

Lingering Resistance of “Cultural Impediments” and Passive Indecision

Despite diplomatic pleasantries during an October 2004 visit to Ottawa, US Homeland Secretary Tom Ridge was fairly blunt with Anne McLellan, Canada's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness. US officials clearly feel that Canada is not doing enough, fast enough. The overall Canadian effort appears to be built on a defensive mindset featuring passive anti-terror activity. Unlike American and British operations, there is little sign of Canadian offensive counter-terror operations in which the fight is taken to the terrorist's base. Indications are that the Canadian government is not as aggressively active as it could be in the global war on terror.

This lack of aggression allows passivity in many government programmes intended to support the global war on terror and enhance Canadian security. Overall, not enough money has been allocated quickly enough. Where resources may be adequate, government processes cannot react fast enough, and depending on where one sits in the organization, perceptions of accomplishment may be vastly different.

The Department of National Defence (DND) and the Canadian Forces (CF) are struggling to play a meaningful role in the national and international security agenda, but their efforts continue to be mired in stodgy government bureaucracy. One example of this struggle is the DND/CF initiative to conduct modern network enabled operations (NEOps).

DND and the CF say that NEOps increase the effectiveness of military forces by improving information and intelligence sharing between various elements, including land, sea and air forces. Consequently, in their eyes, the implementation of NEOps is a key step to achieving shared awareness, increased speed of command, higher tempo of operations and increased security of our forces in the field. NEOps apply equally to international and domestic operations.

In April 2004, Canada's new National Security Policy (NSP) recognized the requirement for a broad national security management framework, and called for an integrated national and international approach by Canada's security partners. NEOps should be used for the integration of

the intelligence, information and operational aspects of this national security partnership in order to achieve maximum effectiveness.

According to the DND, NEOps is recognized as the cornerstone of armed forces transformation around the world. It is known as Network Enabled Capabilities (NEC) within NATO and the UK; Network Centric Warfare (NCW) in the U.S. and Australia; and Network Centric Operations (NCO) elsewhere. The concept has been discussed in military circles for at least 15 years. Only recently has it gained any real traction in Canada.

Over 800 government and military officials attended a recent two-day DND/CF sponsored symposium on NEOps in Ottawa. A third day of workshops was restricted to a smaller number of invited attendees from DND, the CF, other government departments, academia and industry. The workshops offered opportunities to discuss specific aspects of NEOps, such as effective engagement; command and sense; and force generation, support, sustainment and mobility.

Acting as Master of Ceremonies, **Lieutenant-General (Ret'd) Mike Jeffery**, the former Army Commander, explained that the overall aim of the conference was to solicit learned opinions and ideas that would contribute to DND's development of a Network Enabled Operations concept. The symposium offered opportunity for DND and the CF to consult with academic and industry experts, representatives from allied countries, and members of other government departments and agencies. The

expected end result of the symposium and subsequent consultations will be published in spring 2005 as an official NEOps concept document. A focused roadmap enhancing the interoperability of the CF in future national and international operations is expected to follow. By then the idea of NEOps will have been around for about 20 years.

Opening remarks were presented by the Hon. Keith Martin, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence and Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS), **General Ray Henault**, who was recently elected to NATO's top military position, Chairman of the Military Committee. General Henault has been a champion of CF transformation throughout his tour of duty as CDS. He made the clear point that future NEOps technology must be an enabler for more effective human activity and it must cover both joint (multi-service) and combined (multi-national) operations. NEOps can change the nature of operational command and control processes, said General Henault, but the fundamental role of a Commander's intent would remain the predominant element. However, NEOps would provide more flexibility to conduct missions in accordance with that intent.

Subsequent speakers outlined some theoretical aspects of NEOps. **Dr. Terry Pudas** from the US Office of Force Transformation described NCW as a new way of looking at the battlespace and a way in which friendly coalition forces can achieve “overmatch” of enemy capabilities.

Group Captain Dick Hemsley, of the UK Ministry of Defence Command and Battlespace Management Office, reinforced General Henault's point that NEOps should remain “command-centric,” but that it would free commanders from being tied to their command post and allow them to exercise command in as personal a way as might be needed. In a similar way, **Brigadier Gary Bornholt**, Australia's defence Attaché in Washington, reiterated the centrality of the human dimension in war.

Weaving throughout the technological aspects of NEOps was a significant interest in how people would interact in such an environment.

The Director of Global Operations for the US Strategic Command, United States Navy **Rear Admiral Thomas Zelibor**, described his experience with early aspects of NCW during his time as Commander of the *USS Carl Vinson* Battle Group in the Persian Gulf, immediately after the 9/11 ter-

rorist attacks in New York. He outlined his practical efforts in leveraging available networking technology to change the way in which people worked and cooperated, all the while aiming to achieve greater combat effectiveness. Admiral Zelibor was clear in stating that the “culture is the key to change” and that “information is power” – if it is shared correctly. Question period, however, revealed audience skepticism as to whether these changes produced any real advantage for supporting coalition elements.

Dr. Hau Sing Tse of the Canadian International Development Agency and **Mr. David Mulroney** of Foreign Affairs Canada outlined their experiences with Canadian troops in Afghanistan, helping to pursue the Canadian defence, development, diplomacy and trade (DDDT) agenda there.

Lieutenant-General Rick Hillier, the Army Commander who recently returned from a six-month tour of duty as the NATO Commander of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Kabul, struck a memorable chord with a clear call for attention to be paid to “human networks” before too much funding is spent on supporting technology. LGen Hillier sees a more extensive role for “Team Canada” beyond the bounds of a simple DDDT agenda, and in doing so, he offered an earthy explanation that, in his experience, international coalitions, such as those in Afghanistan, are simply not capable of absorbing the kind of modern technological processes and architectures so glibly talked about in NEOps project offices. This was the first cold splash of reality delivered to the symposium.

Mr. Ward Elcock, the new Deputy Minister of National Defence and former Director of the Canadian Intelligence Service, provided an overview of how NEOps could be used to bring coherency to government operations and a new level of cooperation as called for in the national security strategy. When asked if he knew of any legislative changes being planned to allow government departments to share information more freely, he suggested that the real problem was not one of legislation, but more one of culture, in that there was still not a willingness to share on the part of some elements and institutions.

From the policing sector, RCMP **Commissioner Giuliano Zaccardelli** was even more blunt. Not only is there a lack of willingness to engage new methods of operating, there is “a draconian cult of accountability” within government. He suggested that the media is stifling honest initiative

POLITICALLY CORRECT:

“Of course we see the benefits of sharing, we’ll get right on it.”

THE REALITY OF CULTURE:

“Will we become vulnerable through sharing too much?”

and innovation. “Technology is the easy part,” he says, “it’s the culture that’s tough to change.” Despite grand pronouncements, senior government officials are still apparently not setting necessary conditions for modernization to take root and thrive. Commissioner Zaccardelli rhetorically asks if we are prepared to take advantage of the opportunities presented, hinting that many people are still too concerned about their own “rice bowls,” at the expense of being a team player. He noted that Wayne Gretzky became the world’s greatest hockey player, with more assists than any player in history, by “giving the puck away” in the right circumstances.

Paul Kennedy, Senior Assistant Deputy Minister responsible for the Emergency Management in National Security Branch in Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada, holds the optimistic view of emergency planning as a glass that is half full. “Interoperability,” he says, “is a continuing preoccupation” of governments at all levels.

To be fair, there is some evidence that improvements are being made. On 23 November, **Anne McLellan**, Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, and **David L. Emerson**, Minister of Industry, announced the introduction of wireless priority service (WPS) for use in times of emergency. WPS is intended to ensure that key public safety officials involved in managing emergency response situations will be able to use the wireless telephone system to communicate in times of crisis.

Mr. Kennedy, as one would expect of a senior government official, is consistent in his cautious, if upbeat, approach. He said much the same thing a month earlier at the Canadian Association for Security and Intelligence Studies international conference in Ottawa. A recent *Ottawa Citizen* series about emergency planning, written by Mohammed Adam, stated that “Mr. Kennedy is adamant that the country is prepared and getting better. Plans are in place, federal and provincial governments are working closer together than ever before and co-operation with the United States on

border security, critical infrastructure protection and terrorism has improved significantly.” However, this position is contrasted with views from **Senator Colin Kennedy**, the Chair of the Senate Committee on National Security and Defence, who, after hearing from municipal, provincial and federal officials for over two years, is “alarmed at how unready the country is.”

Arguably the most pleasantly surprising item on the agenda, the presentation by **Dr. Paul Sockett**, of Health Canada’s Infections Division, explained the significant strides made by Health Canada in setting up multi-level networks, many linked internationally, to discover, warn of and track infectious diseases around the world. Medical alerts can be exchanged on the Canadian Network for Public Health Intelligence (CNPHI).

In November 2004, the newest version of the Global Public Health Intelligence Network (GPHIN II) was jointly launched by Health Canada and the Washington-based Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI). This unique “early warning” system gathers and disseminates preliminary reports of public health significance on a real-time, 24/7 basis in seven languages. GPHIN monitors global media sources (such as news wires and web sites), gathering and disseminating relevant information on such topics as disease outbreaks, infectious diseases, contaminated food and water, bio-terrorism and exposure to chemical and radio-nuclear agents, and natural disasters. It also monitors issues related to the safety of products, drugs and medical devices.

Overall, it was interesting to hear most speakers explain, in one form or another, that “culture” was believed to be the single biggest issue to be overcome in building effective networks. People still matter. One startling example of the culture challenge came when Mr. Kennedy was describing the requirement for an effective communications plan in times of crisis (because it is important that the public retain faith in government actions). In doing so, he used the unfortunate hypothetical example that it might be more preferable to solve an incident in 48 hours, while implementing an effective communications plan, than to solve the same incident in 24 hours without coordinated communications. Is there really a culture within the public service that believes appearances for political sake are preferable to effective results, no matter how untidy they may appear to be? Or has the media effectively convinced our leaders that they cannot act in an emergency with-

out first garnering general approval via media reporting?

Two dichotomies were apparent throughout the conference. First, American speakers invariably spoke of networked operations in a context of clear combat against an enemy, while each Canadian presenter dwelled on "operations other than war" or peace support operations. **Rear Admiral Jamie Fraser**, the CF Liaison Officer at the US Northern Command (NORTHCOM) Headquarters in Colorado Springs told the audience bluntly that the US was "at war" and the nuances of winning "hearts and minds" in their operations are largely neglected until the fighting is over. This mindset was particularly apparent in RAdm Zelibor's presentation. LGen Hillier, on the other hand, reflected the prevalent Canadian preoccupation with post-conflict nation building. Until the gulf between the two positions, one offensive, the other defensive, is bridged, plans for truly networked coalition operations, let alone a close strategic relationship will remain problematic.

And second, the "culture-thing," is reflected in the differing views of government organizations. Mr. Paul Kennedy represents the way senior government leaders would like it to be, and indeed, in many

activities, our emergency planning glass may well be optimistically half full. Half full or half empty, the objective view remains that the job is only half done. It is the bothersome obstacles posed by remaining bureaucratic impediments that trouble Commissioner Zaccardelli and others.

Extensive discussions with mid-level CF senior officers and government contractors confirm that, in spite of senior-level optimism, too many stumbling blocks remain. Commissioner Zaccardelli is eloquently accurate in condemning a too-politically-correct CYA mentality in government and a sometimes intellectually fraudulent approach by those who see firing as the only answer to many professional transgressions. Neither approach does much to nurture trust or encourage initiative and innovation.

Mid-level officials identify a lingering resistance to the kind of information sharing and cooperation that found so many senior-level champions at this conference. "Great idea, but ...," they say. Within DND, the intelligence staff and information security staff are criticized for not supporting information sharing. Criminal intelligence remains closely protected because law enforcement and legal staffs fear its release would jeopardize prosecution. Many com-

plain that CSIS is just not interested in sharing anything with anyone. The bottom line is that much practical work remains to be done to allow cooperative network enabled operations to be manifest.

Despite all this, maybe we can accept that our national security planning glass is half full and that plans for effective NEOps in DND/CF are indeed moving ahead. In that case, we can look forward to the time when Mr. Kennedy and other senior government appointments start to dwell on the half-glass that is yet to be filled. We will welcome a determined campaign to eliminate troublesome cultural impediments that continue to thwart real improvement and modernization. Finally, there needs to be a more aggressive Canadian approach to the entire war on terror, to set the appropriate tone for DND/CF modernization and to enhance Canada's strategic relationships and security efforts around the world. **FL**

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