



Backgrounder
December 13, 2005

Defending Sovereignty

A more effective, more rapidly deployable Canadian Forces

THE ISSUE

After years of neglect under the Liberal government, Canada does not have sufficient capacity to fulfill our national and global defence responsibilities. Budgets have declined, equipment is in disrepair, and troop levels are too low.

Experts agree that the government's planned defence spending levels are inadequate. The Senate Committee on National Security and Defence recently reported, "Of the \$12.8 billion the government promised over the next five years, only \$1.1 billion was earmarked for the first two years. That means that the rehabilitation process isn't even going to get *started* until 2008-2009. Even when the process does stutter to a start, it will remain vastly underfunded, primarily because the armed forces have been starved for money for so many years." The Committee further states, "Each branch of the Forces is hundreds of millions of dollars short of what would be required just to perform the basics," and that the government's new defence policy is "worthless without proper funding, and the funding simply isn't there."^[1]

Similarly, a recent Queen's University study states, "While the 2005 Budget announced substantial funding increases for National Defence over the coming five years, the bulk of those increases are delayed until the later years. In the meantime of course, 'rust out' continues inexorably to erode the 'capabilities platforms' of the CF... The 'Future Force' capabilities inventory will be reduced and emaciated, and maintaining it will be problematic if drastic steps are not taken immediately."^[2]

The inadequate funding levels for national defence have led to a decline in our sovereign capacity to respond to crises at home and around the world. For example, Canada lacks the capacity to rapidly airlift heavy deployments within Canada and overseas. Canada's fleet of CC-130 Hercules tactical transport aircraft is no longer sufficiently serviceable to meet domestic and international commitments. And while Canada's tactical airlift fleet is extremely important and must be replaced as soon as possible, this capability is unable to lift the large loads needed for major deployments that only larger strategic airlift can provide. Only strategic lift aircraft can carry large awkward loads, such as the army's heavy trucks (such as the

HLVW), water purification machinery, or field hospitals, and can carry them for long distances overseas without refueling.

Because of the absence of strategic airlift in the Canadian Air Force, Canada relies on the United States and east European companies for rentals or loans to meet our national and global responsibilities. This was the case during the 1997 Manitoba floods, the 1998 ice storm in Quebec and eastern Ontario, the 1994 UN mission in Rwanda, the 1999 UN mission in East Timor, and the 2002 mission in Afghanistan.^[3] This was also the case for Canada's disaster assistance missions during the 1999 earthquake in Turkey, the 2005 tsunami in Southeast Asia, and the more recent earthquake in Pakistan.^[4]

The Senate Committee also reported that Canada's response to Hurricane Katrina in September 2005 would have been greatly improved with strategic airlift. "Had the Government had strategic airlift capability, it could have provided a more rapid response to the crisis. Delivery of supplies and personnel could have begun a few hours after the Government decided to act, instead of the six days that was required to get the ships in place. Without strategic airlift, the capacity of the Canadian Forces to move 1,000 personnel and tonnes of supplies is limited."^[5]

For these reasons, the Canadian Forces' "Strategic Capability Plan," released in 2000, states, "Mobility is perhaps the most significant change in capability goals since the end of the Cold War." Furthermore, it is now recognized that the prospects of Canada obtaining timely access to commercial and allied aircraft capable of carrying out-sized cargo will decrease over the next decade as a result of increased demand and diminishing serviceability.^[6] For all these reasons, the Canadian Forces need a new air transport fleet, one that includes a balanced mixture of both strategic and tactical airlift.

Improving strategic deployability involves more than reducing response time and increasing load capacity. It also involves the effectiveness of the deployments we do send. Two very effective capabilities are airborne army units and disaster assistance units.

The Canadian Forces no longer have a stand alone airborne unit. Army airborne units can deploy Canada-wide or world-wide very rapidly. This capability is important for the defence of Canada's sovereignty in locations that are inaccessible by road or helicopter such as the far reaches of the Arctic or for responding rapidly for UN or NATO missions. This capability would be particularly important for effectively responding to a major air disaster search and rescue operation in remote locations.

The Canadian Forces do have a disaster assistance capability, called the Disaster Assistance Response Team or DART. This team can deploy globally to provide primary medical care, the production of safe drinking water, and engineering capabilities, for up to 40 days. However, DART includes only about 200 personnel, comprising a 45-person headquarters in Kingston, a 20-person logistics platoon, a 37-person engineer troop, a 40-person medical platoon, and a 45-person security platoon.^[7] Canada's ability to respond rapidly and effectively to international humanitarian crises is very important for meeting Canada's international responsibilities and advancing the values of Canadians. Strategic airlift will ensure this. As well as responding more quickly, it is important to increase the capacity of the DART itself to respond to humanitarian crises.

THE PLAN

The Conservative plan – “Canada First” – will strengthen Canada’s national sovereignty. The primary objective of the federal government is to defend our nation’s sovereignty, and the Canadian Forces are central to this national objective. Sovereignty means Canada must be able to fulfill national responsibilities, to provide effective emergency response and to protect our vast territory. At the same time, sovereignty means Canada must be able to fulfill United Nations and NATO responsibilities, often on multiple continents, often simultaneously.

The Conservative “Canada First” plan will create new defence capabilities as well as expand and transform existing capabilities in every region of Canada, for greater strength at home and greater confidence abroad. Today’s announcement includes the overall outlines of the Conservative plan and provides three specific commitments from the larger plan.

Overall improvement in defence capabilities

- A Conservative government will make significant increases to the National Defence budget over currently planned levels in each of the next five years, with spending reaching \$1.8 billion over the current projection by 2010-11.
- Defence spending increases will be used as part of a carefully planned “Canada First” defence policy.

More rapidly deployable Canadian Forces

- **Provide a new strategic and tactical airlift fleet at CFB Trenton.** A fleet of at least three heavy strategic lift aircraft will be stationed at CFB Trenton. In addition, we will continue replacing Canada’s fleet of tactical lift and fixed wing search-and-rescue aircraft, based at CFB Trenton and elsewhere.
 - **Station a new airborne army battalion (650 regular force personnel) at CFB Trenton.** The Canadian Forces have had army airborne units in the past at different locations. Today, the Canadian Forces have a Canadian Parachute Centre located at CFB Trenton that supports parachute-related training and aerial delivery operations.^[8] Given the capabilities already present at CFB Trenton, this base provides the ideal location for stationing a new army airborne unit.
 - **Double the disaster relief capabilities and personnel strength of DART at CFB Kingston.** Increasing the size and capacities of DART, combined with convenient access to airborne lift capacity, will significantly improve Canada’s ability to respond to disasters around the world.
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- [1] Senate Committee on National Security and Defence, "WOUNDED: Canada's Military and the Legacy of Neglect, Our Disappearing Options for Defending the Nation Abroad and at Home," September 2005, executive summary.
- [2] Brian MacDonald, "Closing the Policy Gap," *Transforming National Defence Administration*, ed. by Douglas Bland, Queen's University, 2005, pg. 45.
- [3] Toronto Star, "Canada's military is looking for a lift; Forces need own air transport fleet, analysts argue," March 23, 2002.
- [4] Sudbury Star, "Canadian aid team off to Turkey: No reports of deaths among 750 Canadians believed to be there," August 20, 1999; and Belleville Intelligencer, "DART heads out today to quake ravaged region," October 15, 2005.
- [5] Senate Committee on National Security and Defence, "WOUNDED: Canada's Military and the Legacy of Neglect, Our Disappearing Options for Defending the Nation Abroad and at Home," September 2005, pg. 81.
- [6] David Rudd, "The Evolving Canadian Army," Canadian Institute of Strategic Studies, November, 2003.
- [7] DND Backgrounder, "Canadian Forces Disaster Assistance Response Team," January 10, 2005, http://www.forces.gc.ca/site/Newsroom/view_news_e.asp?id=301.
- [8] CFB Trenton, Canadian Parachute Centre, http://www.airforce.forces.gc.ca/8wing/squadron/cpc_e.asp.