A CANADIAN DEFENCE AND SECURITY INNOVATION CENTRE: AN IDEA WHOSE TIME HAS COME

by Bob Near

Introduction

Ensuring the defence and security of Canadians, protecting and projecting Canada’s interests abroad, and contributing to international peace and stability are among the most important responsibilities of the Government of Canada. This requires the Department of National Defence (DND) and the Canadian Forces (CF) to possess not only physical assets such as soldiers, aircraft, ships and other military ‘hardware,’ but also a sound intellectual understanding of national and international security matters in all their dimensions. In other words, the Canadian Government, and, specifically, the DND/CF, must possess the high quality ‘greyware’ necessary for identifying and analyzing a wide range of defence and security challenges in order to develop effective policies and strategies for managing those policies. These include how best to manifest Canadian sovereignty in remote regions of the country, respond to a potential pandemic, conduct consequence management for chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear (CBRN) events, and cooperate with Allies in combating global terrorism, along with other issues. Having a powerful intellectual capacity in all these areas is also important for enabling the development of appropriate operating concepts, doctrine, training, and equipment, not only for the CF, but for all instruments of national power.

To achieve this strategic level greyware capability, it is proposed that a radically new and specialized CF organization be established, based upon a reconstituted and re-ruled Canadian Forces Experimentation Centre (CFEC). To be called the Defence and Security Innovation Centre (DASIC), this new unit would focus upon identifying and proposing innovative solutions to Canada’s security and defence needs. Possessing in-depth understanding of Canada’s strategic situation while valuing ‘outside the box’ thinking, the DASIC would actively explore new defence and security concepts for Canada, especially those requiring a whole of government, or even a whole of nation approach. As such, it would carry out the following activities:

• investigate and analyze Canada’s defence and security requirements in their totality;
Foundation for the DASIC: The Invariants of Canadian Defence

In broad terms, the role and functioning of the DASIC would be established upon what the late Dr. R.J. Sutherland of the Defence Research Board described as the ‘invariants’ of Canadian Defence. The first of these invariants is that Canadian defence and security policy must never prejudice or threaten Canadian national unity; second, Canada must never be perceived as offering a threat to the security and territorial integrity of the United States – hence, the requirement for intimate defence cooperation between both countries to secure and protect the North American continent; and third, in order to balance and offset the huge American preponderance in the Canada-US defence relationship, Canada must actively seek out and participate in other international security arrangements, such as NATO and the United Nations. It is in support of these three invariants that the DASIC would operate. The DASIC’s main product would be defence and security concepts that foster national unity, provide security assurances to our American neighbour, and enable Canada to operate effectively in the international arena as an independent, respected, and capable middle power. To this end, the DASIC would also monitor and advise on CF developmental policies, priorities, and processes.

In effect, the DASIC would undertake to explore Canada’s security requirements in all of its many dimensions – not just military – while proposing policies, strategies, and doctrine for satisfying them. At the same time, it would constitute an outstanding example of the CF’s “… transformation journey to [becoming] more relevant, responsive, and effective in defending Canadians and their interests at home and abroad”.

• design and recommend national security operating concepts;
• conduct security and defence experimentation, modelling and simulation;
• write strategic level security and defence doctrine for the Government of Canada;
• liaise and coordinate with ‘think tanks’ and academia on international security issues deemed relevant to Canadian interests; and
• coordinate with the Canadian Defence Academy and civilian institutes of strategic studies to sponsor education and training for select CF members in the field of national security studies.

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DASIC Operating Framework: Canada’s National Security Policy

While Canada’s strategic invariants would establish the strategic operating foundation for the DASIC, its day-to-day work would be conducted within the framework of Canada’s National Security Policy (NSP). The NSP establishes six activity areas through which Canadian security is to be achieved:

- Intelligence;
- Emergency Planning and Management;
- Public Health Emergencies;
- Transportation Security;
- Border Security; and
- International Security

In each of these activity areas, there are specified actions and tasks leading to a multi-faceted approach for managing real and potential threats to Canadian security. While the policy assigns DND and the CF particular responsibilities in the field of International Security, notably with respect to NATO and the UN, the fact remains that all six security areas could involve DND and the CF, depending upon the scale and scope of a particular emergency or crisis. Consequently, the DASIC’s focus would be on developing operating concepts in all six security domains, including establishing requirements for integrated doctrine, training, and equipment to meet whatever security issues might arise. The DASIC would also assist other government departments and agencies (OGD/OGA) in conducting their own contingency planning in support of the NSP.

Supporting Guidelines: Government Policy and Priorities

While the NSP will provide the DASIC its main terms of reference, the DASIC’s day-to-day work would also be determined by the political policies and priorities of the government of the day, including Canada’s treaty obligations as a member of NATO and NORAD. Domestically, this will require the DASIC to develop concepts, doctrine, and training for ensuring Canadian sovereignty in the high north and on our coasts, responding to civil emergencies, and affecting a host of other tasks and activities the Canadian Government deems important. Internationally, the DASIC will produce concepts and doctrine in support of Canada’s continental defence obligations, and for effecting our NATO and UN responsibilities. These include, inter alia, contributing to international stability and peace support operations, as well as alliance transformation initiatives agreed to by Canada, such as the Prague Capabilities Commitment, the NATO Response Force, and Force Goals assigned Canada in the NATO Defence Planning Questionnaire.

Comprehensive/Integrated Operating Approach

The diverse nature and complexity of Canada’s security and defence situation will require the DASIC to embrace a comprehensive or integrated operating approach – one that capitalizes upon the capabilities and talents that reside outside of DND and the CF. This includes working closely with other government departments and agencies, such as the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, the Canadian International Development Agency, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the Canadian Security and Intelligence Service, and Public Safety Canada. Also, the DASIC will maintain close contact with non-governmental organizations (NGO) and other civilian specialists in the broader security field. To undertake the development of integrated security
concepts, it would be desirable to include members from these organizations on the staff of the DASIC to work shoulder-to-shoulder as part of one integrated team. In addition, there would be liaison and exchange officers from Allied nations, and perhaps other security partners. To further meet the requirements of a comprehensive and integrated approach, the DASIC would seek out cooperative relationships with academia, the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre, and other national and international institutes involved in defence and security concepts.

Creating the DASIC

As to physical infrastructure requirements, the new DASIC could be housed in the already approved for construction “Joint Experimentation Capability (JEC)” facility, planned for Shirley’s Bay, Ottawa. With respect to its initial operating capability (IOC), the DASIC would draw its personnel from the existing Canadian Forces Experimentation Centre, which would be ‘re-cast’ and populated with the appropriately qualified personnel to create this new capability. The physical design of the DASIC building would be one of its most unique features, being ergonomically moulded to foster intellectual creativity, innovation, and brainstorming, which will be key attributes of what, in effect, will be a ‘Team Canada Idea Centre.’ At full operational capability, the DASIC will be an intellectual showcase, not only for the CF/ DND, but also for the Government of Canada. As such, it should have no problem attracting the best military and civilian minds for employment within.

DASIC Areas of Focus

The DASIC will have a “Canada First” strategic focus – meaning its work will be anchored on the invariants of Canadian defence while developing concepts and doctrine consistent with the NSP and the defence priorities established by the Government. Within these modalities, the DASIC would organize its work around three areas:

- analysis of Canadian security and defence requirements in support of meeting our domestic, continental, and international defence obligations. The DASIC would also explore emerging security issues, such as climate change, energy security, and how to effect new doctrines, such as the Responsibility to Protect;
- concept development and experimentation in all six national security domains with particular focus upon Effects-Based Approach to Operations (EBAO), Network-Enabled Operations (NEOps), Whole of Government approach, and NATO capability packages agreed to by Canada. In this latter regard, the DASIC would work closely with NATO’s Allied Command Transformation, with a view to obtaining NATO Security Infrastructure Program (NSIP) funds and NATO experimentation resources in support of DASIC work that also supported NATO transformation objectives;
- writing strategic level doctrine with particular regard for applying Canadian national power in support of operations in a Joint, Interagency, Multinational, and Public (JIMP) environment.

Port Inspection Divers, working from HMCS Discovery in Vancouver harbour, inspect the jetty around Canada Place.
Conclusion

Creating a Defence and Security Innovation Centre of the type described will provide the Government of Canada with an outstanding intellectual capability for helping meet the nation’s defence and security needs. Anchored on Canada’s strategic invariants, while working within the NSP and government priorities of the day, the highly skilled military and civilian members of the DASIC will develop innovative concepts, doctrine, and strategies well-suited for enabling Canada to succeed in the increasingly complex defence and security environment of the 21st Century. Indeed, the DASIC is an idea whose time has come.

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NOTES

1. CANFORGEN 159/07 CDS SITREP 5, 07 Oct 2007.
3. There are several examples in Canadian history when the Government’s defence policies had to be managed in such a way as to preclude irrevocable damage to national unity. These include Sir Wilfrid Laurier’s caveats on the despatch of Canadian troops to fight in the South African War of 1899-1902, the Conscription Crisis of 1917, and the lessons learned from it, leading to how the issue was managed during the Second World War, and the Mackenzie King Government’s utter refusal to have Canada engage in British Imperial defence planning during the inter-war years. More recently, regarding the war in Afghanistan, some commentators have stated that significant casualties from the province of Quebec would seriously harm national unity. Securing an Open Society: Canada’s National Security Policy (Ottawa: Privy Council Office, 2004).
4. For example, a terrorist attack upon the Windsor tunnel, employing radioactive or biological materials would readily invoke a national response across all six security domains, while requiring the CF to provide support of one kind or another to civilian / OGD ‘first responders.’
5. The term ‘integrated,’ in its broadest sense, entails military and non-military organizations working together to achieve a common or shared outcome.

Three members of HMCS Winnipeg’s Naval Boarding Party look out over Karachi harbour, Pakistan, 26 April 2009. The ship was visiting Karachi to increase awareness of NATO activities in the region.