



FROM COLD WAR TO ARAB HEAT

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A Research Essay in fulfilment of one of the requirements of a course of studies at the University of Victoria

From Cold War to Arab Heat:
NATO and The Changing Canadian Navy In The Gulf

6,538 Words

For History 392

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SN V00694068

30 May 2011

With Many Thanks To:

Admiral (Ret'd) John Anderson

Rear-Admiral (Ret'd) Kenneth Summers

&

Commodore (Ret'd) Jan Drent

For their long and distinguished years of service to our nation, but most specifically for devoting many morning hours of their time to assist a snivelling midshipman in understanding the stories of their time.

CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS & DEFINITIONS 4

INTRODUCTION 5

“ABSOLUTELY SUBMARINES”: NATO &THE NAVY IN THE 1980s 7

“PART OF THE FABRIC”: EFFECTS OF NATO ON THE NAVY 12

“BREAKING OLD HABITS”: OPERATION FRICTION AS A DEPARTURE FROM COLD WAR THINKING 17

CONCLUSION 22

BIBLIOGRAPHY 23

GENERAL NOTES

1. Title Page Credits
 - a. Upper Picture: Sovremenny-class destroyer (probably *Bezuprechnyy*) with an IRE (either HMCS Terra Nova or HMCS Gatineau) in the background. They were shadowing the Canadian Navy off the coast of Norway in 1988. Credit: User Occam, of army.ca
 - b. Lower Picture: HMCS ATHABSKAN departing for Operation Friction, Credit: DND.
 - c. Title Page Design: Evan Roberts
2. Use of the words Navy, navy, Canadian Navy and Royal Canadian Navy
 - a. For the purposes of this essay the use of capitalized Navy, Canadian Navy and Royal Canadian Navy are all in reference to the actual Canadian Organization today known as Maritime Command. “navy” without the capitalization is to reference naval force generally, without specific reference to the Canadian Navy.

ABBREVIATIONS & DEFINITIONS

Adm	Admiral
ASUW	Anti Surface Warfare
ASW	Anti Submarine Warfare
Canadian Navy	Meaning Maritime Command
CDS	Chief of Defence Staff
CIWS	Close In Weapons System (Phalanx Anti-Missile)
CLF	Combat Logistics Force
Cmdr	Commodore
CONMAROPS	NATO's Concept of Maritime Operations
CPF	Canadian Patrol Frigate / Halifax Class Ship
DDH 280	Tribal Class Destroyer (NATO Designation for Destroyer Carrying Helicopter)
HMCS	Her Majesty's Canadian Ship
MIF	Maritime Interdiction Force
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDHQ	National Defence Head Quarters
RAdm	Rear Admiral
RN	Royal Navy
SACLANT	Supreme Allied Command Atlantic
Sea Sparrow	NATO Surface to Air Missile
UN	United Nations
USN	United States Navy

INTRODUCTION

“What gulf?” were the words of now retired Admiral John Anderson, as he picked up the phone at his home on a long weekend in 1990.¹ He hadn’t been watching the news that morning, and like the rest of the world he had been caught off guard by the actions of Saddam Hussein on August 2nd, 1990. Like the diplomatic community, the Canadian military establishment had been caught off-balance by the crisis. Both the Minister of National Defence and the Chief of Defence Staff were away from the office, as Monday August 6th was a civic holiday and National Defence Head Quarters was deserted.² If Admiral Anderson had been watching the news that morning, he would have noticed that the invasion of Kuwait by Iraqi forces was raising vocal opposition from the UN, and he would soon find himself drafting Canada’s naval response.³ The resulting task force of Her Majesty’s Canadian Ships ATHABASKAN, TERRA NOVA , and PROTECTEUR departed a mere two weeks later to engage in interdiction and logistical support operations as part of the United Nations Maritime Interdiction Force in Persian Gulf.⁴ The quick refitting and deployment of these ships occurred in record time, highlighting the advantages of extreme flexibility that naval platforms offer to the Canadian Government. While the Canadian task force went on to distinguish itself in the Gulf, just two weeks earlier these ships had been optimized and outfitted to fight Russian submarines in the North Atlantic. This anti-submarine optimization was a speciality Canada possessed and had been contributing for years to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in the

¹ Admiral John Anderson, interview by author, Victoria BC, March 15, 2011. 40:29.

² R. Gimblett and G. Morin, *The Canadian Forces in the Persian Gulf: Operation Friction 1990-1991* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1997), 19, 21.

³ Admiral John Anderson, interview by author, Victoria BC, March 15, 2011. 40:49.

⁴ K. Summers, “Operation Friction: A Personal Perspective,” *Canada’s Navy Annual*. Wings News Magazine Vol. 9 (1991): 55; E. Miller and S. Hobson, *The Persian Excursion: The Canadian Navy in the Gulf War* (Clemensport: The Canadian Peacekeeping press, 1995), 230; and B. Coombs, “United States Naval Cooperation with Canada,” Strategic Research Department Research Report 2-95 (U.S. Naval war College, 1996), 1.

name of collective defence in the 1980s.⁵ The specialization of ships for anti-submarine warfare would be the only one of many affects that NATO would have on the Canadian Navy as it moved into the 1990s.

This paper aims to evaluate the Canadian Navy within NATO from a wider perspective. The evaluation will aim to take into account higher level strategic decisions made by the Canadian Navy and what role was played in that policy by NATO. The Canadian Navy's deployment in the First Gulf War, code named Operation Friction, will be used to illustrate how NATO affected the Canadian Navy and how Operation Friction represented a move away from the conventional NATO operations that were a major and longstanding focus of the Navy in the 1980s. Through the use of this wider perspective this paper will conclude that Operation Friction acted as a showcase for the Canadian Navy's transition from a Cold War mentality to the modern naval paradigm. This will be achieved through the use of a wide range of literature and by drawing substantially on interviews that were conducted with several subject matter experts and first-hand witnesses. Some of the subjects that will be explored will include the strategic situation of the navy in the 1980s, the role NATO played in the development the navy in the 1980s, the development of the Canadian Navy specialized in anti-submarine warfare force, how this contributed to the state of the navy and her ships prior to Operation Friction, how Operation Friction represents a noteworthy departure from forty years of Cold War thinking and operations, and how oral history interviews can add to the discussion.

⁵ Joel Sokolski, J. Jockel, and Georgetown University, Center for Strategic and International Studies, *Canada and Collective Security: Odd Man Out* (New York: Praeger, 1986), 86.

“ABSOLUTELY SUBMARINES”: NATO & THE NAVY IN THE 1980s

While some attempt has been made to place Operation Friction into the greater flow of Canadian naval history, *Operation Friction*, the official history of the operation by R. Gimblett, dedicates only four sentences to explaining why the ships involved in the operation were outfitted for ASW in 1990. Of the two main texts concerning Operation Friction, *Operation Friction* and *The Persian Excursion*, neither offers a wider perspective to a reader unfamiliar with major Canadian naval trends. Without that context, the unique nature of Operation Friction is underrepresented, and the evolution of the navy's strategic posture cannot be seen. These gaps in the historiography provide an excellent opportunity for the collection of oral history to assist in explaining the Canadian Navy's role in the Persian Gulf War. Even the larger story of Canada's navy within NATO garners little following in the historical literature, and most works that explain Canada's role within NATO do not provide much information for naval researchers, and the same oversight also exists in general texts like Marc Milner's *Canada's Navy*. The operational history of the 1980s is, quite simply, very difficult to find in the secondary literature. This makes the collection of oral history all the more important, as this information is simply not recorded elsewhere. Most of Canada's naval activity leading up to Operation Friction was shaped by preparations for a war with Russia that never happened. All aspects of the navy were shaped considerably by the Cold War, and within that, by NATO. The effect of NATO and the threat of the Warsaw Pact on all the components of the Canadian Navy cannot be ignored, and it dominated the thinking and lives of a generation of officers who lived in the "NATO box."⁶ Commodore Drent, for example, who served as a Moscow Naval attaché and with various NATO staffs, claims that while NATO did not dominate the thinking of the entire Canadian officer cadre, he does maintain that NATO was in many ways an essential concern for a majority of officers who passed through the RN Staff College during his time as directing

⁶ Admiral John Anderson, interview by author, Victoria BC, March 15, 2011. 15:00.

staff there.⁷ With small exceptions, NATO operations formed the background for the navy in the late 1980s.

By amalgamating several different literary sources and relating these to the experiences of several officers who served with NATO in this period, a picture of the navy in the 1980s can be drawn. Simply put, the Canadian Navy in the 1980s was like any force; its preparations were largely dictated by the enemy and the threat, and because countering this threat meant involvement within NATO, the two organizations were closely tied to each other. And yet the navy was in decline in the late 1970s. While the Brock Report emphasized the threat of Soviet submarines and the need to continue with an anti-submarine warfare focus,⁸ by the 1970s the Canadian government attempted to move away from this specialization. *Defence in the 70's* completely reversed the government's earlier requirement to specialize in ASW,⁹ but the new direction it mandated would not be realized before the end of the century as no money was provided for this reorientation.¹⁰ Because of a renewed Soviet threat, eventually the late 1980s saw the Navy rebuilt into a modern fleet. In the early 1980s, however, Canadian Navy had reached its lowest point since the demobilization of 1946, and an aging fleet meant only its "residual ASW capability remained of value to NATO."¹¹ The threat in the 1980s was still very much the Soviet submarine fleet and it was clear that Soviet submarines were passing through the Arctic, avoiding NATO's Atlantic defences and becoming familiar with advantageous positions from which to launch ballistic missiles in the event of war.¹² This Soviet threat was the driving factor behind NATO, which was in many ways the driving force behind the Canadian Navy. To that effect, the direct and

⁷ Commodore Jan Drent, interview by author, Victoria BC, March 22, 2011. 26:00.

⁸ Michael Hennessy, "Fleet Replacement and the Crisis of Identity," in *A Nation's Navy: In Quest of Canadian Naval Identity*, eds. W. Crickard, N. Robert, and H. Michael, 131- 156 (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), 147. And M. Milner, *Canada's Navy: The First Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 247.

⁹ M. Milner, *Canada's Navy: The First Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 270.

¹⁰ M. Milner, *Canada's Navy: The First Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 271.

¹¹ M. Milner, *Canada's Navy: The First Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 262.

¹² M. Milner, *Canada's Navy: The First Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 292.

prominent threat in the 1980s was “absolutely”¹³ Russian submarines, of which there were a disturbing number. At some points in the 1980s the Russians were building a submarine a month,¹⁴ and the Russian order of battle boasted a huge number of submarines available, which Admiral John Anderson noted in his interview were quite capable.¹⁵ As early as the 1950s the Russians had developed submarines that were fast, quiet and carried a nuclear missile with an estimate two hundred mile range, which drastically increased the risk of failing to find them before they could launch.¹⁶ NATO believed that the Soviet ocean-going submarine fleet had been designed to disrupt lines of communication and prevent the command of the sea, and this perception dictated much of the Canadian counter strategy.¹⁷ Not only did Soviet submarines now threaten the alliance in an anti-shipping capacity, but they also possessed an often overlooked strategic launch capacity as well.¹⁸

As a result of this threat the navy focused on its new specialist ASW role in the northwest Atlantic,¹⁹ and did its best to carry on. Canada’s navy has a long tradition of anti-submarine warfare operations and the navy in 1980s was very much a part of that tradition. Marc Milner suggests that Canada’s ASW focus goes almost all the way back to the origins of the Navy and that it was the institutional memory of the RCN in the last two years of the Second World War that drove the postwar fleet to become a world-class organization in anti-submarine warfare.²⁰ There is little doubt that the formative event in the Canadian navy’s ASW culture and tradition was during the hunt for U-Boats in the Battle of the Atlantic. This development of ASW capabilities more or less continued into the Cold War,

¹³ Admiral John Anderson, interview by author, Victoria BC, March 15, 2011. 11:29.

¹⁴ Commodore Jan Drent, interview by author, Victoria BC, March 22, 2011. 19:07.

¹⁵ Admiral John Anderson, interview by author, Victoria BC, March 15, 2011. 11:15.

¹⁶ M. Milner, *Canada’s Navy: The First Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 223.

¹⁷ Brian Cuthbertson, *Canadian Military Independence in the Age of the Superpowers* (Don Mills: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1977), 155.

¹⁸ Admiral John Anderson, interview by author, Victoria BC, March 15, 2011. 11:40.

¹⁹ M. Milner, *Canada’s Navy: The First Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 257.

²⁰ M. Milner, *Canada’s Navy: The First Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 24

where the threat of Soviet submarines weighed heavily on naval officers and politicians alike.²¹ For the Canadian Navy in the 1980s, the Soviet submarine threat meant that her operations were going to be dictated by NATO's newly published *Concept of Maritime Operations* (CONMAROPS).²² This document was essentially a guide to how NATO would carry out a war against the Warsaw Pact and support Allied land forces in Europe should it be required to.²³ Prime Minister Trudeau's acceptance of CONMAROPS and his realization that conventional deterrence was required in the late 1970s meant that NATO would have a tremendous effect on the Canadian Navy strategically and tactically throughout the next two decades. Under this plan, virtually the entire Atlantic fleet was to be assigned to SACLANT for NATO operations.²⁴ With such a heavy involvement, CONMAROPS laid out the rationale for these forces and the capabilities that would be required of them. From a tactical perspective it meant that many of Canada's naval operations would be dedicated to convoy work, anti-submarine warfare, and countering the ballistic missile threat, all of which the Canadian Navy could expect to encounter in the North Atlantic. The RCN acquisition of Sea King helicopters, the towed array system, and its efforts toward building an excellent ASW reputation showed the alliance that Canada had the capability to escort high value targets across the Atlantic.²⁵ Exercises like MAINBRACE and MARINE in the fall of 1952 were huge operations of this nature, which involved the Canadian Navy involved in order to practice coordination and to ensure that Norway and Denmark could be supported should they be attacked by the USSR.²⁶ As a Senior and then Flag Officer in the 1980s, an officer who commanded Destroyer Squadrons and eventually became the CDS, Admiral Anderson was one of the officers who saw the navy in the 1980s

²¹ Now retired RAdm Pile discusses a possible counterpoint to this in his Master's Thesis: "Beyond the Workable Little Fleet: Post-War Planning and Policy in the RCN 1945-1948." which was published in 1998 and available from the University of Victoria.

²² M. Milner, *Canada's Navy: The First Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 288.

²³ Commodore Jan Drent, interview by author, Victoria BC, March 22, 2011.49:28. And M. Milner, *Canada's Navy: The First Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 286-298.

²⁴ M. Milner, *Canada's Navy: The First Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 271

²⁵ Rear Admiral Kenneth Summers, interview by author, Victoria BC, April 1, 2011. 7:16, 7:30.

²⁶ F. W Crickard et al, "NATO, a Maritime Alliance: Proceedings of a Conference Held in Halifax, N.S., 6 April, 1989," (Halifax: International Insights Society, 1989), 46-47.

progress through a wide spectrum of positions. In Admiral Anderson's case, most of his career was directed towards "working on the concepts of effectively convoying and resupplying material and personnel if the Cold War broke out," and "all the exercises that [he] did were aimed at that."²⁷ With much of the Atlantic fleet training meant to facilitate reinforcing and resupplying Europe if the Cold War turned into a hot war.²⁸

With this being said, the collection of oral history highlights a gap in the historical literature. While the few publications on the navy in the 1980s give the impression that NATO operations were the one and only focus of the navy, this is simply not the case. While the literature on the RCN would have you believe that all the Canadian Navy did was "drop depth charges,"²⁹ the truth of the matter is somewhat different. For example, Marc Milner's work on the Canadian Navy completely excludes any operational history of the navy in the 1980s and instead focuses solely on the rebuilding of the navy,³⁰ and in this case the oral history interviews with officers from that time paint a larger picture. There is no doubt that ASW was of primal importance to the Canadian Navy, but it wasn't all that they did.³¹ The important difference that needs to be highlighted is that while the literature implies that the Canadian Navy was focused entirely on ASW, oral history accounts note that while it was certainly optimized for ASW, it retained an awareness of its other possible roles.³² Certainly there were those in the RCN that still believed in the "dark, blue water navy"³³ and looked down upon the less glamorous roles of the Navy, especially in relation to taking on Coast Guard duties like fisheries patrols and

²⁷ Admiral John Anderson, interview by author, Victoria BC, March 15, 2011. 9:42.

²⁸ Admiral John Anderson, interview by author, Victoria BC, March 15, 2011. 10:55.

²⁹ Commodore Jan Drent, interview by author, Victoria BC, March 22, 2011. 6:55.

³⁰ M. Milner, *Canada's Navy: The First Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 282-298.

³¹ Commodore Jan Drent, interview by author, Victoria BC, March 22, 2011. 6:55.

³² Commodore Jan Drent, interview by author, Victoria BC, March 22, 2011. 6:55.

³³ Rear Admiral Kenneth Summers, interview by author, Victoria BC, April 1, 2011. 9:36.

inspections, but according to Rear Admiral Summers these were not the majority.³⁴ While he and the other officers consulted agreed that the submarine “threat was a prominent one, there were others”³⁵ and the other traditional roles of the navy were still maintained. Judiciary work, especially in the fishing capacity, was still underway despite Canadian involvement with NATO,³⁶ as were humanitarian operations.³⁷ Even within NATO there were operations that were entirely separate from the focus on ASW. Between 1987 and 1992 the navy and NATO desired to have an anti-air and anti-surface capability to transport a brigade to Norway in support of the alliance.³⁸ There literature also gives little emphasis to the fact that Russian surface ships possessed an anti ship missile capability that would have required attention by naval officers in an ASUW capacity separate from the ASW focus.³⁹ As important as these other viewpoints are to the Canadian Navy in the 1980s “the threats were still very much looking at the Warsaw pact and [its]role at working to gain...sea control of the Atlantic.”⁴⁰ It was this desire to gain control of the Atlantic that fed directly into the development of the Canadian anti submarine role within NATO, which played an important part in the development of the Canadian Navy and may be regarded as the overriding focus of the Navy in the 1980s.

“PART OF THE FABRIC”: EFFECTS OF NATO ON THE NAVY

Having discussed how heavily involved the Canadian Navy was within NATO in the 1980s it is important to investigate what that involvement meant, and what its effects were on the Canadian Navy. After overcoming the challenge of finding information on this topic, the second challenge to recording Canada’s role in NATO is that the direct influence of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization is hard to pin down, as the relationship is somewhat cyclical. While Marc Milner suggests that the naval renaissance in

³⁴ Rear Admiral Kenneth Summers, interview by author, Victoria BC, April 1, 2011. 9:36.

³⁵ Commodore Jan Drent, interview by author, Victoria BC, March 22, 2011. 19:05.

³⁶ Commodore Jan Drent, interview by author, Victoria BC, March 22, 2011. 6:12.

³⁷ Commodore Jan Drent, interview by author, Victoria BC, March 22, 2011. 1:00:28

³⁸ M. Milner, *Canada’s Navy: The First Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 288.

³⁹ Admiral John Anderson, interview by author, Victoria BC, March 15, 2011.16:01

⁴⁰ Admiral John Anderson, interview by author, Victoria BC, March 15, 2011. 25:40 .

the 1970s was in response to the requirements of NATO,⁴¹ others believe that it occurred *vice versa*.⁴² Determining if it is NATO influencing Canada, or Canada influencing NATO is equally difficult. However, there are several positive and negative effects of the NATO-Canadian navy relationship that can be easily identified.

There is no doubt that the Canadian Navy's involvement within NATO meant that some clear benefits and capabilities were introduced as a result of this cooperation. Most scholars and navalists would agree that "the real strength of NATO is the ability to work together"⁴³ and NATO played a significant role in standardizing procedures, terminology, and logistics between the allies. This standardization made cooperation between alliance navies significantly easier, even when they were not operating under the NATO flag. For example, one of the greatest assets to the Canadian Navy in the Gulf War and beyond was the ability to seamlessly communicate with a vast number of other navies.⁴⁴ The exceptional abilities of the Canadian Navy to both communicate and cooperate, in part as a result of NATO training, acted as a force multiplier in the Gulf.⁴⁵ The eventual task group commander of the fleet who deployed to the Gulf, Captain Miller, was chosen in large part because he was extremely familiar with both the NATO and US ways of operating as he had considerable prior NATO experience.⁴⁶ The ability for Canadian warships to exercise command and control functions during Operation Friction was in part because of the previous work of the navy within NATO.⁴⁷ The same data systems and protocols

⁴¹ M. Milner, *Canada's Navy: The First Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), x.

⁴² Joel Sokolski writes heavily on this topic in his book *Canada and Collective Security: Odd Man Out* as well as in several articles which he has written.

⁴³ Admiral John Anderson, interview by author, Victoria BC, March 15, 2011. 45:19.

⁴⁴ E. Miller and S. Hobson, *The Persian Excursion: The Canadian Navy in the Gulf War* (Clemensport: The Canadian Peacekeeping press, 1995), 105-122.

⁴⁵ Admiral John Anderson, interview by author, Victoria BC, March 15, 2011. 59:54.

⁴⁶ E. Miller and S. Hobson, *The Persian Excursion: The Canadian Navy in the Gulf War* (Clemensport: The Canadian Peacekeeping press, 1995), 12.

⁴⁷ Admiral John Anderson, interview by author, Victoria BC, March 15, 2011. 1:01:22.

allowed the Canadians to serve as a bridge between the British and the Americans.⁴⁸ While the capability to communicate and the acquisition of the equipment to do so was a Canadian directed objective, the standardization of protocols for using that equipment was a NATO one and its importance was demonstrated over and over again.⁴⁹ A similar example would be the NATO-organized standardization of fuelling methods, which allowed all coalition navies to refuel each other, something that would become invaluable during the Gulf War.⁵⁰ NATO's joint exercises also meant that the Canadian Navy was used to working with its American (and other) allies on a regular basis.⁵¹ The advantage of personally knowing the people involved in any given operation, rather than knowing them only by radio cannot be overstated.⁵² When Captain Miller steamed into the Gulf he had already worked with and knew the commanders of the four USN carrier battle groups, which formed the majority of the forces already in the theatre.⁵³ Prior co-ordination through NATO was extraordinarily important to Canada's in-theatre commander, now retired Rear-Admiral Summers. RAdm Summers stressed that having operated previously under NATO, meant that upon arrival in the Gulf "you automatically knew how you were going to operate."⁵⁴ Prior NATO operations had given him the chance to know the other commanders personally. Getting to know the other coalition commanders beforehand meant that he could establish trust between them more quickly, which was essential for the operation.⁵⁵ This trust eventually enabled the Captain "Dusty" Miller to take command of the Combat Logistics Force (CLF), a

⁴⁸ Rear Admiral Kenneth Summers, interview by author, Victoria BC, April 1, 2011. 21:16.

⁴⁹ E. Miller and S. Hobson, *The Persian Excursion: The Canadian Navy in the Gulf War* (Clemensport: The Canadian Peacekeeping press, 1995), 107.

⁵⁰ Admiral John Anderson, interview by author, Victoria BC, March 15, 2011. 45:47.

⁵¹ F. W Crickard et al, "NATO, a Maritime Alliance: Proceedings of a Conference Held in Halifax, N.S., 6 April, 1989," (Halifax: International Insights Society, 1989), 41.

⁵² The need to integrate fleets from different navies was made clear in WW2 when Admiral Doorman found himself in command of an international fleet that was unable to communicate and operate with each other, leading to complete destruction. F. W Crickard et al, "NATO, a Maritime Alliance: Proceedings of a Conference Held in Halifax, N.S., 6 April, 1989," (Halifax: International Insights Society, 1989), 45.

⁵³ E. Miller and S. Hobson, *The Persian Excursion: The Canadian Navy in the Gulf War* (Clemensport: The Canadian Peacekeeping press, 1995), 12.

⁵⁴ Rear Admiral Kenneth Summers, interview by author, Victoria BC, April 1, 2011. 16:04.

⁵⁵ Rear Admiral Kenneth Summers, interview by author, Victoria BC, April 1, 2011. 16:57.

large multinational combined logistics force that provided supplies to the navies of all nations. He was the only non-American to take such an important position in the coalition. No doubt much of this trust had been built up by Canadian appointments to ASW Warfare Commander positions in previous multinational operations, where USN officers had noted their commendable performance before 1990.⁵⁶

Joint exercises under NATO also promoted cooperation that was not necessarily found when ships were sailing in purely national squadrons⁵⁷ and the cross-pollination of crews between ships in a multinational fleet also contributed to a culture of cooperation that was vital for future conflicts like the Gulf War.⁵⁸ NATO squadrons also created a sense of competition, pushing fleets farther in order to impress other nations. For the small Canadian navy, this provided an opportunity to show the other nations they were the best at what they did, a spirit which can easily be seen in the Gulf War where Canadians prided themselves on conducting a substantial number of boardings in relation to their size.⁵⁹ NATO allies also assisted with training the Canadian Navy in aspects of warfare that it did not have the expertise or equipment to practice. Nations like France helped with seven hours of Exocet missile attack training; Britain provided their Fleet Readiness Air Defence Unit;⁶⁰ the United States provided all of their lessons learned from their lengthy time spent in the Gulf; and Italy helped by providing a degaussing range for Canadian warships as they entered the Gulf.⁶¹

⁵⁶ Richard Gimblett, "Multinational Naval Operations: The Canadian Navy In The Persian Gulf: 1990-1991, *Canadian Defence Quarterly* Vol 22, no. 1. 25-30. (1992): 31.

⁵⁷ Commodore Jan Drent, interview by author, Victoria BC, March 22, 2011. 56:40.

⁵⁸ Commodore Jan Drent, interview by author, Victoria BC, March 22, 2011. 57:10.

⁵⁹ R. Gimblett and G. Morin, *The Canadian Forces in the Persian Gulf: Operation Friction 1990-1991* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1997), 94.

⁶⁰ E. Miller and S. Hobson, *The Persian Excursion: The Canadian Navy in the Gulf War* (Clemensport: The Canadian Peacekeeping press, 1995), 227.

⁶¹ M. Milner, *Canada's Navy: The First Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 297.

Not all the effects of NATO were positive, however. Some scholars suggest that NATO's concept of operations tied Canadian naval strategy to NATO strategy, limiting Canada's ability to act and outfit independently.⁶² Whether this is wholly true or false is no doubt an issue for debate, but there were certainly downsides to such a heavy involvement by the navy within NATO. Because of the clear Soviet threat and the established ASW focus for the Navy, other functions of the navy were given less attention perhaps understandably. For example, boarding and interdiction operations were not expected to be conducted in a war with the Warsaw Pact and because of this they had not been a focus of NATO training.⁶³ When boarding operations did occur, they were often un-armed.⁶⁴ In addition, since the Soviet surface threat was comparatively low, there was also a diminished ASUW capability within the Canadian Navy, both in equipment and training. Although the arrival of the DDH 280 class, a more general purpose destroyer, was designed in order to fill the AA capability gap, it was still a concern when Operation Friction occurred.⁶⁵ It would take the update of the DDH 280s to finally fill in the area air defence capability gap that had been missing in the Canadian Navy for some time.⁶⁶ Admiral Anderson provides an apt example of the diminishing ASUW capability by explaining that when HMCS BONAVENTURE went through her refit, she lost her air defence capability and became purely an ASW platform.⁶⁷ During the later part of the Cold War, the air defence capability of the Canadian Navy was focused purely on "self defence,"⁶⁸ no doubt in part because of the desire to focus on an ASW commitment to NATO.

⁶² Sokolsky, Joel, "NATO: Taking Canada More Seriously," *Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies Journal*, 127:4 (1982:Dec.), 41.

⁶³ Boarding parties were always used, and often in fisheries patrols but not in the modern sense, Admiral John Anderson, interview by author, Victoria BC, March 15, 2011. 8:52.

⁶⁴ Commodore Jan Drent, interview by author, Victoria BC, March 22, 2011. 11:17. And Rear Admiral Kenneth Summers, interview by author, Victoria BC, April 1, 2011. 13:37.

⁶⁵ Dean McFadden, et al. *Leadmark: Canadian Naval Strategy* (Ottawa: NDHQ Directorate of Maritime Strategy: 2001), 129.

⁶⁶ Admiral John Anderson, interview by author, Victoria BC, March 15, 2011. 14:05.

⁶⁷ Admiral John Anderson, interview by author, Victoria BC, March 15, 2011. 13:14.

⁶⁸ Admiral John Anderson, interview by author, Victoria BC, March 15, 2011. 13:36.

“BREAKING OLD HABITS”: OPERATION FRICTION AS A DEPARTURE FROM COLD WAR THINKING

Having established the strategic culture that was prevalent in the 1980s, the remainder of this paper will be dedicated to demonstrating how Operation Friction departed from conventional Canadian naval operations, which as we have seen were influenced very much by NATO, and moved the Canadian Navy on a path towards the modern role we see it performing today.⁶⁹ The importance of the oral history of the navy in the 1980s is that it explains the setting and background for Operation Friction that was not recorded. When Operation Friction became a reality in the 1990s, the ships selected were optimized for a primarily ASW role,⁷⁰ and knowing why helps us to evaluate Operation Friction in a more complete way. By illustrating how different the strategic culture and NATO orientated thought of the 1980s was from what was required in Operation Friction, we can then see how the “inherent flexibility of maritime force”⁷¹ began to emerge as an important theme. Admittedly, the evolution of our modern navy cannot be attributed to one sole event, but certainly Operation Friction was a major part of this transition away from 40 years of Cold War tradition.⁷² To some degree, this shift from the old ASW ways had already begun. RAdm Summers, for example, remarked that although they “still had the reputation” of ASW experts, they were “more and more switching over” and were “no longer just torpedoes and mortars.”⁷³ This was in large part due to the general purpose capability of the DDH 280 class coming into service.

⁶⁹ In March of 2011, HMCS CHARLOTTETOWN was deployed to Libya to aid in evacuation, maritime interdiction, and to assist in imposing a no fly zone.

⁷⁰ Richard Gimblett, “Multinational Naval Operations: The Canadian Navy In The Persian Gulf: 1990-1991,” *Canadian Defence Quarterly* Vol 22, no. 1. 25-30. (1992): 25.

⁷¹ Admiral John Anderson, interview by author, Victoria BC, March 15, 2011 49:57.

⁷² Admiral John Anderson, interview by author, Victoria BC, March 15, 2011. 1:07:00

⁷³ Rear Admiral Kenneth Summers, interview by author, Victoria BC, April 1, 2011. 15:20.

What the literature on Operation Friction provides to describe the changing nature of the Navy and how it relates to Operation Friction is sparse. General de Chastelain, then CDS, makes mention in the opening portion of the Persian Excursion of how the Canadian Navy had to make rapid changes away from the NATO scenarios in order to prepare for the Gulf, but how influential the 1980s were for the Navy is sparsely mentioned directly elsewhere.⁷⁴ *The Persian Excursion* makes numerous mentions of how innovative a great deal of what occurred was, from new uses for equipment to new boarding and interdiction tactics, but aside from a lessons learned chapter, does not summarise the changes and their effect in any definitive way.⁷⁵ Richard Gimblett dedicates only a short paragraph to describing how and why the Canadian ships were outfitted for anti-submarine warfare in 1990. He summarizes that “for the past forty years the anticipated foe had been the Soviet submarine service, to be faced as a part of a NATO task force in the open waters of the North Atlantic”⁷⁶ and that “the ships were armed and fitted for NATO ASW.”⁷⁷ Interestingly enough, although he notes how the anticipated foe played into the arming of the ships, he does not comment on how the anticipated foe affected the training, operations or tactics of the fleet. This is where oral history can be particularly useful.

It was clear the Canadian Navy while focusing on the alliance had not prepared for or planned to become involved in the Gulf specifically.⁷⁸ Several changes took the Navy away from the 1980s and NATO's CONMAROPS when Operation Friction began. The most apparent change that Operation Friction necessitated was a physical one. The naval task group bound for the Gulf had no need for the anti-

⁷⁴ E. Miller and S. Hobson, *The Persian Excursion: The Canadian Navy in the Gulf War* (Clemensport: The Canadian Peacekeeping press, 1995), vii.

⁷⁵ E. Miller and S. Hobson, *The Persian Excursion: The Canadian Navy in the Gulf War* (Clemensport: The Canadian Peacekeeping press, 1995), 222-228.

⁷⁶ R. Gimblett and G. Morin, *The Canadian Forces in the Persian Gulf: Operation Friction 1990-1991* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1997), 22.

⁷⁷ R. Gimblett and G. Morin, *The Canadian Forces in the Persian Gulf: Operation Friction 1990-1991* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1997), 22.

⁷⁸ E. Miller and S. Hobson, *The Persian Excursion: The Canadian Navy in the Gulf War* (Clemensport: The Canadian Peacekeeping press, 1995), vii.

submarine weapons systems that were already fitted on its ships, since there was no submarine threat in the Gulf. Mortars, anti-submarine rockets and sonar transducers were among the systems that represented NATO material legacy, and these were to be promptly taken off.⁷⁹ What the task group did need was anti-air defences, none of which were currently fitted on Canadian surface vessels. There were anti air defences waiting to be implemented on the Canadian Patrol Frigates, but they were instead diverted and fitted to the task force bound for the gulf.⁸⁰ Among the more notable physical changes of the task group, the Gulf War would be the first time HMC Ships designed for ASW operations would be using the sophisticated Close In Weapons System(CWIS) for air defence, in addition to Harpoon missile systems, the Canadian Electronic Warfare System, the SHIELD system,⁸¹ and numerous other electronic sensors and equipment.⁸²All of these modifications have carried over into the modern day, unlike the mortars and depth charges of the 1980s navy. Modifications to the ships were so comprehensive that TERRA NOVA became the first (and arguably only) ship in the RCN to ever to be designated DDG, a guided missile destroyer.⁸³

Less apparent and less mentioned are the tactical differences and preparations made for the Gulf. Operationally, the Persian Gulf War resulted insignificant jumps towards the modern tactics used by the Navy, and Operation Friction very much reflects the sort of operations we are engaging in at

⁷⁹ E. Miller and S. Hobson, *The Persian Excursion: The Canadian Navy in the Gulf War* (Clemensport: The Canadian Peacekeeping press, 1995), 18.

⁸⁰ E. Miller and S. Hobson, *The Persian Excursion: The Canadian Navy in the Gulf War* (Clemensport: The Canadian Peacekeeping press, 1995), 20.

⁸¹ A summary of modifications made to the ships can be found in R. Gimblett and G. Morin, *The Canadian Forces in the Persian Gulf: Operation Friction 1990-1991* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1997), 268-269.

⁸² E. Miller and S. Hobson, *The Persian Excursion: The Canadian Navy in the Gulf War* (Clemensport: The Canadian Peacekeeping press, 1995), 222.

⁸³ R. Gimblett and G. Morin, *The Canadian Forces in the Persian Gulf: Operation Friction 1990-1991* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1997), 41.

present.⁸⁴ *The Persian Excursion* by Miller and Hobson notes how HMCS ATHABASKAN needed to pay attention to AA warfare more than ever before, when normally it would have “focused on ASW almost to the exclusion of other threats.”⁸⁵ When Admiral Anderson, who was Chief Maritime Doctrine and Operations at the time, was asked about doctrinal preparations for the Gulf he replied, that:

In terms of doctrine for a specific event like this, no there isn't, but the general doctrine of how you deploy a navy will cater to all sorts of requirements, and hence the inherent flexibility you get with a blue water navy.⁸⁶

This lack of established doctrine and guidance for the new tasks was especially true for boarding parties. When RAdm Summers was asked about what guidance was received for the conduct of boarding parties he replied that originally there was “none”.⁸⁷ The use of boarding parties in the Persian Gulf was only the beginning of things to come. While boarding operations were something the navy had always done,⁸⁸ before Operation Friction, naval boarding or landing parties had no dedicated training school⁸⁹ and were more focused on putting people ashore rather than “boarding ships on the high seas.”⁹⁰ One Canadian sailor of the 1980s joked that boarding parties were mostly for “comic relief” and were world away from the teams employed currently.⁹¹ Operation Friction marked a significant increase in the tempo and intensity of their operations and during the passage to the Persian Gulf guidance was sought from the United States Coast Guard, among other agencies, to improve the capabilities of the Canadian

⁸⁴ In March of 2011, HMCS CHARLOTTETOWN was deployed to Libya to aid in evacuation, maritime interdiction, and to assist in imposing a no fly zone.

⁸⁵ E. Miller and S. Hobson, *The Persian Excursion: The Canadian Navy in the Gulf War* (Clemensport: The Canadian Peacekeeping press, 1995), 12.

⁸⁶ Admiral John Anderson, interview by author, Victoria BC, March 15, 2011. 51:20.

⁸⁷ Rear Admiral Kenneth Summers, interview by author, Victoria BC, April 1, 2011. 22:58.

⁸⁸ Admiral John Anderson, interview by author, Victoria BC, March 15, 2011. 29:16.

⁸⁹ Rear Admiral Kenneth Summers, interview by author, Victoria BC, April 1, 2011. 25:56.

⁹⁰ Rear Admiral Kenneth Summers, interview by author, Victoria BC, April 1, 2011. 6:31.

⁹¹ A personal message sent to the author by a former naval officer who is still in the service.

boarding parties.⁹² This played a large part in developing the future tactics of boarding parties, in part from the experiences taken from HMS GLOUCESTER,⁹³ which demonstrated several new tactics for the Canadians, but no doubt also from the experience gained by their frequent use.

In a broader sense, the success of the Canadian Navy in a task that it had not prepared for during the 1980s demonstrated the inherent flexibility of a naval force⁹⁴ and how much more effective capability based structure is over a threat based structure.⁹⁵ In addition to this, Operation Friction taught the Canadian Navy about the importance of joint doctrine, of which there was none at the time.⁹⁶ Several studies emerged after Operation Friction that eventually resulted in a revamping and restructuring of operational commands at NDHQ.⁹⁷ Operation Friction demonstrated that the Canadian Navy was able to provide exactly the sort of solution to government wanted by providing an active but limited participation to demonstrate solidarity with the UN and a credible military presence at arms-length from American control within a limited budget.⁹⁸

⁹² Rear Admiral Kenneth Summers, interview by author, Victoria BC, April 1, 2011. 45:03

⁹³ R. Gimblett and G. Morin, *The Canadian Forces in the Persian Gulf: Operation Friction 1990-1991* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1997), 69. And E. Miller and S. Hobson, *The Persian Excursion: The Canadian Navy in the Gulf War* (Clemensport: The Canadian Peacekeeping press, 1995), 150.

⁹⁴ Commodore Jan Drent, interview by author, Victoria BC, March 22, 2011. 5:05. And Admiral John Anderson, interview by author, Victoria BC, March 15, 2011. 49:57.

⁹⁵ A threat based structure is one which directs defence strategy and weaponry based on who the nation expects to fight and what they have. In the 1980s this threat based structure meant that defence policy was orientated towards fighting the soviets and their assets, most threatening of which was the submarine. A capability based structure is more flexible in that it is directed towards acquiring capabilities that can be used against a wider range of threats. For example, a capability might be "Area Air Defence" rather than "defence against the MIG-22."

Admiral John Anderson, interview by author, Victoria BC, March 15, 2011. 1:06:27.

⁹⁶ Rear Admiral Kenneth Summers, interview by author, Victoria BC, April 1, 2011. 46:32.

⁹⁷ Todd Fitzgerald and Micheal Hennessy, "The NDHQ J-Staff System in the Gulf War," *Canadian Military Journal* Spring (2003): 23-28. And Admiral John Anderson, interview by author, Victoria BC, March 15, 2011. 48:00.

⁹⁸ Richard Gimblett, "The Canadian Way of War: The Legacy of Operation FRICTION and the Gulf War," Paper presented at Symposium 1998 Panel 3, Conference of Defence Associations, 1998.

CONCLUSION

Having described the NATO-directed theme of the Canadian Navy in the 1980s as one which was dominated by anti-submarine warfare, resupply, and convoy work, it can be seen how Operation Friction's focus on anti-surface warfare, interdiction operations and boarding parties represent a significant departure from forty years of Cold War and NATO traditions. When these high level changes are noted, it can be concluded that Operation Friction represented a move away from conventional NATO operations that were a large focus of the Navy in the 1980s and acted as a part of a turning point that moved the Canadian Navy far closer to modern operations, a perspective that cannot be fully understood by reading the existing literature on the subject but instead requires the use of oral history to fully grasp the implications. With only a small volume of literature available, oral history has been particularly essential to painting a picture of Canada's Navy in NATO during the 1980s, and without such oral history it is hard to see the navy as being anything more than "depth charges and mortars."⁹⁹

⁹⁹ Commodore Jan Drent, interview by author, Victoria BC, March 22, 2011. 6:55.

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