in the war, and we the military might as well get used to the idea and work out how best the process can be managed for the national good.<sup>70</sup>

As well, the ability of the military to censor the news has been severely diminished in the wired world. Peter Young and Peter Jesser noted this fact in their book The Media and the Military. They stated that:

The capacity for independent assessment and reporting has been reinforced by an increasing independence in communications and dissemination of information through the global media. The capacity for independence increases the potential for the media to break free from military constraint, while globalisation has conferred on the media formidable power to influence national and international public opinion. Another factor is the liberating influence of the digital phone and Internet to ordinary citizens around the globe. While limited to the individual, the impact of that informal individual information could have major international repercussions when broadcast through formal media organisations.<sup>71</sup>

They go on to state that:

Once information is in the global media network, news would be available on a worldwide basis. The information simply cannot be contained, short of jamming airwaves and restricting private satellite dish receivers. Such draconian measures would not be politically sustainable in time of limited conflict. But even if such censorship was put in place, the news would still spread through the normal peacetime traffic of newspapers, journals, international travelers, word of mouth and, more importantly, the Internet. In the end, time would become the enemy of the operation.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> General Peter Gration. "Keynote Address." Defence and the Media in Time of Limited War. Ed. Peter R. Young. London, England: FRANK CASS & CO. LTD. 1992. 17.

<sup>71</sup> The Media and the Military - From the Crimea to Desert Strike, 291-292.

<sup>72</sup> The Media and the Military - From the Crimea to Desert Strike, 295-296.

As General Michael J. Dugan, USAF (Retd) has stated:

What does all this mean for the future? In my view, it means that soldiers and sailors will continue to live in a relatively unknown subculture; technology will continue to evolve and present new challenges; leaders must continue to lead; defense policy must pursue military and political objectives that are clearly defined and achievable within the limited resources available. The media must continue to search out and tell the story; defense must generate the facts that support a story they want told, for a story will definitely be told.<sup>73</sup>

The senior leaders of DND must take steps to ensure that they have the ability to deal with the media in a forthright manner. The media cannot be regarded in an adversarial manner, as this will only block any efforts to create media allies. The media can be an ally in transmitting a message to an external target audience and in ensuring that the public receives all sides of any story. Creating a positive working relationship with the media should be the goal of every senior leader in DND.

In the next section, I will examine some of the realities of public affairs today.

## **PUBLIC AFFAIRS TODAY**

Public affairs has improved dramatically, especially since the Canadian public raised questions about the promises made in the 1987 White Paper on Defence, Challenge and Commitment - A Defence Policy for Canada. This White Paper replaced the one issued in 1971 and made a number of commitments to the future defence of the country,

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<sup>73</sup> Dugan, 180.

including the purchase of nuclear submarines.<sup>74</sup> The failure to convince Canadians of the necessity for these submarines has to be seen as a failure in DND public affairs.<sup>75</sup>

Since the publication of DAOD 2008-0, there have been some notable successes in public affairs. The DND newspaper, The Maple Leaf, is one such success. This publication has been directed mostly at internal audiences, but is also being read by Canadians outside DND. Of importance, for the first time in the last few years, DND has a successful tool for informing (targeting) the families of members of DND.

Many organizations within DND are setting up their own websites to inform their personnel and Canadians at large of their activities. In the wired world, this initiative will ensure that more people inside and outside of DND are aware of the happenings and the organizations of DND. However, websites must be kept up to date. A quick perusal of websites within DND in April 1999 found that some had not been updated since 1997 and were sorely out of date. Once an organization chooses a vehicle to target audiences, it must ensure that the vehicle remains relevant, especially one that has the potential to reach a growing audience in the wired world, the website.

Recent events in Serbia are in the news on a daily basis. Our American counterparts are using this opportunity to let their soldiers, sailors and air personnel in the area of operations, tell their story to the American public. We have taken a different tack

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<sup>74</sup> Challenge and Commitment - A Defence Policy for Canada. Ottawa, Canada: Department of National Defence. June 1987. 52-53

<sup>75</sup> It is recognized that there were political concerns at play here as well.

and have not allowed those involved in the daily air operations to be identified for security reasons. We are also not telling the Canadian public what our personnel are doing or achieving. We are missing a great opportunity to let Canadians see their soldiers, sailors, and air personnel at work. We should be taking every opportunity to let Canadians know what the members of their CF are doing. Hiding the reality from the Canadian people may lead us back down the slippery slope that we traveled to the Somalia Affair. The Canadian public has a right to know.

There is still reluctance within the DND to get the story out. To echo General Dugan, "... defense must generate the facts that support a story they want told, for a story will definitely be told."<sup>76</sup> We should be allowing the members of the CF to tell their stories.

## **THE FUTURE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS**

The future of public affairs is limited only by a lack of imagination on the part of senior leaders. We have come a long way from 1986 and have taken steps to ensure that public affairs is a part of our day to day operations in the DND. Recent reorganizations within DND have emphasized the importance of public affairs. ADM (Pol)<sup>77</sup> has created a new high-profile Chief of Public Affairs (CPA) who attends all daily executive meetings and the Defence Management Committee. This strategic shift acknowledges

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<sup>76</sup> Dugan, 180.

<sup>77</sup> Associate Deputy Minister (Policy)

that public affairs must be close to the very senior leaders of DND and provide advice directly to the Chief of the Defence Staff and the Deputy Minister of Defence. Websites and the use of the inter and intra net will also continue to educate the public about the organization and the Internet will become a powerful tool to transmit the DND message to our target audiences. There are also other methods to raise DND's public profile. We may wish to look to our American military colleagues for some ideas in this area as they have a more aggressive public affairs attitude. One example of this is a relationship established between soldiers in Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and some local schools. Soldiers from the Fort go to local schools and assist with the tutoring of elementary students. This program has been very successful in establishing excellent relationships between the soldiers, the children, the teachers, and the parents in the affected schools.<sup>78</sup> Initiatives such as this would be ideal to ensure that the Canadian public better knows and understands their military.

The Navy has recognized the future. In their document Adjusting Course they state:

In the coming years, communicating our message to the Canadian public will be as important as any operation undertaken by the Navy. With intense pressure on the government to maintain many programmes in the face of tight fiscal constraints, the defence budget must be fully justified. However, the collapse of the bipolar world with the end of the Cold War and the uncertainty that surrounds the emerging multipolar system have made consensus on defence policy difficult to achieve. It is essential, therefore, that every opportunity is taken to promote awareness amongst Canadians on the contribution the Navy makes to our security and quality of life, both at home and abroad.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Heike Hasenauer. "Partners in Education." Soldiers. Volume 52. Alexandria: September 1997. 18-20.

<sup>79</sup> Adjusting Course: A Naval Strategy for Canada, 15-16.

The future of public affairs is limited only by the lack of imagination of those involved in designing and delivering the message to the target audiences. With a strong public affairs strategy tied to the overall strategy of DND, imaginative use of the steps and tips suggested by Radtke and McLoughlin and, creative use of the technology of the wired world, DND could own that future.

## **CONCLUSION**

In this paper I have examined public affairs within DND and looked at the change in strategy from 1986 to the present. I have presented some steps for the development of a successful strategic communications plan and some tips to ensure that the plan is properly delivered. I have examined the military/media relationship and indicated the importance of dealing effectively with the media, especially as the media has a major impact on DND's ability to reach external target audiences. I have highlighted the importance of the senior leaders in the public affairs process and the importance of their ability to adapt to a wired world. I have presented some concerns about how we deal with public affairs today and some suggestions as to what public affairs in the future may entail. I have also shown that the process of public affairs has matured in DND since 1986 but still has a way to go, especially in the delivery of messages to target audiences.

In conclusion, public affairs and the targeted delivery of messages to the appropriate audiences are and will continue to be important to DND. In the wired world, mastery of public affairs by senior leaders will lead to the DND message being heard and understood by the target audiences.

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