

REMARKS ON CANADIAN DEFENCE PREPAREDNESS for the Defence Policy Roundtable - June 27, 2016; Montreal, P.Q.

A conventional approach to this topic might include a review of the world geopolitical outlook, contemplation of Canada's desired role and positioning therein, followed by an appreciation of the size, shape, composition and capability of the Canadian Forces therefore and then the kind of equipment and training required to fulfill such roles. Predicting what the world may look like and what the actual opportunities and demands upon Canada on the world stage over the next decade, let alone several decades, requires more than clear foresight. It requires studied flexibility coupled with firm determination and above all a strong domestic base.

A country may equip its navy with the ability to withstand hyper kinetic weapons or focused EMP attacks. Such a country may acquire aircraft that are hard to detect to interdict unwanted visitors to its vast Arctic regions. It may equip its soldiers with advance personal armour, encrypted communications systems, state of the art personal weapons as well as rapid deployment and recovery ground and air vehicles. It may even provide advanced psychological training to reduce combat related PTSD. It would be expected to wrap all such preparation into coherent military doctrine consistent with the policy objectives of the government of the day.

Leaving aside the always present issues of lag or gap between policy and reality, capability and need, availability versus readiness, and like concerns, the one issue affecting a country's defence which is often not addressed as part of its defence policy is its domestic preparedness and resilience. In an age of instant communication, large scale trans-border migration, hostile cyber intrusions, asymmetric warfare and increasing dependence upon electricity, it is reasonable to ask 'how well prepared' are the country's defences to deal with, for example, 1) cyber terrorism of its power, financial, medical and/or transportation systems; 2) bio/chemical/pandemic threats; 3) artificially inspired domestic provocations and disturbances; 4) public food and water sources contamination; and perhaps worst of all, 5) long term shut down of the electric GRID.

To say that any one of the foregoing are unlikely, if not totally implausible, is to ignore the reality of the experience of others. Belgium might never have thought their nuclear plants were vulnerable to penetration; the Ukraine might not have believed that any party would deliberately 'black out' their power system;

Californians would likely doubt that a transformer station could be shot up and shut down; Floridians would never believe that someone might shoot a hole in a nuclear retort for sport; Canadians would have considered unlikely that 18 youth would plot to blow up Parliament and behead the Prime Minister or that others would randomly shoot up a Calgary bar, kill a ceremonial soldier on Parliament Hill or run down a soldier in a shopping center lot or plan to derail an international train over Niagara Falls; or for that matter, plant bombs in mailboxes and kill a provincial Cabinet Minister.

Many of the forgoing events have or have the potential to upset the stability of a society, distract a government from its planned military focus and potentially require the use of the military in a manner not likely well considered in the then current defence policy. Of course, the presumption is that the multi-task capable military, especially the ground forces and some of the air and naval troops, will be able to respond to domestic needs. But if such needs are a planned part of another country's military initiative to neutralize Canada's defence capabilities, it is not hard to envision an overwhelming situation.

If the domestic situation was truly severe, one can reasonably ask the extent to which the country's needs would be put ahead of immediate personal and family needs *in extremis*. Will military discipline falter in a prolonged dire domestic situation? Will Canadian soldiers serving abroad or at home willingly maintain their posts if their families are in grave danger at home? Such a question must also be posed for the civilian 'first responders'; will they willingly retain their normal roles in the face of prolonged overwhelming adversity. But before that question is addressed, it is perhaps reasonable to ask 'just what is the role of police and other first responders in overall Canada's defence policy'? Are their roles integrated with that of the military; can their responsibility 'silos' be integrated effectively?

And then, finally for this commentary, one might also ask, what is the expected role of the individual Canadian in the country's defence? Has it been defined? Is it shared and understood? Based on this commentators experience, the answer to these last two questions, like many of those preceding, is 'NO'. The Canadian public, its first responders and its military are not adequately prepared to sustain Canadian society in a situation of prolonged overwhelming adversity. And every day our society becomes increasingly dependent on one element for its survival - the electrical GRID. Thank you.

