

## MODERN NAVAL DIPLOMACY - A PRACTITIONER'S VIEW

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**HMC Ships CALGARY, PROTECTEUR and IROQUOIS (top to bottom)**

On 29 February 2008, the Minister of National Defence, the Hon. Peter MacKay, announced that Canada would lead Combined Task Force 150 (CTF 150), a naval coalition force operating in the Middle East. The Canadian contribution of three Canadian warships, HMC Ships *Iroquois*, *Calgary* and *Protecteur*, with embarked Flag-Officer level command staff, and supporting elements, collectively known as Task Force Arabian Sea, proceeded to the waters surrounding the Arabian Peninsula and the coasts of Pakistan and Somalia. The designated Task Force Commander, I had the honour to lead this fourth rotation of Operation Altair, Canada's ongoing maritime commitment to Operation Enduring Freedom.

What made this operation unique was that Canada would lead CTF 150 for the first time, and this would only be the third time that Canada would lead a significant maritime coalition effort.<sup>1</sup> Also, this would be the first deliberate deployment of a naval task group; all previous task group deployments had been responsive or reactive to an emergent crisis

Navies, by their nature and capability, offer more than strictly defence. Much of Canadian thinking in terms of international relations has focused on the 3D approach; defence, diplomacy and development as three pillars of a whole of government approach to regional and international challenges. Through visits and presence, simply flying the Canadian flag around the world, Canada's navy can contribute in all three of the 3Ds and moreover, can represent values, interests, industrial capacity, ingenuity – virtually a host of characteristics and capabilities that describe our country and what it is to be “Canadian”. Where the navy should be engaged, how it might fit into concepts such as the 3D approach or perhaps the *Responsibility to Protect*<sup>2</sup> and are not well articulated in Canadian policy documents, leaving open arguments both for and against the use of maritime power in this context. Arguably, an even more comprehensive approach may be necessary, one that considers many other government departments as well as commercial and other private sector interests.

This article is one practitioner's view of modern naval diplomacy, a comprehensive approach, and the effect that can be delivered from the sea with

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<sup>1</sup> From February 7 - June 15 2003, Commodore Roger Girouard commanded Coalition Task Force 151, during Op Apollo. In 1991, during Operation Friction, Captain (Navy) Duncan “Dusty” Miller served as the multinational coordinator for a large naval combat logistics area established in the southern Persian Gulf.

<sup>2</sup> The Responsibility to Protect is an idea that stems from a report by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty. The premise is that sovereign states have a responsibility to protect their own citizens, but if they are unable or unwilling, that responsibility must be borne by the international community. The Commission completed its work and reported back to the UN Secretary-General and the international community in December 2001. See <http://www.iciss.ca/report-en.asp> accessed 8 Jan 09.

Canada's maritime forces. It is a description of the mission and its challenges and accomplishments. I will examine some of the links to other national efforts, both diplomatic and military, including Afghanistan. You will draw your own conclusion on the value of our maritime effort, but my aim here is to demonstrate that Canada's navy has a key role to play in building Canadian national influence worldwide.

## **Background**

Canada first began deploying regularly to the Arabian or Persian Gulf region during the first Gulf War in the early '90s. Canadian Forces Middle East, a joint force under the command of Commodore Ken Summers, deployed to the central Persian Gulf prior to and during the conflict. Three Canadian ships, HMCS *Athabaskan*, *Terra Nova* and *Protecteur*, with five Sea King helicopters, were committed to this operation.

In the post-9/11 period, Canada's first reaction demonstrated the versatility and readiness of maritime forces. On 7 October 2001, Prime Minister Chrétien announced that Canada would join the campaign against terrorism, and ten days later, a Task Group of ships was underway, to join HMCS Halifax that was already diverted from NATO operations and headed for the region. When the U.S. Marines entered Kandahar, they were landed from a Marine Expeditionary Unit at sea off the coast of Pakistan and under escort by a Task Group led by Canada. Canada was the first nation after the USA to join the coalition and the extent of our commitment with Operation Apollo (October 2001 – October 2003), reaching 1,500 sailors and six ships, demonstrated the importance assigned to this mission. This surge of activity was predicated on a desire for maximum short-term effect rather than on any expectation of

a long and sustained conflict. It was not sustainable given the size of our naval forces and the maintenance and training needs of the fleet. Consequently, Canada drew down our force commitment with the commencement of Operation Altair (October 2003 to the present). The name of the operation was changed to reflect the transition from the surge to a periodic commitment of forces that could be sustained over the long term. Over the course of these two operations, Apollo and Altair, Canada has deployed a total of 25 ships as a demonstration of our national commitment to peace and security in this volatile region.

In announcing the fourth rotation of Operation Altair, the Minister noted: “this significant contribution to CTF 150 shows Canada’s dedication towards making the world a safer place.”<sup>3</sup> He went on to say, “denying terrorists the use of the maritime environment as a venue for illicit operations translates into added security for Canadians at home and abroad.”<sup>4</sup> This link between expeditionary efforts and domestic security is of critical importance to understanding the value of these deployments for Canadians. The three Canadian ships subsequently deployed from April till October 2008, and served under my command alongside ships from the USA, UK, France, Germany, Denmark and Pakistan. In total, 32 different warships from seven countries served in CTF 150 for some period of this command. Half of these ships came from the United States Navy. I will return to the issue of multinational command, but let’s start by looking at the Canadian commitment.

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<sup>3</sup> News Release - Canada to lead Combined Task Force 150, NR-08.013 - February 29, 2008.  
<http://www.forces.gc.ca/site/news-nouvelles/view-news-afficher-nouvelles-eng.asp?id=2585>

<sup>4</sup> *ibid*

## **Canada's Contribution**

Since 2004, Canada has regularly contributed to CTF 150 with single ships under Operation ALTAIR, Canada's contribution to the maritime component of Operation Enduring Freedom. HMCS *Charlottetown* had already been committed to the force in 2008, and had contributed our recognized expertise in boarding operations. *Charlottetown* was also the 21<sup>st</sup> ship that Canada had deployed to the region since 9/11. This time around, we were offered an opportunity to lead the force. From a national perspective, it was hoped that Canadian leadership would bring greater influence and recognition of Canada's enduring interest and commitment to the region. Indeed, as I will discuss later, our leadership was noted by the UN World Food Program and led to a mission that brought significant recognition for Canada.

By sending multiple ships and a Commodore and staff to act as Task Force Commander, we would draw far greater attention to the national effort, and ensure that the force was adequately resourced to deliver operational effect during our time in command. It would also be the first deliberate deployment of a Naval Task Group, showcasing the concept at a crucial time of naval capacity transition and reinvestment. In this case, a three-ship force was selected.

For Canada and the Canadian Navy, the logical contribution was a Naval Task Group. The smallest naval formation that is self-sustaining is known in naval parlance as a Task Group. The Canadian Task Group (CATG) concept has been the cornerstone of Canadian Naval deployment sustainability for the past two decades. The composition and number of ships can vary depending on mission and threat. A basic CATG will have a destroyer, one or two frigates, an Auxiliary Oil Replenishment vessel,

integral helicopter air detachments and, if required, additional special capabilities such as Maritime Patrol Aircraft and submarines.

The destroyer provides the support facilities and communications for a leadership element for command and control of naval operations. To lead a group of ships, a senior officer, usually a Commodore, and his staff are required to coordinate the disposition of ships, their logistics support, rotations for rest and maintenance, and to develop the tactical operation plans and orders to execute the mission effectively. The destroyer, carrying this flag officer, then becomes the 'flagship', with the Commodore's pennant flying from the mast as a visible indicator of the seniority and purpose of the ship. Also equipped with an area air defence missile system, the destroyer is able to defend against air threats over a large area and provides additional protection for ships with lesser air defence capabilities<sup>5</sup>. The 130-metre long Iroquois Class destroyer displaces 5100 tons and has a complement of 300 including the flag officer's staff and air detachments.

Frigates are the workhorse element of the CATG. A multipurpose and versatile vessel, the frigate can fulfill almost all roles at sea and they have sufficient self-defence capabilities to operate at extended ranges and independently from the main CATG. With reasonably long endurance and good sea keeping characteristics for nearly all weather conditions, these are the ships of choice when Canada needs to send a single vessel over short or long distances. The 134-metre long Halifax Class frigate displaces 4770 tons and has a total complement of about 225, including an air detachment. In the early stages of Op ALTAIR, Canada elected to send single frigates, either in company

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<sup>5</sup> Modern area air defence destroyers can also provide ballistic missile defence. This has useful application in both foreign and domestic roles.

with allies, or independently. Four such deployments occurred between October 2003 and April 2006.

The AOR is the support element that gives the other ships their extended endurance on station and their ability to transit independent of shore support over greater distances. AORs carry the additional fuel, medical facilities, cold and dry food stores and maintenance support capabilities to extend the range of the force's ships and helicopters. They can provide a delivery service of food, replacement parts and fuel, to vessels that need to remain on station in a particular patrol area. Also equipped with limited self-defence suites and military crews, these ships have proven to be useful to augment the CATG operational capability in lower threat environments. For example, equipped with boarding teams, AORs can contribute to an interdiction or blockade effort that involves visit, inspection and diversion of civilian vessels.

With the addition of integral air assets in the form of helicopters, maritime patrol aircraft and in the future unmanned aerial vehicles, the CATG brings a significant amount of sea power that can be applied on the water. With the potential future addition of joint capabilities to exert influence on the land maritime power offers a broad range of options when governments want to show action of resolve in a crisis.<sup>6</sup>

With this force contribution and basic government and headquarters direction in mind, as the prospective force commander I wanted to achieve maximum effect across the spectrum of capability that can be delivered by maritime forces. Leading a force of 850 Canadians (it would grow to 1075 with the addition of the *Ville de Québec*) to the other side of the planet is no simple undertaking and value needs to be delivered for

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<sup>6</sup> Joint refers to the combination of army, navy and air capabilities. The CF has explored options such as the Joint Support Ship and limited amphibious capabilities to broaden our ability to project power ashore. Strike capabilities could also be included here such as conventional land attack missiles, and unmanned aerial vehicles air to surface effects.

any expenditure from the public purse. The mission must not only be worthy, but it needs to be seen to be of worth and there needs to be a means to measure its effectiveness. There is an opportunity cost to any course of action, since some other activity will not get those resources (people, ships, money), but equally there is a lost margin if opportunities are not realized to their full value. To optimize the effect being delivered, this force would need a campaign plan along a series of lines of operation.

The protracted time period over which successive governments have authorized Canadian Naval deployments also sends some clear messages regarding the multi-partisan nature of some Canadian foreign policy. Governments like to demonstrate leadership and initiative early in any crisis. With a CATG kept at readiness levels that will permit a quick response, Canada's first response to virtually every war and serious international crisis has been the deployment of maritime forces. The CATG has proven on numerous occasions to be an option of choice for early action. It was a naval response that was the first one deployed in the wake of the outbreak of both the Korean and first Gulf wars. It was a naval response that was first out the door in response to the 9/11 attack. The navy responded in days to Hurricane Katrina.<sup>7</sup> By their inherent flexibility and cohesive unit readiness, Canada always has ships ready to go, whereas land and air based forces require in situ logistical support via temporary camps and other infrastructure that takes time and planning to establish. Although only the latter capabilities can directly affect the events in the sense of 'boots on the ground', naval forces provide a useful and ready early response that demonstrates government commitment, interest and determination to take action. Naval forces therefore provide

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<sup>7</sup> On Tuesday, Sept 6 2005 – HMCS ATHABASKAN, VILLE DE QUEBEC and TORONTO, with 2 CH-124 Sea King helicopters, and the Canadian Coast Guard Ship (CCGS) Sir William Alexander departed Halifax, eight days after hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans.



'influence on the ground' early while also remaining flexible and being able to be withdrawn readily should circumstances on the ground change.

Notwithstanding the debate over land-based forces in Afghanistan, there has been no real objection to any naval deployment to date, and the fact that both conservative and liberal governments have taken this action suggests a certain degree of multi-partisan support for the use of naval forces as an early response to crises. Naval deployments also allow a degree of flexibility both in applying national power and in withdrawing it. The exit strategy is always easier with maritime forces, though to be fair, this is at the expense of lasting effect that can be delivered on the ground. It is in this latter area that land-based forces will always deliver more effect. Over the horizon threats affect governments and produce military and economic effects but they rarely influence the behaviour of ordinary people, unlike the soldier on the street corner who serves as a visibly deterrent. Nevertheless, the naval capability that Canada can deliver can still represent a significant national commitment that is rapidly deployable, self-sustaining and versatile in application.

The deployment of naval forces has also played an important role in the history of our interoperability, working with our USN allies. The navy has placed considerable emphasis on interoperability for many years by exercising regularly with our USN allies, and more recently with integrated deployments. Placing a Canadian frigate in a US Navy Carrier Battle Group has been a key to our success. With national authority to veto any tasking and national rules of engagement for the use of force, Canada has been able to exercise the level of surety to keep this activity within the limits of national foreign policy. On the plus side for interoperability, integrating frigates into these Battle

Groups has enabled the navy to align communications and cryptographic requirements, doctrine and tactics to the maximum extent possible. Shared networks improve the speed by which we can integrate into a US-led coalition force. Commonality of procedures and shared experience has built confidence in Canadian leadership and training.

Why has this been important? It has built credibility and enabled Canada to lead combined forces. For the US, the CF is a known quantity that has proven itself on every occasion. It has built understanding at all levels in the respective militaries and fosters long term relationships at senior military and civilian levels in the respective defence departments. Trust and mutual respect on the military-to-military level has improved the Canada-US relationship at the government-to-government level. A flourishing relationship through military cooperation can set the conditions for dialogue in other areas of the mutual concern. A discussion on an existing area of cooperation can segue to an exploration of further areas of cooperation. For example, some commentators have drawn linkages between the softwood lumber agreement and Canada's increased combat role in Afghanistan, suggesting that the latter effort facilitated the deal on softwood. Whether we accept that logic or like the final deal on softwood is immaterial. The point is that there can be linkages and that cooperation in one area of foreign policy can spill over into other areas as political deals are made. In this way, bilateral and multi-lateral military cooperation with the US lead to direct benefits for Canadians.

## **Contributing to Coalitions**

As it says in the Parable of the Faithful Servant, “To whom much is given, much is required”. A wealthy nation, Canada must bear some responsibility for the state of world affairs. Canadians have the luxury of living in a peaceful neighbourhood, but others do not. We have a duty to share the burden of international security. Economic and industrial capacity and military capability are traits that suggest that Canada can and should share this burden; that we should be prepared to do our fair share of the heavy lifting. Our tradition is one of moral obligation, be it peacekeeping or peacemaking. On many occasions through many periods of conflict, our nation’s sons and daughters have voluntarily put themselves in harm’s way to do that heavy lifting. We have re-learned with the conflict in Afghanistan and with each flag-draped casket that moral obligation can be a heavy burden on a nation.

Contributing to a coalition, such as CTF 150, in order to police a key international trade route is another aspect of that burden. Some Canadians might argue that Canada could take a free ride – let others carry this burden. However, even the US does not have the resources to go it alone, worldwide in maritime security. In a global village of international trade, all nations are dependent on the movement of goods on the waterways and through the chokepoints that make up the oceans’ transportation routes. Surely we must have learned from the recent financial crisis, the spreading recession, and the gas dispute between Russia and the Ukraine that diseases of the economy or of trade quickly spread from nation to nation. Shipping represents another area of economic vulnerability. Terrorism and piracy are persistent threats to shipping, not only in the Arabian Sea, but also in other parts of the world. Always possible is the added

threat of a state action to inhibit such movements, such as the occasional rhetoric from Iran threatening to close the Straits of Hormuz. The operations area of CTF 150 comprises a region through which roughly two thirds of the world's oil moves. Although we may not rely on this source for Canadian oil, it is critical to our trading partners. Safe and unhindered navigation through this region's waters is critical to the economies of the west, including Canada, and thus our contribution to this international coalition force is not simply about altruism, or doing the right thing. Given our economic reliance on trade, worldwide maritime security is also about self-interest.

Commanding CTF 150, we were responsible for 2.4 million square miles of ocean. This is an area about half the size of Canada. The force's mandate stems from the post-9/11 response, and so it is principally about counter-terrorism: taking the fight to the militants and extremists in the region by denying the use of the maritime environment for either attacks or transportation of contraband, weapons and terrorists. In bringing a measure of security and stability to this region, the coalition serves as a deterrent and as a readily available response option to emergent threats to peace or life. But the effort to bring stability and security to the region can imply a broader mandate, or implicit tasks. Criminal and illicit activities can be de-stabilizing on their own. In the complex maritime world where the movement of traffic is not well regulated, finding terrorist activity hidden with a web of black and gray market activity and human and drug smuggling is an enormous challenge. It is within this web of underground trade that terrorism can hide and flourish. Therefore, reducing illicit activity can go a long way towards building confidence, reducing risk for mariners, and creating the conditions for a successful counter-terrorism campaign. The complexity and volume of

traffic makes it clear that no single nation could do this job. Only a broadly based coalition, supported by regional partners, can hope to take on this enormous challenge.

There is no standard template for contributions to an international coalition. Ships and sailors, aircraft and aviators may be provided to the mission according to the capabilities and resources available to the contributing nations. Each capability that is provided will have attendant caveats or employment limitations driven by national concerns and restrictions. These may take the form of limits on the application of force or they may proscribe involvement in actions that may contravene national policy. Reticence to take action may stem from sensitivity to certain mission types, a desire to avoid complicating factors such as the taking and transferring of detainees, or the prosecution of offences under national or international law. Governments may permit their ships to react to certain events, such as coming to the defence of a vessel under attack by pirates, while prohibiting proactive action, such as disarming or disabling pirates when the threat of attack has passed. For the military commander, the mission then becomes a balancing act between national capabilities and prohibitions, fraught with potential political 'potholes' and sensitivities. The successful military commander quickly learns that diplomacy is not solely the province of diplomats.

As a national as well as coalition commander, I wanted to focus the force on both national and coalition objectives. The latter objectives and mission sets would come from my coalition commander. The following describes the coalition's mission:

Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) patrols more than 2.5 million square miles of international waters to conduct both integrated and coordinated operations with a common purpose: to increase the security and prosperity of the region by working together for a better future. CMF is working to defeat terrorism, prevent piracy, reduce illegal trafficking of

people and drugs, and promote the maritime environment as a safe place for mariners with legitimate business.<sup>8</sup>

In a coalition, many nations will shy away from certain objectives, such as any suggestion that their military forces might execute a constabulary or police role, particularly involving any potential for detainees and law enforcement. In addition, while individual nations may come with their own diplomatic agenda, the idea of a coalition-based diplomatic strategy can be problematic. The lead nation, in this case the US, is certain to have its own national objectives for the region that may not always coincide with the plethora of coalition views. Nations with a long established presence in the region, such as France and Britain, have their own agendas for advancing national interest. This can have significant implications on force flow for mission accomplishment as units are pulled at short notice for national tasks. For example, on several occasions, French ships would withdraw from the force to provide a close escort for French-flagged commercial vessels transiting through the Gulf of Aden or to conduct national visits to countries that other ships would not normally visit, such as Yemen.

The variety of capabilities, views and mandates of coalition partners is a coalition's greatest weakness but it can also be a source of strength. It is a weakness, because it limits what individual partners can do in contributing towards the common goal. Every ship cannot be assigned to every mission, and thus available resources are constrained for the operational commander. This is the case in Afghanistan where there are insufficient soldiers to do the required combat roles. However, attempts to reach commonality for rules of engagement usually result in accepting the lowest

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<sup>8</sup> The Commander of US Naval Forces Central Command also serves as the CMF Commander. Serving as the Maritime Component Commander for US Central Command, he directs the operational campaign plan for the maritime component of Operation Enduring Freedom. This statement comes from Commander's Guidance and can be found at <http://www.cusnc.navy.mil/mission/rhumblines.html> (accessed 21 Sep 08).

common denominator. UNSCRs can be watered down in successive drafts in order to reach a consensus. For military operations in a coalition or allied environment, efforts at commonality are also likely to result in a reduced scope for action. This is a significant limiting factor for NATO operations where all nations must agree to a specific rule set. Thus, the presence of multiple ships with different mandates and rules of engagement will usually result in more freedom for a coalition commander provided he is not limited by his own national rules. In this operation, my guidance was simply to remain within the rules of engagement of each respective nation's assets, with the proviso that I not order any unlawful action under Canadian or International Law. For example, at the beginning of the operation before Canada took on the World Food Program escort, and before Canadian units were authorized to enter Somali territorial waters, I was able to direct another nation's ship into Somali territorial waters because they had that permission bi-laterally and hence it was not unlawful. Differing opinions and policies within a coalition also help ensure that the commander does not remain fixated on any narrow course of action. Thus, the varied nature of mandates and rules of engagement can bring strength to a coalition, provided that there are sufficient assets to assign to the required tasks.

From a strictly Canadian perspective, given the national level of effort, I needed to achieve effect that was distinctly Canadian as well. For example, our interests required a degree of emphasis on both the United Arab Emirates and Pakistan, nations whose direct or indirect support and cooperation is critical to our ability to sustain forces in the region. A key visit that we planned was to Karachi, since from a national perspective a relationship with Pakistan is critical if only for reasons of supporting our

efforts in Afghanistan. Through a humanitarian outreach project, media engagement, military bilateral exercises and social events in Karachi, a significant warming of relations occurred. This visit represented a significant change in stance given that Canada had not conducted a warship visit there for over fifty years, and we had maintained a somewhat subdued relationship with Pakistan since their development of nuclear arms.

Equally, for national reasons, the mission would need to be exposed to the Canadian public and within government and hence our public affairs stance was likely to be at odds from time to time with coalition aims. I will explore this conflict between coalition and Canadian public affairs campaigns when I return to this aspect later.

Notwithstanding the potential for conflict, lines of operation needed to have both coalition and Canadian character, and where conflicts arose, some careful management would be required. There can be many ways to categorize our effort, but I chose to use the following four lines of operation: Maritime Security Operations; Theatre Security Cooperation; Public Affairs; and Maritime Influence Operations. It may be counter intuitive, but these are in order of increasing complexity and difficult. This will become more apparent as the lines of operation are more fully explained.

### **Maritime Security Operations**

The first and most obvious objective of the mission was to achieve effect through operational accomplishments. In the context of the OEF mission, this is best described as Maritime Security Operations (MSO). As described by CFMCC:



MSO help develop security in the maritime environment, which promotes stability and global prosperity. These operations complement the counterterrorism and security efforts of regional nations and seek to disrupt violent extremists' use of the maritime environment as a venue for attack or to transport personnel, weapons or other material.<sup>9</sup>

Although much of the mission could be described as international policing, some of our opponents were belligerents as defined under the Law of Armed Conflict. MSO adequately describes the range of activity necessary to counter an asymmetric threat at sea but it is worth emphasizing that this blending of military and constabulary roles significantly complicates modern naval operations. It creates the need to categorize activity carefully to meet internationally recognized definitions to guide lawful maritime interdiction and information collection. It would be outside the scope of this article to delve too deeply into the legal and policy aspects of military responses to terrorism, but I will by necessity touch on some aspects as they affected our activity.

Within the coalition, the campaign plan for MSO was largely already done. I would inherit an existing command, CTF 150, from a French Admiral, who had in his turn inherited it from others. The mission mandate would continue to stem from a regional coalition commander's campaign plan. This United States Navy Admiral would provide the continuity between CTF 150 commanders. Therefore, I had expected that the boundaries and direction for mission accomplishment would be well articulated, and indeed this was

**A Naval Boarding Party in action**



<sup>9</sup> From <http://www.cusnc.navy.mil/command/ctf150.html> accessed 21 Sep 08.

case. While some tinkering was needed to adapt to the changing intelligence picture and environmental conditions, this is the 'bread and butter' of maritime operational planning and I foresaw little difficulty here.

A series of patrols were planned to disrupt and deter the use of the maritime environment by violent extremists. Threatened but not exercised, deadly force was available to respond to witnessed acts of terrorism or piracy. Where intelligence and other indicators of illicit activity met a threshold of suspicion, ships conducted boarding operations, to examine crews and cargo manifests. Persons of interest were only to be detained if necessary and, where cargo met the criteria of contraband, items could have been seized for confiscation or disposal. Of course, any boarding had to be lawful and consequently, care was taken to ensure that each order to execute such an operation explicitly stated the character of the boarding, its basis in law, and the consequential level of intrusiveness permitted in the conduct of any search or the collection of intelligence. Let me offer two examples of boarding operations where the outcome was unsuccessful, largely due to the application of the rule of law.

We had received some intelligence regarding a possible shipment of heroin to Somalia from the Makran Coast. The likely vessel, a 600 ton cargo dhow, was identified and tracked as it passed through the territorial waters of several nations. At an opportune time, this dhow was intercepted in international waters. Without revealing the details for reasons of operational security, I had reasonable belief that the vessel was linked to a smuggling network with direct ties to the Taliban. I therefore directed a boarding by HMCS Iroquois, under the law of armed conflict, since the Taliban are defined as belligerents in the war on terrorism. On boarding, it was discovered that the

vessel was carrying over 30,000 25-Kg bags of rice. Over the course of almost six days of searching, it proved impossible to find the suspected 100kg of heroin in 850 tons of rice without destroying the cargo. I elected not to do that as I could not reconcile destruction of foodstuffs bound for a country on the verge of starvation. I remain convinced that the narcotics were there – this one got away.

A second example was affected by the tensions in the region regarding Iran. We found a suspicious vessel in international waters off the coast of Iran. Bearing no flag and exhibiting suspicious behaviour, a flag state verification was ordered under the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, UNCLOS. This fishing vessel turned out to be Iranian. It had no fish, unused nets, an empty hold, and it had attempted to flee when it sighted the coalition ship. During the boarding, a false bulkhead was located that had no obvious entry. Given the existing tensions with Iran, the lack of intelligence to merit a more intrusive search, and the likelihood of damaging the vessel by attempting to access this space, I decided to terminate the search and the vessel was released.

Over 30 tons of hashish had been intercepted by the coalition in the four months preceding Canadian command, and so our hope on arrival in area was to have some effect in this area. Unfortunately from our perspective, since we wanted measurable effect, the onset of the southwest monsoon season and its impact on small dhows reduced trafficking over the summer, dramatically limiting our potential for interception. Nevertheless, our continued and persistent efforts involved in searches and patrols certainly had their impact. Intelligence indicated that smuggling networks were 'backed up' with product that could not be exported. Much of this was due to the difficulty the

smugglers began to have in identifying vessels to run the coalition gauntlet. Deterrence was at least having some effect.

Human smuggling is another regional threat that requires a security vice a military solution. The most severe situation exists in the migrations occurring from Somalia to Yemen. Ruthless criminals prey on desperate people trying to escape the conflict and famine in Somalia. They charge fees by the head to move the people in small boats across the Gulf of Aden where they are landed on the beach in Yemen and typically end up in UN refugee camps. At sea, these people can suffer the most austere of conditions, in open boats under a blazing sun, and with little or no food or water. These boats regularly break down and the people are often abandoned to fend for themselves. If approached by a warship or the Yemen Coast Guard (YCG), the smugglers have been known to throw the migrants into the water, as a distraction to allow the boat to escape. One case is worth noting as it epitomizes the brutality of these thugs. The coalition identified a vessel crossing the Gulf on 9 Sep 08, and rather than approach it, we passed its movements on the YCG. Their normal routine is to allow the refugees to be landed and then attempt to capture the smugglers. Unfortunately, the YCG vessel approached the smugglers after only a portion of the people had been landed ashore. The smugglers threw two babies into the water to get the migrants to abandon the boat. When that failed, the smugglers shot several passengers, and then forced the remaining passengers overboard. The ensuing pandemonium enabled the smugglers to make their escape. The next day 29 bodies washed up on the shores of Yemen. Tackling the problem of human smuggling is not

as simple as it sounds – it is a tragedy, where desperation is compounded by greed and ruthlessness, and where honest efforts to help refugees can result in more victims.

As with all maritime missions, all participating ships were always ready to respond to any calls from distressed vessels endangering safety of life at sea (SOLAS). As a result, coalition ships were involved in nine rescue or humanitarian events, saving roughly 115 lives in the process.

One of these involved a boatload of abandoned refugees, which had already lost six people. Tragic though it was, we were forced to take these people to the nearest port, Bossasso, in Puntland (Somalia).



**A SOLAS event involving the rescue of Somali**

Increasing piracy did have some impact that changed the MSO focus, created what some viewed as mission creep. Piracy off the Somali coast began in earnest in 2005. The cause is open to some debate, but essentially is related to a perception of foreign over-fishing. Pirates began to capture foreign fishing vessels and held them for ransom. This proved over time to be lucrative and the operation has slowly expanded, with larger commercial vessels routinely taken and held for ransoms exceeding \$1 million USD. The typical pirate tactic is to use speed to catch up with merchant vessels. Firing small arms, the pirates force vessels to slow, allowing them to climb aboard with ladders or grappling gear. Once on board, they take the crew hostage and direct the vessel to an anchorage near their base while ransom negotiations are conducted.

The hijacking of a French luxury yacht, *Le Ponant*, on 4 April 2008 was the final catalyst in the creation of United Nations Security Resolution 1816, calling on nations to address the piracy problem within Somali territorial waters.<sup>10</sup> The actions of the French military in capturing some of the pirates in Somali territory suggested that bold action could eliminate the problem.



**Suspected Somali Pirates**

While such action could ultimately have some impact if others repeated it, the reality is that the event had no deterrent effect on the piracy. Only a few of the pirates were captured and their criminal prosecution could take many more months to resolve. UNSCR 1816 did not carry the 'bite' or international will to encourage more direct and violent action against the pirates on shore in Somalia. There were no provisions for International Criminal Court or other proceedings to handle captured pirates. The UNSCR only called on nations to take such action as they deemed fit within the normal rules for international piracy. Lacking such provisions, and without any action in the

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<sup>10</sup> Resolution 1816 (2008) adopted by the Security Council at its 5902nd meeting on 2 June 2008 determined that for a period of six months from the date of the resolution, "States cooperating with the TFG in the fight against piracy and armed robbery at sea off the coast of Somalia, for which advance notification has been provided by the TFG to the Secretary-General, may: (a) Enter the territorial waters of Somalia for the purpose of repressing acts of piracy and armed robbery at sea, in a manner consistent with such action permitted on the high seas with respect to piracy under relevant international law; and (b) Use, within the territorial waters of Somalia, in a manner consistent with action permitted on the high seas with respect to piracy under relevant international law, all necessary means to repress acts of piracy and armed robbery. See [http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/unsr\\_resolutions08.htm](http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/unsr_resolutions08.htm)

lawless villages where the pirates are based, no real long-term effect could be achieved.

Some nations are not prepared to undertake counter-piracy in any form. This piracy, though clearly now reaching the scale of organized crime, has no proven links to international terrorism. Consequently, the CTF 150 mandate was not significantly changed with the passage of UNSCR 1816. Having been established for counter-terrorism, and without this link between piracy and International Terrorist Organizations, the coalition could not come to grips with the idea of a robust counter-piracy mission. Rather, it could only continue to provide deterrence through presence in the area of concern. Indeed, the discomfort of some nations was such that even the term piracy was replaced by “destabilizing activity” in documentation and orders as a means to avoid pushing the limits of national mandates. The frequency of piracy attacks up until that time had been limited due to an apparent cap on how many vessels could be held for ransom by the pirates. At that stage, there had been only two vessels held at one time. This changed in mid-August when a piracy surge occurred and four vessels were taken in a 48 hour period. The pirates had increased their capacity and capability.

With this increased threat, there was a need for a more focused effort in the Gulf of Aden. The coalition announced the establishment of a Maritime Security Patrol Area, but it remained strictly a presence mission with forces only responding to attacks and chasing pirate skiffs away. National mandates, rules of engagement and use of force all inhibited more robust action. Other national concerns included the handling of detainees and their subsequent prosecution and punishment in a region where the application of law and the quality of legal systems can create doubt for western

constituencies regarding fairness and justice. Some punishments under Sharia law are not acceptable to most Canadians. The experience of Afghanistan has shown that Canadians have a distinct lack of comfort with handing over prisoners to local authorities without substantial assurances regarding their treatment. Certainly, handing pirates over to Somali authorities would be equally problematic for most nations. With coalition ships thousands of miles from their home ports and without the diplomatic agreements in place to transfer prisoners through the region, it would be equally challenging to transport detainees to national jurisdictions. Would Canadians want these pirates in our jails on long sentences and with Charter of Rights and Freedoms and refugee claims to follow? A Danish ship operating in the Gulf of Aden detained a group of ten pirates in the middle of September 2008. Notwithstanding their evident desire to have some lasting effect on piracy, within a matter of days they were forced to release the pirates on the Somali shores.

Throughout my time in command I maintained the view that the shipping industry needed to assume more responsibility rather than simply calling for naval escort. Warships are an expensive way to protect shipping from a rudimentary pirate threat. I think a parallel can be drawn with banking. Notwithstanding the fact that banks pay taxes, there is no expectation that the police will escort money transfers between banks. Banks have recognized the requirement to hire professional security companies and the shipping industry could readily do the same. Given the volume and profits stemming from international shipping, arguments that it is too difficult to regulate are specious. If security is required, then regulatory means can be negotiated. The fact is that relatively simple self-defence measures such as defensive wire, water hoses and flares and a



determined effort to evade will likely be enough to prevent an attack. It is certain that pirates would not attempt to board a ship that had professionally trained and armed security on board. Approaching a vessel in an open boat with the possibility of small arms fire from that vessel is too dangerous, even for desperate pirates. Notwithstanding this potential, such negotiations and arrangements take time, and so the only short-term solution is military.

One concept of operations that we had considered was to attack the means of piracy rather than the perpetrators. The enabling resources that are critical to success for the pirates are weapons and skiffs, fast small boats with outboard motors. A possible tactic is to eliminate one or both of these resources. This would require either the destruction of any unmanned small vessels, remembering that such vessels are often simply fishing skiffs, or stopping skiffs at sea and disarming any pirates and confiscating boats and motors. Although the pirates can be released, once in the control of a nation, there is some onus under international law to take legal action if evidence exists. Moreover, the act of disarming the pirates creates the potential for casualties and detainees. Finally, even if they are to be released, there is the problem of returning those in custody to the beach. The only other option would be to attack the pirates in their homes but this was not authorized by any international consensus.

Realizing these limitations and the growing crisis of greater numbers of captured vessels, UNSCR 1853 was adopted in December 2008, calling for action within the territory and airspace of Somalia.<sup>11</sup> Though this resolution does carry more authority for direct action against pirate bases of operation, most nations are likely to continue to be reluctant to engage in action that could result in either casualties to their own personnel,

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<sup>11</sup> See <http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/unscreolutions08.htm>

collateral damage to innocent civilians, and/or wounded or detained pirates, leaving any bold strategy to counter the piracy with significant risk and dubious benefit. The days of summarily executing pirates passed with the 19<sup>th</sup> century and such action is not acceptable to the populations of most western nations. Meeting the rule of law, admissibility of evidence requirements, ensuring procedural fairness, and protecting individual human rights are all factors that will significantly complicate any criminal proceeding. Moreover, by bringing desperate criminals to a western nation, you open up additional challenges arising from claims of refugee status and the burdens of long periods of incarceration.

The Canadian propensity for multilateralism, an overarching theme of Canadian diplomacy, did create a burden of responsibility that would have some impact on the TFAS mission. Canada was a sponsor of UNSCR 1816. Although perhaps not well understood by those who acted on the resolution, combined with the fact that Canada was also leading the coalition force responsible for the region, it is understandable why nations and NGOs expected some leadership from Canada on this issue. Thus, the International Maritime Organization did pressure Canada and the coalition to take action during my tenure. I had long recognized this threat and had been asking the coalition to take a more proactive stance. I had also been regularly assigning ships to the Gulf of Aden for presence. In the end, by necessity, it became a coalition priority as well.

A second event did have an immediate affect on the Canadian TFAS mission. On 6 August 2008, the government, acting on a request from the World Food Program and the International Maritime Organization, decided to help with the escort of relief supplies to famine stricken Somalia. This humanitarian escort, for a period of just over

one month, clearly met the general principles of Canada's human security agenda. Concepts such as *The Responsibility to Protect* have long figured in the psyche of Canadians.

"The Responsibility to Protect populations from genocide, ethnic cleansing, war crimes and crimes against humanity is an international commitment by governments to prevent and react to grave crises, wherever they may occur. In 2005, world leaders agreed, for the first time, that states have a primary responsibility to protect their own populations and that the international community has a responsibility to act when these governments fail to protect the most vulnerable among us."<sup>12</sup>

Taking action, to help those whose nations were either failed or failing states or where the government was incapable of looking after the welfare of its citizens or the source of any ill treatment, is an area that is fraught with risk and challenge. It is nevertheless, a laudable and altruistic ideal espoused by many. Simpler to implement is humanitarian assistance, and this is certainly in keeping with Canadian values as evidenced by the fact that we are the third largest donor to the World Food Program. Canadian immigration policy will continue to keep our nation focused on international humanitarian crises. With significant ethnic populations from every part of the globe, the international character of the Canadian population will ensure that every crisis makes it to the front pages and news networks of the nation.



**HMCS Ville de Québec escorts a WFP contracted vessel**

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<sup>12</sup> Taken from <http://www.responsibilitytoprotect.org> accessed 19 Sep 08.

HMCS *Ville de Québec* joined Task Force Arabian Sea for this mission that would lead to significant recognition for Canadian leadership. This latter mission would have to be rolled into the existing campaign plan, and would provide opportunity to re-emphasize the CTF 150 mission as a complementary activity for regional security and stability. It was in fact Canada's leadership of CTF 150 that prompted the request for support. This would be done as a purely national mission, outside of the CTF 150 mandate but linked by region and a common concern regarding the piracy threat. Escort of WFP ships bringing humanitarian relief would have far reaching effects. On both the diplomatic and military fronts it was a demonstration of leadership; a demonstration of willingness to take risk. It would also garner significant media interest and this would allow for additional opportunity to emphasize the activities of the other ships in the theatre of operations and the leadership that Canada was showing in the region. This short-notice tasking also demonstrated the value of having Canadian Naval forces forward deployed and ready for operations. Conducting multiple escorts into war-torn Mogadishu and other parts of Somalia, by completion of the mission, *Ville de Québec* is expected to help deliver enough food to feed the over 2 million needy Somalis for many months. When they are done, other nations will be needed to step up to help the WFP.

### **Theatre Security Cooperation (TSC)**

The second main line of operation was TSC. The effectiveness of MSO will always be dependent on two principal factors; the resources available to be applied to the problem, and the degree to which the opposition forces or belligerents can exploit

the seams created by borders and mandates. Through engagement with potential coalition partners in the region and internationally, more resources can be brought to bear. MSO cannot be done by any one nation and any coalition needs constant nurturing to sustain it. Even with adequate resources, seams can open through which illicit activity can flourish. Boundaries between international and territorial waters, mandates for law enforcement, interdepartmental rivalries and 'turf' disputes will hamper information sharing and activity coordination.

TSC describes the continuous and active engagement with regional maritime nations in order to bring resources to bear to eliminate these seams. Cooperation and information sharing can reduce inefficiencies and duplication of effort. Small nations with nascent navies and coast guards can be encouraged to use the mechanism of an international coalition to enhance their capabilities. In a coalition operation, interest in continued participation will wax and wane among nations, particularly among those that have to travel significant distances to participate. Thus, on the international front TSC must also be oriented towards encouraging continued commitment by existing coalition partners, and towards finding new partners to join in the shared effort.

A basic TSC strategy had already existed in the coalition and my predecessors had put significant effort into this line of operation. Nevertheless, the foundation of TSC, like diplomacy, is the relationship that exists between organizations and stakeholders. As institutional leaders come and go,



relationships need to be re-established through face to face consultation. As the 'new kid on the block', I foresaw a need to expend part of my effort towards establishing recognition of the Canadian presence, improving our baseline knowledge of the region and its influencers, building on the successes of my predecessors, and seeking new relationships to enhance regional cooperation. Like other lines of operation, I anticipated a need for a Canadian angle on TSC that would serve to promote our interests in the region. I needed to understand what those Canadian interests were.

Djibouti, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen are four regional nations whose location, capabilities and/or influence in the region are vital to the coalition effort. Knowing that I would be likely to visit these countries, I wanted information on Canadian objectives and priorities. I had requested information on these objectives prior to departing Canada, and was somewhat surprised by the lack of policy guidance. In fact, I discerned a degree of discomfort regarding my intention to visit these countries. This aspect of the operation and the leadership by Canada in the region deserved more thought and preparation than it got either within DND or DFAIT. The compression in available planning time hindered a more aggressive inter-governmental liaison effort in this area. Consequently, I was essentially left to my own devices. This seemingly would give me greater freedom, but in reality it limited my ability to speak with authority or to use other Canadian initiatives to leverage our influence. The paucity of direction or policy for some countries could be attributed to lack of national interest, but it is worth remembering that Canada had little interest in Afghanistan only a few years ago.

About six weeks after taking command of CTF 150, I proceeded with a series of visits oriented around building relationships with regional partners. Visits had already occurred in Jordan during the assumption of command event, and Djibouti. Trips were conducted to Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Pakistan, and the United Arab Emirates. Yemen makes an excellent example of the potential that exists here. Interestingly, working for a US coalition commander, one of the key benefits of international leadership is that different countries may elect to go to different locales when others are inhibited by policy or security issues. In a country like Yemen with its significant security concerns, my presence was easier to coordinate and arguably at lower risk than a more high profile visit by a US Admiral.

The Yemen visit was particularly interesting for several reasons. As inferred previously, my plan to visit Sana'a generated some 'push back' from within the defence department. The lack of a national strategy for Yemen, the lack of an Embassy in the country, and its security situation all argued against a visit. However, Yemen is critical to the coalition effort, particularly in the areas of drug trafficking, human smuggling and piracy. Yemen is a major route of entry into the Arabian Peninsula for hashish. An insecure border with Saudi Arabia allows drugs and people to pass relatively easily northwards into the Kingdom and subsequently to adjacent countries. It is a transit route and destination for insurgents, for Somali refugees, for arms and for drugs.

The Yemeni Coast Guard (YCG) is a nascent and progressive organization that is trying to come to terms with these challenges. Their central location suggests a potential for Yemen to coordinate training and operations amongst nations bordering the Gulf of Aden. In fact, the YCG is proposing the creation of a centre of excellence in

Aden to promote counter-piracy efforts. I enjoyed a superb visit to Sana'a and some excellent discussions with the Chairman of the YCG. They were gracious hosts and very forthcoming. I was impressed by their efforts to create capability in the region, including efforts to build surveillance and patrol capability along the length of their substantial coastline. The British Royal Navy has been involved in helping the YCG, but more support is required. I believe that Yemen and the YCG present an opportunity for a nation like Canada to show leadership by supporting their efforts. For a moderate investment in their development, and with the help of some advisors, the YCG could flourish and grow into a force for stability within the region. Such a plan would not be without risks. Working in a country with such significant security challenges is not going to be easy. But the best way to counter de-stabilizing forces is through dialogue, engagement and investment.

More core to the coalition, but no less important, I also visited as many coalition ships as possible. This was critical to ensure their good work was recognized before their departure from the task force. It is equally important to have a face-to-face discussion with individual commanding officers in order to have a sense regarding their likely response to various operational situations. Finally, these are future leaders in their respective navies, and a positive impression of Canadian leadership is likely to have long-term benefits.

On our way to the theatre and within the theatre we conducted operations and exercises that were aimed at building relationships or buttressing existing ones. Our involvement in two operations is worth noting. The transit in the Caribbean afforded an opportunity to work with the Joint Inter Agency Task Force South, a US Coast Guard led



counter-narcotics operation. The movement of cocaine across the Caribbean basin has a destabilizing effect on the US and Canada, and the periodic involvement of Canadian military assets in this activity helps to promote cooperation between the two nations in areas of continental security. Passing through the Mediterranean, we also contributed to surveillance and intelligence gathering in support of Operation Active Endeavour, a NATO counter-terrorism activity in that region. In this way, the transits to the theatre contributed to our cumulative diplomatic effect.

### **Public Affairs (PA)**

The third major line of operations was PA, an effort that was expected to significantly influence our success in the other lines of operation. Fundamentally, if it isn't reported it didn't happen. Further, without video or photography a story can languish and not be told. In the competition for resources, measurable effect is critical, and much of that effect will be based as much on perception as on fact. Without PA it is impossible to let the regional populations and public at home know what is being done on their behalf over the horizon. In a coalition environment, each nation needs to tell the story of its involvement in a way that will connect with their people. As was previously noted, any activity that could capture media interest, such as the WFP escort, would also create an opportunity to re-emphasize the totality of the task force effort. Finally, in a national PA campaign, the positive media attention will help promote recruiting and retention for the Canadian Forces.

A proactive public affairs strategy is not without risk. While the taxpayer clearly has a right to know how their taxes are being spent, the free flow of information has to

be constrained to the extent necessary to achieve operational security. Consequently, a significant amount of time was spent both in encouraging PA interest and concurrently in seeking the needed approvals to make it happen in a meaningful way. Moreover, the story you seek is not always the one that will be told. Misquotes and the idle commentary of junior (and senior) personnel can skew a message badly. Nevertheless, as Oscar Wilde pointed out, “the only thing worse than being talked about is not being talked about.” The deployment story had to be told. Therefore, I put significant emphasis on a PA strategy that would include press releases for every noteworthy event and embeds for interested media. I was particularly interested in encouraging stories in regional media in order to complement the TSC plan by fostering greater regional awareness of the CTF 150 mission.

Public affairs turned out to be an area of significant friction with the CFMCC staff. Their Commander’s intent in this area was not always conveyed to the subordinate commander and there was a degree of naivety regarding the need for national perspectives. It was unrealistic to expect that all nations would line up on public affairs any more than they do on rules of engagement or policy. Each nation will have a different perspective on how to package information for their own domestic requirements as well as how to convey messages of a diplomatic nature. Given that nations expend considerable resources to deploy their ships, there is an expectation that they can advertise the successes of their ships and aircraft, within the bounds of operational security.

An excellent example here was the differing view on media exposure to the piracy deterrence mission. Several of the nations felt that their successes in stopping

piracy attacks merited at least national media attention. From a coalition commander's perspective, with only limited resources available, excessive media coverage of the piracy deterrence mission would likely have raised expectations of safe transit when no guarantees could reasonably be provided. In my view, the correct approach was to be honest and forthcoming in addressing with both media and industry our ability and likely success. Indeed, at one point I was quoted as saying that shipping industry owners needed to step up and help themselves and not solely rely on the military – as we could not guarantee success. This generated angst from CFMCC staff who felt that an admission of the likelihood of possible successful attacks would reflect badly on the coalition – when in fact it was simply a reality that did occur.

### **Maritime Influence (MI)**

The final major line of operations was MI. To a certain extent MI is simply about making Canada look good; however, it is also about building our influence in the region. The objective can be pragmatic - perhaps to improve access for economic investment – or it can be idealistic - with a view to bringing Canadian values to bear, such as encouraging human rights and the rule of law.

This line of operations was intended to cover engagement strategies, including any DFAIT originated diplomatic endeavours. It would also cover the aspect of leadership expertise for multinational operations. One of the principal objectives of government in assigning the mission was to demonstrate Canada's capacity to lead large international maritime operations, thus increasing Canada's reputation while allowing our perspective to influence the future course of the coalition. The leadership

opportunity was exploited to the extent possible under the conditions and threat level encountered and our PA plan also complemented this effort. Simultaneously the deployment also presented an opportunity to show the value of the Canadian Naval Task Group of three or more ships versus previous single-ship deployments.

This deployment also supported embassies and military-to-military relationship building for Canada in many nations, both within the regions, and on the transits to and from the area of operations. *Calgary* and *Protecteur* also completed an around-the-world voyage and so brought some influence into the western Pacific region through visits to India, Malaysia, Thailand, Japan and South Korea. In total, our ships and personnel brought Canadian influence to 22 countries during this deployment.

The aim with MI was to clearly demonstrate that modern naval operations present far more opportunity for creating national influence than simply gunboat diplomacy. The classic model of



gunboat diplomacy derives from the legacy of colonial power: warships are despatched to the far corners of the planet to influence the course of world affairs and advance the prestige and reputation of the imperial state. Gunboat diplomacy has continued to be used as a means to influence the course of events on land by controlling the seas or threatening kinetic action via air strike or cruise missile. Legitimacy has largely come from United Nations Security Council resolutions, with moral suasion or sanctions being the principal tools of censure. Although possessing a relatively small navy with

negligible kinetic power over the shoreline, Canada's ships can contribute well to MSO and can hold their own in a classic sea engagement. Thus, a small measure of classic gunboat diplomacy is achievable. Even more could perhaps be done with a limited strike capability in our ships.

A key element of the ability to bring influence to a situation is geographical. We saw with the reassignment of the *Ville de Québec*, that having ships forward deployed means they are ready for such assignments at short notice, and therefore able to bring strategic effect to bear at short notice. The trait was similarly demonstrated with HMCS *St John's*, in September of this year when she was re-assigned from a Caribbean counter-narcotics operation to humanitarian relief in Haiti following two successive and devastating hurricanes. Being forward deployed means having a flexible and quick response to demonstrate Canadian interest and resolve in crises.

Canadian warships represent more than simply combat power, or humanitarian relief. The people in any organization are its greatest assets, and the Navy has outstanding people. Each one is a mini-ambassador, representing the country and its interests and values in every port of call. I believe that our sailors do a great job in this respect. Modern warships are floating technology demonstrators, able to showcase the industrial capability of a nation. They can serve as a platform for diplomatic events or trade delegations. The ships typically do charitable works during port visits, particularly in the developing countries and hence can readily serve to assist the CIDA agenda. For example, while in Croatia, the *Iroquois* and *Calgary* crews raised money for a children's hospital and then spent several hours visiting with the children. This activity was principally for the sailors who enjoy helping out, but the benefit from a national

perspective is tangible in terms of the good will created by such endeavours. Our sailors, soldiers and air men and women are an embodiment of Canadian interests and values and a reflection of Canadian society. Perhaps most importantly, they are a visible demonstration of Canada's commitment to and interest in those regions that we visit.

Although the military plays a far more modest role in Canada, the protocol of a military visit can open doors in some parts of the world. In countries where militaries can dominate democracy, the CF can gain access where civilians cannot, and the positive example our officers present helps promote civilian democratic control over the military. Thus, the modern naval deployment has potential far beyond the limited concept of gunboat diplomacy. Maritime influence operations, with appropriate departmental lead, can be conceived and implemented with a view to enhancing Canada's reputation in a broad spectrum of areas that cross the boundaries of many government departments.

TFAS did not achieve the maximum possible effect in this area. Industry was not engaged in any of the ship visits, and CIDA only had a limited involvement in our historic visit to Pakistan, the first Canadian warship to visit there since 1955. Strong Embassy and Canadian Defence Attaché involvement was obtained in all venues, but the relatively short notice for these visits limited their ability to take maximum benefit from the occasion. Port visit timings were not optimized to achieve effect except militarily.

Leadership of the coalition did provide Canada the opportunity to influence the future direction of this coalition. Our efforts to de-escalate tensions with Iran, our

approach to smuggling challenges and our leadership with the World Food Program, are aspects that we will leave behind. It is not by coincidence that I elected to give some Inukshuks as gifts and to name our last operation, Op Inukshuk. The message was clear; Canadians were here and we intended to leave a visible reminder. In addition, Canada did garner some significant benefit from the many ship visits and the opportunities that a ship hosted event affords. Moreover, the visit of senior Canadian Forces officers opened some doors in countries where the military has significant influence. This benefited our diplomats and military liaison staff in those countries visited.

As I have noted previously, bringing Canadian character to the mission was important. How we achieved this is not so clear, nor truly measurable, but there one example will illustrate the point. In my visits, media exchanges and discussions with regional and coalition naval officers, a frequent theme that came up was the tension with Iran. I think we (Canada) looked at Iran's maritime operations in the region in a different light to some of our allies. We have our own national sensitivities about



sovereignty and so we are sensitive to what I would characterize as the 'backyard effect'. Canadians know how we feel if we think someone has strayed into our backyard and so we are more tolerant of this effect on others. I never felt that the Iranians were operating near us just to be

threatening. I always felt that I was operating in their part of the world and if they happened to be close to us - well - that was to be expected. I know that if a foreign power came to the shores of Canada and started boarding Canadian fishing vessels, we would not have liked that very much, so we should not be surprised by any angst we saw in the Gulf of Oman while boarding Iranian dhows. We should and did expect to see Iranian warships from time to time, and our approach was always to be courteous. We got the same courtesy in return. Also, shore stations in Pakistan regularly hailed us for the same reasons. Reminding the media and our coalition partners that we were in someone else's backyard was a distinctly Canadian way of reducing tensions in the region.

### **Links to Afghanistan**

With the significant effort that was taking place in Afghanistan throughout the period of this maritime deployment, it was natural that some people would ask two questions. The first was, "Is a second major line of operation manageable for planners in Ottawa?" and the second was, "Are there any links between this mission and the one in Afghanistan?" The answer to both questions is yes.

In the question of managing a second major line of operations, it is true that the start of this mission, and the complications that arose along the way did create additional labour for the planners in our Canadian Expeditionary Force Command headquarters. Notably, arising challenges and policy questions, such as rules of engagement for emergent missions, did create work on a stretched staff. Nevertheless, I think it is also fair to say that the deployment of a Task Force Commander meant that



many of the issues were addressed at the tactical level. This would not have been the case had there been a series of singly deployed ships, each reporting directly to the headquarters. Thus, to a certain extent, the embarked staff was able to deliver a 'turnkey' operation to the operational commander.

The more critical question to answer in my view was the linkage with ongoing activity in Afghanistan. With limited resources, the Canadian Forces capabilities are used for best effect when disparate activities actually bring a degree of synergy to the overall campaign plan. Maritime activity does impact the land campaign, directly and indirectly. In the direct sense, there are elements of sea-based power that impact the land situation directly – most notably air power. With USN carriers operating in the region, their freedom of manoeuvre is dependent on maritime stability. During the time that Canada commanded CTF 150, US carriers operated regularly in the northern Arabian Sea providing sorties into Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. On several occasions previous to this deployment, Canadian frigates were integrated into the Carrier Battle Group, and deployed to the theatre of operation as an integral member of the carrier escort force. Canada's long-term commitment to the region has linkages to the delivery of air support in Afghanistan, notwithstanding the lack of deployable Canadian sea-based air power.

More indirectly, the CTF 150 operation also has an impact on the financing of the Taliban and international terrorism. The drug trade in Afghanistan is a major source of revenue for these ostensibly religious men. Trafficking in both hashish and opiates, the drugs are moved by land out of Afghanistan into Pakistan and other neighbouring territories. From Pakistan a portion of the trade goes via smuggling networks through

the less regulated western provinces of Pakistan to the Makran coast where it is then transhipped to the Arabian Peninsula and East Africa. By interdicting or disrupting this movement of narcotics from the Makran Coast, the coalition can indirectly affect the financing of terrorism. While money in Afghanistan may have already changed hands, interdictions on the water have a 'trickle' effect, reducing the numbers of vessels available for the activity, and affecting profits for the smugglers – thus reducing their ability to purchase for smuggling. Each dollar kept out of the hands of terrorists and extremists will reduce their ability to get more bombs, weapons or insurgents into the fight. Thus, the counter-narcotics efforts in the Northern Arabian Sea have an indirect but meaningful impact on the Afghanistan campaign. It is also worth noting that by tackling the supply chain vice the farmer, the coalition can avoid the direct negative effects to relationship building with the disaffected and poor farmers in Afghanistan whose livelihoods may be dependent on their meagre opium crop.

Whatever the impact in Afghanistan, the maritime mission still stands on its own. Bringing peace and security to the region enables the people that live and work there to get on with their lives – to earn a living. Extremism is defeated one opinion at a time, over generations. The greatest weapon against intolerance is education. Building solid relationships, working with people, and being a force for stability will help create the conditions for lasting effect on the ground.

### **Where do we go from here?**

With some solid success with this deployment, one question needs to be addressed. Where should Canada and the CF go from here? What about the navy

transition that is now underway? As the Chief of Maritime Staff noted in his last annual strategic assessment:

The navy is on the threshold of a major transition period, in which the fleet we know today will be replaced by the fleet of tomorrow. Over a seven to ten year period beginning at the turn of the decade, the navy will be modernizing or replacing all of its major surface combatants, while at the same time introducing into service a new maritime helicopter and a new class of patrol ships.<sup>13</sup>

As we go through this transition and await the arrival of new destroyers and AORs, Canada will likely not be able to participate in coalition operations with Task Groups. Indeed, our ability to put fully capable frigates into operations in this period will be affected by the reduced number of available hulls as ships are sequentially refitted with their midlife upgrades.

But by the same token, we should not want this experience to be a fleeting legacy. We should be trying to build on this effort - and reinforce and nurture those relationships that we have started in the region. If Canada is serious about playing a major role and about fulfilling its moral obligations in international affairs, then now would a good time to examine a more comprehensive strategy to address this region. We need to develop a broadly based approach that reconciles our priorities across departments and finds the synergies that can be leveraged for optimum effect. We should articulate our priorities by country and region, and look for both investment and development potential that can bring lasting effect in terms of Canadian diplomatic aspirations and in respect to our commitment in the global war on terror.

From the military perspective, international leadership opportunities are rare and we have much to gain and offer. Such experience is critical to creating our future

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<sup>13</sup> Maritime Commander's Strategic Assessment 2008, 5 Dec 2007.

military leaders. With fewer assets available during the major transition period about to begin, we should look for opportunities to command or participate from shore. CTF 150 has been commanded from ashore by several nations. Another option is to offer to lead CTF 152, the coalition command responsible for the central and southern Arabian Gulf. This would provide a solid basis for increasing Canadian influence and understanding among Gulf Cooperation Council nations from within the coalition headquarters in Bahrain.

In the short term, while we are able, Canada should also continue to send individual ships to the region. Programmes need to be oriented around achieving effect both for the coalition, and nationally. Greater advance planning and liaison between departments should be explored. Future commitments to the World Food Program should be incorporated where feasible.

Finally, Canada should have a long term strategy for the region that incorporates whole of government objectives. For the CF, when we have reconstituted a deployable Task Group capability, Canada should command coalition operations from sea, as a demonstration of ability and national will.

## **Conclusion**

Task Force Arabian Sea was a successful deployment for the Canadian Expeditionary Forces Command, and the Navy and Air Force teams in support. We achieved excellent effect across the four lines of operation in the campaign plan - Maritime Security Operations, Theatre Security Cooperation, Public Affairs, and Maritime Influence. This deployment showed that Canada has an enduring interest in

the Arabian Sea region; that we are prepared to commit national resources to it; that we care what happens there. We proved our ability to lead an international maritime operation; thirty-two ships from seven nations participated in CTF 150 during our command. Canadian and coalition ships visited over 175 vessels, boarded sixteen suspect vessels, stopped eleven piracy attacks while preventing countless others, and saved the lives of about 115 people at sea in eight different rescue and assistance operations. The coalition conducted four major operations while Canada was in command, increasing the security and stability in the region – making the world a safer place. Canadian ships and the Task Force Commander visited twenty-two different countries, eleven in the theatre of operations, and eleven in the transit periods to and from the theatre, bringing some Canadian influence.

The Canadian escort of World Food Program ships helped safely deliver supplies to feed millions of Somalis. The WFP escort demonstrated Canadian values and interests, and our desire to contribute to humanitarian relief efforts. The Canadian government and military were able to demonstrate leadership. This short notice change in tasking for *Ville de Québec* also demonstrated the value of forward deployed naval forces, ready to respond to emerging threats and opportunities.

Although a comprehensive Maritime Influence strategy was beyond our reach on this deployment, we increased Canadian influence in many locations. A more synergistic approach is possible that could bring all of the stakeholders in Canadian international policy together; industry, development, foreign affairs, defence and others working together to articulate plans and priorities, by country and region, over the long term. In this way, resources could be brought to bear to bring maximum effect to each

engagement and to focus our energies in those regions of greatest interest to Canadians. For maritime engagements, Canada's navy could then play a more significant role. Canada's Navy represents more than military power or gunboat diplomacy. It is a deployable microcosm of Canadian society and technology. Much greater use of this capability could be made through improved coordination across government departments.

Whether we choose a more comprehensive approach or not, the fact remains that Canada's maritime forces have and can continue to contribute significantly to the global security and stability. We have both a capability and a responsibility to act. While our maritime forces, ships and aircraft, may be reduced in capacity over the coming five to ten years as we re-equip, we can still contribute with single ships and shore based staffs. However, when we come out at the other end of this transition, with a modern and capable force, we should be prepared to contribute leadership. Moreover, having proven the value of being forward deployed with both *Ville de Québec* and *St John's*, we should be prepared to always have forward deployed and, in the motto of Maritime Command "Ready Aye Ready".

In conclusion, HMC Ships *Iroquois*, *Calgary*, *Protecteur* and *Ville de Québec*, their three embarked helicopter detachments, the headquarters staff and the liaison and support teams ashore did an outstanding job, representing the country in the finest traditions of the Canadian Forces. Their operations and leadership drew significant national, international and Arabian Sea regional media attention, bringing credit to Canada, and to the coalition of nations participating in CTF 150. These men and women and the Canadians they serve should be proud.



About the Author: Rear-Admiral Bob Davidson joined the Canadian Navy in 1977. He has commanded the submarine OJIBWA, the frigate ST. JOHN'S, the Fourth Maritime Operations Group, and Canadian Fleet Atlantic. He recently returned from the Arabian Sea region where he commanded Combined Task Force 150 from June until September, as part of the Coalition Maritime Forces in Operation Enduring Freedom. He currently serves as the Director of the Strategic Joint Staff at National Defence Headquarters.