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RUSI VI

To promote national defence and security issues through discussion and engagement

Newsletter of the Royal United Services Institute of Vancouver Island

The Royal United Services Institute of Vancouver Island is a member of the Conference of Defence Associations. The CDA is the oldest and most influential advocacy group in Canada's defence community, consisting of associations from all parts of the country.

The CDA expresses its ideas and opinions with a view to influencing government security and defence policy. It is a non-partisan, independent, and non-profit organization.



May 2022

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President's Message

Well, the world has changed drastically since our January Newsletter! The threat of the Pandemic may be in decline, but a new threat has emerged, a major European war- the first since 1945. Diplomatic efforts went nowhere, Putin invading Ukraine on 24 February. Whatever his plan, it didn't go well. Russian ineptitude gave away surprise, attacking during the 'rasputitsa' or the season of mud, believing in faulty intelligence, relying on inadequate logistics, poor command and control and weak leadership to name but a few problems. Throughout this botched operation the Russians took punishing losses in equipment, soldiers, senior officers and even generals. Finally, we have the disastrous sinking of the Black Sea Flagship, the *Moskva*, and the Ukrainian 'Alamo' of Mariupol.

On 19 April, Phase II began with a major Russian offensive in the Donbass. The Russians appear to be addressing some of their problems and are playing to their traditional strengths of firepower and air power by which their superiority is roughly 3-1. Between Ukrainian counter-attacks and the Russian attacks across the Donbass front, there is now a desperate race to determine who can seize the strategic initiative. Events in Ukraine however, are changing rapidly and thus we are refraining from providing articles on the war, as things are moving too fast.

One thing is sure, if this war started with overestimating one contestant and underestimating the other, it would be prudent not to make the same mistake again: now underestimating the Russians and overestimating the Ukrainians. This war will likely reveal more surprises in the weeks and even in the months to come, as both sides have something to prove.

Scott H. Osborne
President
Royal United Services Institute of Vancouver Island

Find below, the weekly synopsis published by our confreres the Security Affairs Committee of RUSI Nova Scotia. While I resist publishing opinion pieces, this was particularly on the mark for our turbulent times. I hope it acts as grist for your mental mill.

Craig Cotter LCol (retd)
RUSI VI Newsletter Editor

RUSI NS - Security Affairs Committee Synopsis

O Canada

Canada's national interests. One of the biggest issues is that Canada has never set out what our national interests are. We continue to stumble around and are often unpleasantly surprised by factors that with thought and understanding and just perhaps planning, would help us avoid problems that unfortunately occur. What do we mean when we discuss national interests? These are issues or statements that directly effect the well being and potentially survival of our nation, they are therefore such interests that help define us and sets out conditions where would have to take action in some form to survive. For example, one might offer the following: the survival of the citizenry of the country is essential, prevention of major internal disorder, conditions by which the country would react with potential military or other action to prevent, what are key industries that must be maintained and protected, the sovereignty of our landmass and internal waterways both legally and physically. This type of thought into what is essential to the survival of our country should be the guide, but this understanding of national interest is essential before one develops any policy. From these points one can develop a growth policy in a defined way, security policy which falls out of national interests, foreign policy and of course, defence policy amongst others.

The latest budget and the eight billion dollars, now we are only 4.5 B in the hole! After listening to various opinions on the requirement for new defence spending, one might think the world is sunshine and roses to certain elements of society. Authoritarianism is on the rise around the world, and we now have a major war in Europe once again for the first time since 1945. Canada unfortunately has left the lid off the continent and has put our own country and our ally to the South in peril because we consistently fail to keep up our military agreements. Like our fighters, the North Warning System is ancient by military technology terms. It is typical of Canadian inaction and denial. The cost of delaying its modernization and now an imperative need will raise the costs. The changing nature of weapons systems means that Canada should encompass the idea of ballistic missile defence at least to identify the attacking system whether the attacking system is air breathing, hypersonic or ballistic

The increased defence spending is more than a little murky. While I am happy that there is at least recognition of defence issues. It is unclear what it is for and how it will be used. Defence needs to be overhauled completely because successive Governments have failed to pay their dues or even maintain vital capabilities. Key capabilities were sacrificed for budget cutting. Successive Governments at least allowed the service to cut its own throat when budget issues occurred. One can clearly see this in the misbegotten battle group in Latvia. First it is less than a battalion in size, it is missing all sorts of pieces such as anti-armour, mortars, tanks and air defence and I suspect communications, maintenance and

logistics issues. It is a pathetic effort from one of the richest countries in the world. The battle group should look very similar to what we put into Afghanistan. We only sent one, but it was the meanest organization there, but it was still missing pieces. If there are to be expenditures, may we suggest that an immediate operational requirement (IOR) be made for at least anti-armour weapons and perhaps very low-level air defence weapons systems? Most Canadian efforts were lacking especially in the Cold War when tank trainers were sent to Norway as part of the Allied Command Europe Land (AMF (L)) contingent. Fortunately, we had TOW launchers and other weapons such as Carl Gustav and M 72 anti-tank rocket launchers: no air defence though and we had about a week to deploy. No run up training as we trained for the task constantly and we were mainly fully manned, about 1200 personnel. If we have money to spend, lets increase our units to full strength so that we no longer rob one battalion to fill another and that the battalions make sense thus allowing Commanders to pick the right type of unit for a specific task and to give it all the resources it needs from units designated to provide it.

China

Sanctions are something that Communist Chinese Party (CCP) are very wary of in the current situation in Europe. The CCP has a public opinion that pretends to be neutral, but essentially blames the West for the unfortunate attack on the Ukraine, although it is calling for parties to respect borders and the internal affairs of each country. The Chinese language press however is anything but neutral thus giving citizens of China the Russian version of events leading to Russia's attack on Ukraine. A group of Chinese speaking Westerners are fortunately reading and translating the Chinese language version and are calling out the CCP's two faced approach. Needless to say, the official outlets such as the Peoples' Daily have been vigorous in their denials but also have attacked the people translating their own material and ensuring everyone knows that the CCP has been dishonest.

One thing that is of note is that the CCP has kept Chinese entities and organizations from acquiring Russian oil and gas thus taking advantage of Western sanctions against the Russian economy and the loss of sales. The CCP has watched with concern about the very united Western effort to impose major sanctions on Putin's regime. Currently, China has actually followed most of the Western sanctions as failure to follow them closely would result in a major round of possible sanctions on the CCP regime. A united and long-term sanctions effort would have grave consequences for the Chinese economy thus slowing growth even more.

The property management industry is continuing its meltdown in China. It will require an extensive bail out package to survive. It is expected that not every company will survive even if there is a bail out. Property is one of the key avenues for middle income families to protect their wealth and until recently, actually increased their wealth. The meltdown of the property management sector is not just an unfortunate event where companies cease to exist; it also means that thousands if not millions of Chinese middle-class citizens could lose their entire savings and investments. China announced this week that they would inject 2.3 T USD equivalents as a stimulus for the economy. In past this has meant more property development in order to keep the facade of growth. It is suggested by some Asian and beyond to be a short-term solution and does not address the very real problem that the whole system is built on everyone stating that there is growth and success even when there is none. The CCP does not take bad news well and usually some scape goat goes to jail. The CCP has built the country on a significant amount of debt, as we have seen in Canada, each level of Government also creates their own debt (OK, cities have to balance books). China has done so in an absolutely massive way and

using some interesting accounting procedures more akin to a Ponzi scheme.

China has also never controlled the pandemic. At the time of writing, 67% of the population is now in some form of lockdown. This also means supply chains are affected by the CCP's ham-fisted Zero Covid solution which has likely killed more heart disease and diabetes patients rather than save COVID sufferers. The combination of the almost mindless adherence to a failed strategy on COVID, existing sanctions, financial mismanagement, supply chain issues and the possibility of antagonizing major customers in Europe and the Americas with their pro-Russian stance with the potential to incur a new round of major sanctions, should cause most investors to leave the country.

Russia

This is the first war fought in front of the world in real time. Much of the video is in small snippets of film, usually with limited context as to the actual event. Some new businesses are making money sorting out what is likely true versus absolute fiction from each side. Both are guilty of using social media to their own advantage. This being said, Ukraine has been vastly more open and transparent, allowing foreign journalists a wide latitude to investigate various allegations and stories within their control. Russia has virtually shut down any real media. The message from the Kremlin is strictly controlled through a captive media. Any story that is written or shown must be carefully examined for its source and the reliability of that source. One must also understand that even the most well-meaning organization can sometimes get things wrong. All that to say, look at your information flow always with a bit of scepticism.

By the time one may read this note, the city of Mariupol may have fallen. Late Wednesday afternoon apparently up to 1 k Ukrainian Marines laid down their arms and surrendered to Russian forces. Ukrainian forces were pushed back into a small industrial area of the city. They had fought for 47 days without let up and with few if any reinforcements or resupply. If true, it was a worthy stand, showing skill and fortitude against overwhelming odds and for the most part holding off defeat for an exponentially longer time than expected. Time will tell if Russia actually has something to celebrate or whether it is just another step in a protracted war. One big issue is the alleged use of chemical weapons use by Russia in Mariupol Tuesday. There is also the alleged use of white phosphorus as well during shelling. The issue of any use of chemical weapons is considered a major escalation of this conflict. One must be aware that chemical weapons is considered just another "arrow" in the Russian quiver, the West has another opinion. More to follow on this issue.

Currently, Russian forces have withdrawn from the region of Kyiv and Chernihiv, essentially most of the areas occupied by Russia in the North are now gone. There is debate whether some Russian forces remain in Belarus which may be used to "threaten" the Kyiv area thus preventing the use of Ukrainian forces from reinforcing efforts in the South and East. Most Russian forces appear to have moved into Russia and are now proceeding into the area around the Donbass. The common thought of the talking heads is that this will create conditions for a major Russian offensive in the area of the Donbass which would see the whole oblast of both the Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts fall into Russian hands and that Mariupol all the way to the Crimea would be in Russian hands. There is some debate whether these forces would be able to attack and take Odesa. Time is a problem for both sides at the moment, one Russia's mobilization is not going well, casualties have been high possibly as high as 60 K killed wounded and captured. Aircraft and armour losses are almost impossible to replace in the short term.

The effect of sanctions on Russian industries is rapidly degrading the ability of Russia to maintain a technologically based armed forces in the medium term. Right now, as weapons are destroyed, there are no new ones coming off assembly lines as they are missing vital Western made parts and China is extremely reluctant to provide replacements due to the potential damage from further Western sanctions that could also be imposed on them.

Ukraine needs time to gain access and do some familiarization training on new equipment including tanks, self-propelled guns, armour personnel carriers and aircraft to prepare for a Ukrainian counter moves action to thwart Russian attacks in the east. Ukrainian troops have far exceeded expectations in the use of infantry and artillery supported by logistics efforts to succeed in the north and blunt actions in the East and South. This next part of the battle will be one of mobility requiring tanks and greater support according to some analysts. One point to be made here is that when Ukrainian troops are out of their vehicles they use the ground and are aggressive in the use of their anti-armour and air defence systems. Russian troops seem to lack that get up and go needed for success in an infantry battle. Ukrainian efforts seem well coordinated and seem to use all available systems at once to achieve dominance of the battlefield, something totally missing from Russian efforts to date.

Russia has appointed a single commander for this next offensive, Colonel General Dvornikov a veteran of the Chechnya, and Syria. He was apparently noted for his brutal actions that seem to use brute strength rather than an all arms approach to minimize casualties. He was successful in both operations. Will he do the same here, it seems likely.

This war is barely started, and it seems likely to last longer than expected by pundits. It is increasingly clear, there is only one way this will end with the absolute defeat of either Ukraine or the fall of the Putin regime, otherwise it can and will continue as long as it takes until one side or the other stops. There is so much more this week that could be discussed including refugees, the fallout from the Solomon Islands agreement with China, the possibility of Sweden and Finland joining NATO and Ukraine being able to join the European Union and the brutal conflicts affecting Africa and India's ongoing conflict with China over the Ladakh not to mention Pakistan's new Government. So many disasters so little time to define them with research.

There is so much more this week that could be discussed including refugees, the fallout from the Solomon Islands agreement with China, the possibility of Sweden and Finland joining NATO, Ukraine being able to join the European Union, the brutal conflicts affecting Africa and India's ongoing conflict with China over the Ladakh - not to mention Pakistan's new Government. So many disasters so little time to define them with research.

Ukraine war highlights the Canadian military's urgent need for a lifeline

The Conversation <https://theconversation.com/ca>
Published: April 12, 2022, 9.36am EDT

The Liberals have ignored the historic opportunity the war in Ukraine is presenting Canadian Defence Minister Anita Anand to revitalize Canada's military.

The \$8 billion in additional funding announced for defence as part of the 2022 federal budget doesn't come close to resolving the military's funding crisis, let alone meet NATO's two per cent funding minimum.

Beefing up the Canadian Armed Forces has supposedly been a government priority since Paul Martin's government in the early 2000s. After a decade of Conservative under-spending, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's Liberal government promised \$164 billion over 20 years to finance the Armed Forces' nearly 350 various projects.

Parliamentary Budget Officer Yves Giroux, however, recently estimated that more money is needed annually to meet this capital expenditure target above the \$24.3 billion currently being spent each year.

Given the war in eastern Europe, defence and security are taking on a new urgency.

The Canadian Surface Combatant project, meant to replace Canada's aging Halifax-class frigates, is expected to cost \$77.3 billion for 15 ships, according to the latest Parliamentary Budget Office report.

Subs need replacements

The joint support ships needed to sustain those warships are expected to cost another \$4.1 billion, and the aging Victoria-class submarines will also need to be replaced. There's also the cost of the Royal Canadian Air Force's F-35 fighters, estimated at between \$15 billion and \$20 billion for 88 jets.

The Army, with generally lower-cost capital expenses, has forces deployed in support of NATO in the Baltics and has been training Ukrainian armed forces. But its stockpiles of weapons and equipment have been depleted by transfers to the Ukrainian army.

Furthermore, the services are reportedly undermanned by nearly 7,500 service members.

While consistently under-funding the military, the Liberals have been fixated on internal issues such as the crackdown on sexual misconduct in the Armed Forces, increasing the recruitment of women and cosmetic changes such as introducing a new dress code.

Time is of the essence

Even Anand, the former procurement minister, has stated in the wake of the Russian invasion that the Canadian government must move quickly to build up the military. That includes increasing funding, modernizing Canada's contribution to the NORAD aerospace defence network and increasing the commitment to NATO collective defence.

The recent Liberal-NDP coalition agreement supposedly included plans for "aggressive options" to improve defence spending, but the \$8 billion promised by the Liberals was underwhelming in this regard.

The Conservatives aren't likely to make any difference. Stephen Harper's Conservatives, in power from 2006 to 2015, prioritized national sovereignty as a defence goal, but this was at the expense of delivering on Canada's collective defence commitments.

Fears of 'militarist' mentality

The Navy, for its part, has emphasized these commitments, as has the Air Force. Concerns about "fifth-generation" aircraft, capable of fulfilling both NATO and NORAD requirements, however, clash with current public perceptions that procuring new fighters represents a militarist mentality.

Canada, however, cannot meet its international commitments, including humanitarian and peacekeeping missions, without new equipment.

Why have Canadian governments so significantly disregarded defence spending for so long? The blame must be shared between the proponents of the national sovereignty focus and the industrial benefits system built into Canada's procurement process. The policy requires companies awarded defence procurement contracts to undertake business activities in Canada equal to the value of the contract.

The F-35s, for example, on which \$613 million has been directly spent since 1997, have generated more than \$2 billion in various contracts for Canadian firms despite the fact that no fighters have yet been delivered.

Furthermore, Canada has already sunk \$2 billion into the enormous Canadian Surface Combatant project, again, without delivering a single warship. And so far, the Royal Canadian Navy has received only two of the eight Arctic and Offshore Patrol Ships it ordered, with two others intended for the Coast Guard — now reported to cost \$1.5 billion for two ships, inexplicably double the cost of the Navy's own patrol ships.



The centre block of the future HMCS Max Bernays is moved from the fabrication building to dockside at the Irving Shipbuilding facility in Halifax in January 2021. The vessel is Canada's third Arctic Offshore and Patrol Ship being built for the Royal Canadian Navy. THE CANADIAN PRESS/Andrew Vaughan

Billions in 'industrial benefits'

Industrial benefits stemming from the patrol ships program are expected to reach \$3.1 billion. Additionally, the Coast Guard's new heavy icebreakers are expected to cost \$7.25 billion for two ships, whereas the original cost was \$1.3 billion for one ship.

The alternative to this incessant defence overspending and under-delivering is buying platforms "off the shelf" and modifying them for Canadian use.

The Canadian government hasn't always rejected this approach. The MV Asterix supply ship is a notable example: the German-built container ship was converted on schedule at the Davie shipyard in Québec between 2015 and 2017 and has since operated on budget.

Modified off-the-shelf purchases have also been used by the Air Force, as was the case with the C-17 and C-130J transport aircraft.

Deal rejected

Interestingly, in 2017, the Fincentari-Naval Group, an Italian-French consortium, offered to build 15 frigates based on its export-oriented warship design for no more than \$30 billion to fulfil the Canadian Surface Combatant program's requirements. Three of the ships were to be built in Europe.

The deal was rejected by the Liberals on the grounds that it was outside the parameters of the bidding process, meaning it wouldn't meet the industrial benefits requirements.

Given the urgent need to rejuvenate Canada's role as an international partner in the collective security system in the aftermath of the Ukraine war, continuing to dream of Canadian defence self-sufficiency through industrial benefits is a fantasy. That's clearly demonstrated by the inability of both Liberal and Conservative governments to appropriately fund defence and revitalize Canada's crumbling military.

Three Ways to Improve Defence Procurement in Canada



Apr 6, 2022 - CDA Institute The Forum [cdainstitute](https://cdainstitute.ca)

Richard B. Fadden, O.C. former National Security Advisor to the Prime Minister and Deputy Minister of National Defence

LGen (ret) Guy Thibault, former Vice Chief of the Defence Staff

In National Defence, getting the money is the easiest part...

Given the deterioration of the international security situation, the Prime Minister has said he is open to additional defence spending. Assuming Mr. Trudeau meant what he said, getting additional defence resources approved through Cabinet and Parliament is fairly straightforward. The first real challenge is determining on what the money is to be spent. Then comes the seemingly impossible task of getting spending decisions effectively implemented as quickly as possible.

Mr. Trudeau is the last in a relatively long line of Prime Ministers who have pauperized Canada's defence establishment. Whether they regret or are content with their decisions, is not important except that it explains why virtually every part of Canada's defence establishment needs new resources. In seeking to revitalize the operational capabilities of the Canadian Forces, it is important to appreciate that this will not happen if new resources are exclusively directed to the CAF. The Department of National Defence (the civilian part of the Defence portfolio) and Public Services and Procurement in particular will need additional resources.

New resources for the Canadian Forces can be spent in four ways. The first category is major capital procurement – the fighter aircraft replacement and Canadian Surface Combatant programs are examples. The second category is minor capital procurement- sidearms or armour vests are examples. The third category covers personnel costs – both those relating to current personnel as well costs relating to increasing the head-count of the Forces. The fourth category includes funding for infrastructure – everything from runways to jetties to personnel housing.

The last category might be called operational costs which come in two parts: those relating to training and those relating to actual operations in Canada and abroad. If the Government is serious about increasing the capabilities of the Forces, all five categories will need an injection of money and on-going attention by both Ministers and the public service. The challenge we'd like to focus in on below is the procurement process itself.

Defence procurement is under constant criticism for being overly slow and expensive. There are three main reasons for these shortcomings. The first is the insistence of successive governments that defence procurement support policy objectives other than procuring equipment for the Forces. Objectives such as regional and industrial development, support to innovation and others are all laudable but applying them automatically to major projects means that the procurement of defence equipment takes second place. The second reason is the extreme risk aversion of both Ministers and public servants to anything going wrong such that an already heavy process is over layered with checks and balances and delays for additional study. Whether these precautions are to help avoid questions in the House, stories in the media or visits to the Federal Court or the International Trade Tribunal they mean delays and cost increases.

The third reason is the view of Governments — admittedly broadly supported by public opinion — that national security and defence are not as important as any number of other policy areas. This means that defence spending gets a low priority, frequent cutbacks and poor priority setting. In any event, the shortcomings of the procurement process can be shared between politicians, public servants and CF personnel.

A number of possible measures to improve the procurement process are set out below but even the best procurement system on the planet would not change the fact that defence is an expensive business. Currently, for Canada, defence will be especially expensive as we will be — or should be — playing catch-up with most of our allies.

The first aid to an improved defence procurement system is sustained prime ministerial and ministerial attention based on their belief that the national security of Canada and of its allies requires it. This will happen most easily if Canadians generally share that view but whether this is the case or not, it is the responsibility of governments to lead and to do what it is necessary to provide it. Surely, the current international environment requires nothing less.

If the above is forthcoming, the second aid will develop relatively easily. This would be an acceptance that greater risks are to be taken to advance specific procurement projects, including that public servants be encouraged to recommend — where appropriate — that specific procurement projects be exempt from some or all the rules which govern them. This should specifically include the possibility of subordinating other policy objectives to the delivery of required equipment. The third aid is the acceptance by all — including the Forces — that while perfection is always desirable when developing capability requirements, sometime getting something promptly is the desirable course.

The final aid is utilizing at least some new defence resources on existing projects. For example, topping up the CSC budget to ensure that the full number of — fully capable — projected ships be delivered. Another example relates to the need to increase our defence presence in the Arctic and could mean upgrading the Nanisivik Naval Facility to at least what was initially intended — a year-round capability including one or more runways to accommodate both Canadian and NATO aircraft. The same sort of upgrade could be applied to the Canadian Army's Arctic Training Center. Finally, to improve communications and surveillance in the Arctic, build on existing commitments to support the on-going development of a low earth orbit constellation which could support both military and civilian needs.

There seems to be agreement in Canada and throughout NATO that we are all facing a very dangerous international environment. If this is the case, Canada will need to up its game on national security and defence. This will mean, as a former Deputy Prime Minister once said, our not going to the washroom when the bill is being circulated! But, it's not only money, it's ongoing attention by the Prime Minister and appropriate Ministers. And given Canada's history in this area, the key is "on-going" attention. As Minister Anand has noted, Canada can get things done when its important – vaccine acquisition and distribution being the latest examples



Canadian Defence Institute Statement on The Federal Budget and National Defence

Apr 13, 2022

Last week, in her address on the 2022 Federal budget, Canada’s Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, the Hon. Chrystia Freeland stated that we now live in a world that is “utterly transformed” by Russia’s reckless and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine. The growing assertiveness and aggressive arms programs of Russia and China, including the recent deployment of hypersonic weapons, have indeed fundamentally shifted the international security landscape.

Quick action is necessary to address the serious nature of this aggression on European soil, but more broadly to prepare Canada for what NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg described as a the “new normal” during our recent Ottawa Conference on Security and Defence as assertiveness turns to aggression and international law and norms are ignored by revisionist states.

With this in mind, we applaud the government’s intent to promptly update our current defence policy, Strong, Secure, and Engaged (2017) in order to account for this new strategic environment. At the same time, however, we wish to highlight that, without the necessary resources and reforms to defence procurement to confront the enhanced security risks of our time, this policy revision is unlikely to meet its goals, leaving Canada dangerously exposed and underprepared.

We support the initiatives related to Canada’s defence and security that were mentioned in last week’s Federal Budget. In addition to the defence policy review, this includes initial investment toward strengthening continental defence through NORAD modernization and the long-overdue replacement of the CF-18 fleet. While acknowledging that these are important steps in the right direction, we remain seriously concerned about the adequacy of Canada’s defence preparedness.

In our view, the announced increase in defence expenditures is woefully insufficient to fill critical capability gaps and capacity shortfalls in our nation’s defences especially given the threats we, our allies and like-minded nations face. This underfunding is made even more evident when considering the increased recourse to the Canadian Forces to assist civil authorities in disaster

relief and in response to non-traditional security threats, such as climate change and pandemics. We have seen the quiet professionalism of the Canadian Forces at home and abroad, and our soldiers, sailors, and aviators deserve to be given the tools to succeed in the critical missions they are assigned by the government.

On this basis, CDA would like to highlight the following points:

- While welcoming the Government's decision to undertake a new review of defence policy to update Strong, Secure, and Engaged (2017), the CDA emphasizes that defence policy must be closely linked to a country's foreign policy objectives. It seems incongruous that a second review of defence policy is to be commenced, when Canada's foreign policy has not been seriously reviewed since the Martin administration in 2005;
- A further review of defence policy would certainly have utility insofar as it brings with it new resources to address the additional challenges that such review is certain to identify, beyond the money provided in SSE or the recent budget.
- The budget did not announce any measures to increase the capacity of the Department of National Defence or Public Services and Procurement Canada to deliver critical capabilities in a more timely and effective manner. An improved defence procurement system that accelerates decision-making and delivery of equipment will be key.

Improving the defence procurement system will require sustained prime ministerial and ministerial attention based on their belief that the national security of Canada requires it. This would happen most easily if Canadians generally shared that view but whether this is the case or not, it is the fundamental responsibility of the Prime Minister and the Minister of National Defence to lead and to do whatever is necessary to ensure that the nation has the capabilities to defend its sovereignty. Surely, the current international environment requires nothing less.

The government must also be willing to accept greater risks in addressing critical capability gaps, including that public servants be encouraged to recommend — where appropriate — that specific procurement projects be exempt from some or all the normal rules which govern them. This should specifically include the possibility of subordinating other policy objectives to the delivery of required equipment. This is a time where speed of delivery must be an overriding consideration.

The view that national security and defence spending are not as important as other government priorities has resulted in a chronic underfunding in Canada's defence and security sectors, which continues to leave our country exposed and underprepared. There have rarely been clearer moments in history where the need to invest and transform our armed forces along with other critical national security capabilities has been more explicitly demonstrated than with the contemptuous actions of a great power aggressor nation against a sovereign democracy.

Strait of Magellan Major Concern for U.S. Southern Command

By: **John Grady**

March 24, 2022 United States Naval Institute News



Army Gen. Laura Richardson, gives the keynote address during the Metropolitan State University of Denver on Dec. 17, 2022. US Southern Command Photo

Restrictions to the passage of traffic through the Panama Canal and the Strait of Magellan as China moves aggressively to expand its footprint across Central and South America are the top concerns of the current U.S. Southern Command head told a Senate panel.

“[Those] very strategic lines of communication that must be kept open,” said Army Gen. Laura Richardson in a Thursday hearing before the Senate Armed Services Committee.

In Panama, PRC-based companies are engaged in or bidding for several projects related to the Panama Canal, a global strategic chokepoint, including port operations on both ends of the canal, water management, and a logistics park,” according to Richardson’s written testimony.

“We have a lot of ground to make up” with the government of Panama in investing in projects important to [Panama] as Beijing has done, she added. Richardson cited a Corps of Engineers major water project as a step in the right direction.

Likewise, the Chinese have invested heavily in a space-research project in Argentina that would allow Beijing to track U.S. satellites and also won the rights to build facilities near the Magellan Strait that would also give China access to Antarctica.

Richardson told the panel the Beijing's investments in Central and South American infrastructure, particularly ports, follow the pattern it developed in Africa. Right now, the "Chinese have 29 port projects" across the command, including a major one in El Salvador that has economic implications for other Central American nations.

Ports have civilian and military value.

To date, the Chinese have not participated in large-scale military exercises in the region, although they have sold anti-ship missiles to Venezuela in the last two years. Iran is also reported to have sold similar systems to Caracas.

In contrast, the United States participates regularly in major maritime exercises like UNITAS and Tradewinds for disaster response in the Caribbean and PANAMAX for defense of the canal with more than 20 nations.

The U.S. also encourages officers at the lieutenant colonel level in Central and South American nations to attend professional military education programs in the United States, Richardson said.

COVID-19's impact on the nations in Southern Command provided an opening that Chinese and Russians have exploited to increase their presence by for example quickly exporting Russian and Chinese vaccines to the region.

In addition, Richardson, five months on the job, said the pandemic wreaked havoc in Central and South America. More deaths were recorded in the region per capita than in others globally.

The pandemic shattered economies and left governments strapped to provide necessary services. Her predecessor, Adm. Craig Faller, described the pandemic as "the perfect storm" the Chinese used to gain leverage in Central and South America. Richardson added that it also opened new avenues for transnational criminal organizations to expand their activities.

Across the region, "security forces are increasingly focused on the very near-term need for items such as vaccines, fuel, food, and personal protective equipment at the expense of security operations," she wrote in prepared remarks.

To meet development needs in the wake of COVID-19, "21 nations have signed up" for China's Belt and Road infrastructure projects, Richardson told the panel. What these nations are discovering, as was the case in Africa, the work "is not done to standard" and the Chinese bring in their own labor force rather than hiring locally.

But the 31 nations and 16 dependencies in Southern Command are critically important to Beijing now and in the future, she said. The AOR provides China with 36 percent of its food source.

This takes on even greater importance as the war in Ukraine threatens global supplies of wheat and other grains, as well as fertilizers.

In addition, “resources [like lithium used in areas as different as medicine and aircraft parts] are off the chart” for future growth in high-technology enterprises. Other resources, Richardson mentioned of value to the Chinese are “fresh water,” the Amazon itself for possible development and oil from Venezuela and Guyana.

The growing Chinese presence and continued Russian influence with Cuba and Venezuela are not the only challenges the command faces. Richardson, like other Southern Command top officers have testified in the past, said it also remains a secondary regional command in priorities.

“I get only a little bit less than 1 percent of the global ISR [intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance],” Richardson said.

ISR is also used in the counter-narcotics and monitoring of transnational criminal organizations that remain command priorities. Richardson said the command remains a test-bed in using artificial intelligence and machine learning to overcome funding shortfalls in ISR and cyber.

Richardson said the command relies “on non-traditional ISR” to close gaps and seams in monitoring the region, including using unclassified data from open sources. In her written testimony, she listed demonstration projects like “innovative use of high-altitude balloons, stratosphere platforms, hydrogen fuel cells, and solar-powered technology.” She added the joint demonstration projects, shared with INDO-PACOM are used in her command “to tip and cue” missions and operations.

EU tells China ‘Not to Interfere’ with Russia sanctions



EU leaders said on Friday (1 April) they had told their Chinese counterparts during a virtual summit that they expect Beijing to help end Russia’s war in Ukraine or, at the very least, ‘not to interfere’ with international sanctions imposed on Moscow.

“We expect China, if not supporting the sanctions [against Russia], at least to do everything not to interfere in any kind,” European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen told reporters after Friday’s meeting.

“On that point, we were very clear,” she said, adding that the EU expected China to use its influence on Russia to end the war in Ukraine.

European Council President Charles Michel stressed that “any attempts to circumvent sanctions or provide aid to Russia would prolong the war. This would lead to more loss of life and greater economic impact”.

“We will also remain vigilant on any attempts to aid Russia financially or militarily. However, positive steps by China to help end the war would be welcomed by all Europeans and by the global community,” Michel added.

“We asked China to help end the war in Ukraine,” he said. “China cannot ignore Russia’s violation of international law.”

The comments came after a two-hour conversation with China’s Premier Li Keqiang and a video call of less than one hour with President Xi Jinping.

EU urges China to push for peace

Beijing has so far abstained from United Nations Security Council resolutions on the invasion and has sided with Russia rhetorically, echoing many of Moscow’s talking points.

Over the past weeks, Chinese officials and state media have blamed NATO for the war in Ukraine, with Foreign Minister Wang Yi describing the country's friendship with Russia as 'rock-solid'.

According to experts, Beijing fears that the Ukraine war will bring Europeans and Americans even closer together.

One of the most often cited explanations for why China is still siding with Russia despite the atrocities in the Ukraine war is the hope of being able to continue to join forces with its "strategic partner" in the future against the US.

Meanwhile, European leaders last week received what senior EU officials called "very reliable evidence" that Beijing is considering arms sales to Russia.

Speaking to the press, von der Leyen said China had offered no assurances to Brussels about its position on Russia's war.

"Frank and open means that we exchanged very clearly opposing views," von der Leyen said.

"China has an influence on Russia and therefore, we expect China to take its responsibility to end this war" and influence Moscow to seek a peaceful solution, she said.

If this would not be the case, von der Leyen warned that Beijing would suffer "major reputational damage" to the European public and its business environment if it sided with Moscow over Ukraine or refrained from taking a clearer stance.

"Equidistance is not enough," she added.

China's 'own way'

According to a readout provided by China's official Xinhua News Agency, Xi stressed the need for Beijing and Brussels to "play a constructive role in adding stabilising factors to a turbulent world".

He also urged the EU to "form its own perception of China, adopt an independent China policy, and work with China for the steady and sustained growth of China-EU relations."

China has been concerned that European countries are taking more hardline foreign policy cues from the United States and has previously called on the EU to "exclude external interference" from its relations with China.

According to Chinese state broadcaster *CCTV*, Premier Li told EU leaders in a two-hour session on Friday that Beijing would push for peace in "its own way" in Ukraine after Brussels pressed for assurances that China would not supply Russia with arms or help it circumvent Western sanctions.

Despite its political backing for Russia, China wants to work towards peace in Ukraine with the Europeans and the international community, Li told the EU leaders.

China has always sought peace and promoted negotiations and is willing to continue to play a constructive role together with the international community, he said, according to a Chinese readout of the summit.

Systemic rivalry

“The EU leadership has made its positions and expectations with regard to China’s approach to the war in Ukraine and China’s discriminatory practices vis-à-vis Lithuania very clear. But they also seem to not have received any significant response or assurances from Beijing,” Janka Oertel, European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR) Director of our Asia Programme, commented after the meeting.

“The fact that Xi Jinping’s comments on the summit were published in Chinese state media already half-way through the summit underscores that there was a limited willingness to engage in an actual conversation,” she said.

Before the summit, EU officials had stressed the meeting would be far from being “business as usual” and more of a frank exchange of opposing views, especially over Ukraine.

“Systemic rivalry is a new reality,” Oertel said.

What a Chinese military base in Solomon Islands will mean for Australia

By Richard Wood • Senior Journalist - Channel 9 News Sydney AU

11:23am Apr 1, 2022

Australia is facing a major defence shake-up if China manages to base warships in the Solomon Islands.

Security experts and Australian Defence Force senior commanders flagged an overhaul in military operations after the Solomon Islands initialled a security agreement with China.

The deal opens the way for the superpower to base military forces on the Pacific nation less than 2000 kilometres from Australia's coastline.



Chinese naval forces are set to be based on the Solomon Islands, less than 2000 kilometres from the Australian coast, under a new security deal. (China Ministry of Defence) Chinese naval forces are set to be based on the Solomon Islands, less than 2000 kilometres from the Australian coast, under a new security deal. (China Ministry of Defence)

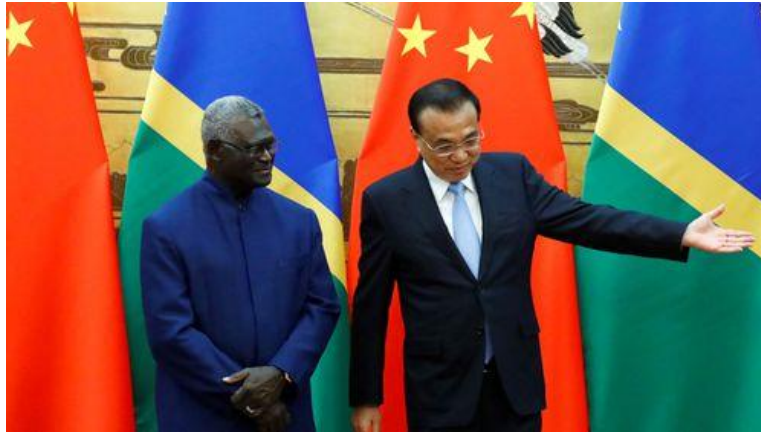
Defence analyst Malcolm Davis said if Chinese naval forces are based in the Solomon Islands, Australia will have to respond with a "fundamental change" in its military operations.

It would involve switching the focus from the traditional "sea-air gap" to the north and north-west of Australia, Dr Davis, of the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, said.

"We now have to think more about defending the east coast ... there will likely be more focus on better surveillance by naval, space and air assets to monitor Chinese activities," he said.

From an advance military base in the Solomon Islands capital Honiara, China would be better able to exert influence on other Pacific Island states.

Dr Davis said after the May federal election, the incoming government should review military capabilities on the eastern seaboard to keep pace with the changing security environment.



Solomon Islands Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare, left, and Chinese Premier Li Keqiang. The Pacific nations is forging closer security ties with China. (AP)

And a top ADF commander said an increased Chinese presence in the Pacific would mean an overhaul of day-to-day operations.

Lieutenant-General Greg Bilton, ADF Chief of Joint Operations, was speaking during a visit to the Australian Signals Directorate in Canberra yesterday.

"It does change the calculus if Chinese navy vessels are operating from the Solomon Islands," General Bilton said.

He said if Chinese forces are based there, ADF operations would have to adapt to new security challenges.

"They're in much closer proximity to the Australian mainland, obviously, and that would change the way that we would undertake day-to-day operations particularly in the air and at sea.

"We would change our patrolling patterns and our maritime awareness activities."

Diplomatic snub for Australia

After details of the deal were finalised by officials yesterday, Solomon Islands Foreign Minister Jeremiah Manele and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi will now formally sign the agreement.

Signing the deal will be a rejection of pressure by the Australian and New Zealand governments who opposed it.

The Solomon Islands government said in a statement that officials have "initialled elements of a bilateral security cooperation framework" with Beijing.

It added the Pacific nation would continue to work with all partners including Australia "in providing a safe and secure nation where all people are able to co-exist peacefully".

Under the draft agreement, leaked last week on social media, Chinese naval ships and other military forces will be permitted to be based in the Solomon Islands to protect Chinese projects and citizens there.

The Pacific nation's closer relations with China come after rioting erupted in the capital Honiara last November.

Australia and other neighbouring countries sent police and military personnel there to restore order.