

1-23-2012

## “Missed Opportunity”: Operation Broadsword, 4 Brigade and the Gulf War, 1990–1991

Sean M. Maloney

*Royal Military College of Canada*

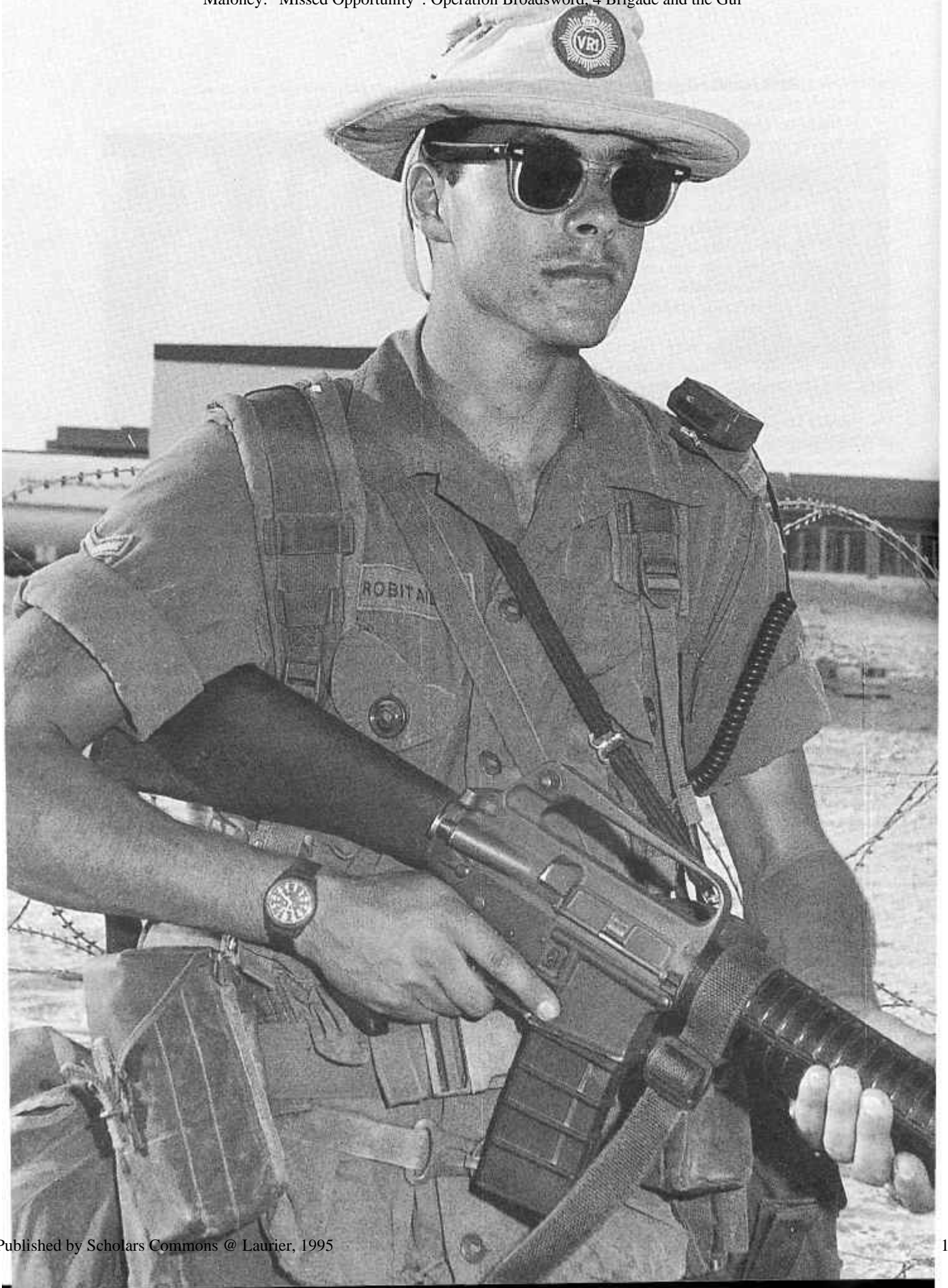
---

### Recommended Citation

Maloney, Sean M. (1995) "“Missed Opportunity”: Operation Broadsword, 4 Brigade and the Gulf War, 1990–1991," *Canadian Military History*: Vol. 4: Iss. 1, Article 4.

Available at: <http://scholars.wlu.ca/cmh/vol4/iss1/4>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Scholars Commons @ Laurier. It has been accepted for inclusion in Canadian Military History by an authorized administrator of Scholars Commons @ Laurier. For more information, please contact [scholarscommons@wlu.ca](mailto:scholarscommons@wlu.ca).



# “Missed Opportunity” Operation BROADSWORD, 4 Brigade and the Gulf War, 1990-1991

Sean M. Maloney

The decision not to deploy 4 Canadian Mechanized Brigade (CMB) to participate in the Gulf War may eventually be of interest to students of Canadian defence policy. The current lack of available material on this subject will no doubt attenuate such efforts. The purpose of this article is to provide a brief, and very tentative, discussion of relevant factors contributing to the decision not to go. In essence, the following should be considered a "toe in the water" rather than a "headlong dive."

On 2 August 1990, Iraq overran and occupied its smaller neighbour Kuwait. This act not only threatened the delicate balance of power in the Middle East but posed a direct threat to the economic well-being of the Western world. If Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states were invaded in turn by Iraq, the flow of Persian Gulf oil would be shut off, adversely affecting other parts of the world. Additionally, the morally repugnant and brutal occupation of Kuwait, coupled with the seizure of Western embassies and citizens (including Canadians) were indications that Saddam Hussein could not be negotiated with. The United Nations, with unprecedented haste, passed Resolutions 660 and 661, demanding that Iraq vacate Kuwait immediately or face imposition of economic sanctions.

In the wake of the conflict, a great deal of criticism was levelled at the apparent inability of the Army to

*Opposite: Private Mike Robitaille stands sentry at the entrance to Canada Dry 2 in Qatar.*  
(CFPU IWC 90-333)

deploy and sustain a brigade-sized force in a regional conflict. Much of this criticism resulted from inter-service disputes and defence budgetary matters. This could be ignored except that the alleged inability of the Army to conduct such a deployment was used by some to call into question the viability of Canada's land force commitment to NATO's Central Region since 1951. It thus deserves examination.

Responding to the U.N.'s request for forces to enforce the economic sanctions, Prime Minister Mulroney announced the deployment of a Canadian naval task group to the Persian Gulf on 10 August. Operation FRICTION had started. Other commands within the Canadian Forces were anticipating further action on the part of the Canadian Government and used their initiative to prepare a number of contingency plans in case the senior military leadership had to provide options to the political leadership. By 13 August, seven contingency plans were proposed even though no detailed staff work on them had been done. In order of priority these plans included:

1. Evacuation of Canadian nationals from the Gulf Region
2. The deployment of CF-18s to Turkey
3. Resupply and sustain the Operation FRICTION task group
4. Replace vessels involved in Operation FRICTION
5. In-theatre airlift support to Pan-Arab forces
6. Logistical support to multi-national forces in Gulf region
7. The Deployment of Ground Combat Forces.



*Two soldiers from 3rd Battalion Royal Canadian Regiment on patrol at Canada Dry 2 in Qatar.  
(CFPUSC 90-5050)*

As the Canadian naval task group departed on 24 August for its "Persian Excursion," the first U.S. pre-positioning ships from Diego Garcia disgorged enough equipment for two U.S. Marine Corps divisions. By 25 August, the U.N. passed Resolution 665, which permitted the use of military force to back up the economic sanctions against Iraq.

Around this time, Canadian Forces Europe had prepared a contingency plan to deploy a CF-18 squadron and an Army protection unit to an undesignated location in the Persian Gulf. This was a logical contingency to the planners who felt that the ships would require air cover and the aircraft would require protection from hostile ground forces. This contingency was quickly adopted by the Government and Operation SCIMITAR was announced on 14 September. The first CF-18s from CFB Baden left on 6 October for their base in Qatar, which had been secured by "M" Company 3 Royal Canadian Regiment (RCR), from Baden-Soellingen.

The air force planners had to be convinced to take a security company with them. Later on, "C" Company 1 Royal 22e Régiment (R22eR) took over as Security Company for the Operation SCIMITAR bases CANADA DRY 1 and CANADA DRY 2. The security threat was rated as "high" in theatre; Saddam Hussein publicly announced that terrorist groups sympathetic to Iraq would wreak havoc within those nations arrayed against him.

The Americans had already committed a Marine division, an airborne division, an airmobile division and a mechanized division to Saudi Arabia for Operation DESERT SHIELD. In addition to this, the United Kingdom announced Operation GRANBY on 14 September. Operation GRANBY deployed the 7th Armoured Brigade from British Army of the Rhine (BAOR); at the same time, France implemented Operation DAGUET which deposited the 6th Light Armoured Division into the desert sands of Saudi Arabia. The British wanted to bring in an entire three-brigade division to Saudi Arabia but could only provide 7th Armoured Brigade initially, followed by 4th Armoured Brigade on 22 November. Sometime around 14 September, Canadian officers at higher-level NATO headquarters were informally contacted by British officers from BAOR. Could Canada provide a brigade under British control to form a Commonwealth Division along the same lines as the Korea conflict in 1951?

This was a tempting request. It was, however, fraught with problems. The political dimensions went well beyond command and control on the battlefield. Some Canadian officers believed that the British wanted "more flags" on the battlefield to balance out American influence; in the British mind a Commonwealth partner might be easier to influence than say, the French. This would be important in the post-war resolution of the

conflict. In Canada, however, there were the issues of national pride and the old colonial relationship. For this and other reasons, the British proposal was put on hold.

Canadian military staff planners at all levels knew that force would ultimately be needed to evict Iraqi forces from Kuwait. They also knew from the list of planning priorities generated in August that the last Canadian option was to deploy ground troops to Saudi Arabia. Canadian initiative operated at new heights. Mobile Command HQ (FMC HQ), with input from 1st Canadian Division, conducted a quick staff check on 26 October on the feasibility of providing a brigade-sized formation to Saudi Arabia. The assumptions in this staff check formed the basis for what would eventually be called Operation BROADSWORD.

FMC HQ determined that any Canadian formation sent to Saudi Arabia would have to fight in a high-intensity battlefield environment, a battlefield that probably would include the use of chemical and biological weapons. The headquarters also assumed that Canadian units in Europe could be released by SACEUR for operations. Furthermore, the planners knew that such a formation would have to work within the framework of a higher formation like an Allied division or corps. More importantly, any Canadian contribution less than a brigade group was unacceptable for "visibility reasons."

After surveying the existing formations in the Canadian Army, FMC HQ determined that the

formation best suited for operations in the Middle East was 4 CMB. It was at 75% of war establishment strength, while the other brigades in Canada ranged from 70% to 45% of their establishment. Only 4 CMB had main battle tanks. Notably, the planners did not think that enough lift could be acquired to move a brigade group to Saudi Arabia immediately; they estimated that it would take 8 to 10 weeks to fully deploy the formation.

These assumptions were critical in the creation of the more detailed contingency plan Operation BROADSWORD. The Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS), General de Chastelain, ordered a staff check with the aim of analyzing the factors influencing the deployment and employment of a viable brigade group to support U.N. coalition action against Iraq. This staff check was prepared by 13 November, and added more detail to the FMC HQ staff check. The CDS check assumed that a Middle East deployment would receive first priority over existing Army operations, and that resources could be drawn from anywhere. Again, it was assumed that the force would be integrated into a higher formation (division or corps). Most importantly, this check assumed that the force would be based on 4 Canadian Mechanized Brigade Group (CMBG) after augmentation with Operation PENDANT (the unit was re-titled for this operation) adding a third infantry battalion with Armoured Personnel Carriers and a fourth tank squadron. Four CMBG also had to have enough supplies for 30 days of operations, and it had to have time to acclimatize. It was further assumed that 2 Princess Patricia's

*Iraqi prisoners of war in Saudi Arabia being watched by Canadian and British soldiers.*

(CFPU VSC 91-6224-2)





*Leopard Is of 4 Canadian Mechanized Brigade on exercise in Germany.*

*(CFPU LRC86 057-4)*

Canadian Light Infantry (PPCLI) would be the third infantry battalion.

The timings for the deployment of 4 CMBG to Saudi Arabia in the CDS staff check assumed that it would take 7 days to produce the plan, 45 days to assemble the force, 55 days to move the force and 35 days of training and acclimatization in-theatre. Some general shortfalls needed to be made up, however. The long standing problems in Canada's logistics and medical structures, problems which had been identified in the 1970s, had not been corrected even though major attempts at overhaul had taken place in the mid-1980s. The other critical area was combat sustainment. The problems inherent in reinforcing 4 CMBG in Germany had never been solved either, though attempts had been made to improve the state of Canada's reserve forces. If Canada wanted to sustain a brigade group in-theatre for a period longer than six months, reserve forces would have to be employed, and there was no job protection legislation to guarantee Militia soldiers their livelihood once they returned from the Gulf.

While the CDS staff check was undergoing review, External Affairs Minister Joe Clark met with his American counterpart, James Baker, in Bermuda on 13 November. The effect of this meeting on the CDS tasking instruction for 14 November is unclear, but the media speculated that the Americans sounded out Clark on sending land forces to Saudi Arabia. Whatever the impact, 1st Canadian Division HQ was tasked to prepare a plan to deploy a mechanized brigade group to Saudi Arabia, and this plan was to be called Operation BROADSWORD. For all intents and purposes, this tasking instruction used the same

assumptions as the CDS staff check. It should be noted here that no decision was made by the Canadian Government in November 1990 to deploy ground forces to Saudi Arabia; this was a military contingency plan in case the Canadian Government was asked to do so and committed itself to such a course of action.

Over the next 15 days, the Division and FMC HQ planning staffs in Lahr, Kingston and St. Hubert laboured to produce a concrete concept that would keep the Canadian Government's options open. As a result, the BROADSWORD plan was an amalgamation of several elements that included a concept of operation; a risk assessment, a movement estimate, and a casualty estimate.

The concept of operations for BROADSWORD, as in the earlier estimates, postulated that 4 CMBG would operate as part of an allied division within the framework of an allied corps. The threat environment in which 4 CMBG would be operating was a heavily armoured one, with the enemy in prepared defensive positions in the desert. Iraqi chemical capability was as diverse as it is was prolific; known enemy chemical weapons included mustard blistering agents, phosgene choking agents as well as Sarin and Tabun nerve agents. The Iraqis were also credited with producing BZ, a psychochemical similar to LSD. Finally, the enemy had combat experience from the long Iran-Iraq war; Canadian troops had not been in combat since Korea.

As to tactical employment, 4 CMBG was incapable of participating in an advance to contact, based on the equipment that it possessed

in Germany. Leopard Is and M-113s advancing in the open desert were vulnerable to direct fire from long range. The planners reasoned that 4 CMBG could, however, participate as the reserve formation within an armoured division. Once the other armoured brigades bypassed strongpoints and took on the enemy's armoured reserve, 4 CMBG could be used to assault bypassed Iraqi units. If the situation worsened, and allied forces were forced onto the defensive, the brigade was already attuned and equipped for defensive operations in an armoured heavy environment. Other missions could include flank or screen operations on a flank, or corps rear area security.

With regards to assigning 4 CMBG to a division or corps, there were a number of possibilities. The choice came down to placing 4 CMBG under the British division or under a U.S. division operating within a U.S. Corps. As noted earlier, a bias had developed against placing 4 CMBG under British command. This emotional bias was, however, backed up with undeniable facts. 4 CMBG had not operated with the British since 1970 but had operated with the Americans since 1971. When the list of advantages and disadvantages was compiled, the situation favoured placing 4 CMBG with VII (US) Corps, preferably with 1st (US) Armored Division. Interoperability issues, including liaison officers, training and equipment compatibility no longer existed between the British and the Canadians. Standardization did exist in the form of the usual NATO agreements, but Britain no longer had anything comparable with the Canada-U.S. integrated logistics system. As a result, placing 4 CMBG with the British armoured division was no longer a reasonable option.

The organization of 4 CMBG for a Middle East deployment was not radically different from having 4 CMBG augmented in Europe by Operation PENDANT (a reinforcement plan). 4 CMBG would have a four-squadron tank regiment (8th Canadian Hussars) plus a recce squadron, while the infantry battalions (3 RCR, 2 PPCLI, 1 R22eR) would be augmented to include three four-company battalion structures. 444 Tactical Helicopter Squadron was having problems with the aging Kiowas and wanted to create a composite squadron with Kiowas and Twin Huey light transports. The other arms and services required little modification, at least initially. Some planners called for the deployment of a complete

Canadian Support Group and a Canadian Medical Group. This would have increased the number of troops in theatre from the 7,000 to 9,000 originally envisioned to 12,000.

Once the planning process was underway, units were solicited to provide material and organizational improvements that they deemed necessary for a Middle East deployment. Planners at the several headquarters involved in BROADSWORD also added changes and suggestions. An attitude developed in many places simultaneously; this attitude can best be described as the "We can't go without \_\_\_\_\_" syndrome. This was an understandable phenomenon since some equipment programmes which had been put off in 1989 could now be implemented. Some (but not all) of these organizational "grafts" included the deployment of the new ADATS anti-aircraft system, an artillery target acquisition battery, an entire intelligence company, a forward replacement holding unit, all of 2 (Electronic Warfare) Squadron, a decontamination unit, an evacuation company and a 400-bed field hospital. Personal equipment necessary for fighting in desert environment was needed, as well as improved Nuclear, Biological Chemical Defence (NBCD) detection and protective gear. This was not a problem, since Canada led NATO in the development of NBCD protective equipment. Other larger pieces of equipment would, however, delay the deployment and would increase cost if the decision was made to obtain them.

It would be easy to call this situation "gold plating" and to blame inter-arm rivalry. The real problem was that the Canadian Army was still playing "catch up" from the 1970s deficiencies and the heightened expectations of the 1980s. Many of these material improvements had been identified by 4 CMBG back in 1985, but had not been solved by 1990.

The movement estimate for BROADSWORD was not encouraging. There was no sealift capability organic to the Canadian Forces and this forced the logistics planners to look to commercial shipping. Unfortunately, the Americans had already hired much of Canada's commercial sea and air lift to support their own deployment operations. Even the United Kingdom was chartering Eastern Bloc shipping to move the balance of their division to Saudi Arabia! The use



*Above left: Canadian medical personnel arrive in Saudi Arabia; Above right: Canadian doctors perform surgery on an Iraqi prisoner of war. (CFPU ISC 91-6210-1 & ISC 91-4435)*

of the large RO/RO (Roll on/Roll off) Newfoundland ferries was contemplated, but this was not feasible for political reasons. Moving manpower was less of a problem; agreements between the Canadian Government and commercial air carriers in Canada ensured Canada's ability to move troops and some light equipment. The apparent lack of heavy lift would probably have imposed a significant time delay on the deployment of 4 CMBG if BROADSWORD were authorized and implemented.

Another problem that the planners had to deal with was conflicting casualty estimates which were driven by extremely pessimistic threat assessments emanating from American sources. Medical specialists calculated that, given 30 days of combat, the entire brigade group would need replacement. They estimated that, out of a 9,000 man force, there would be 1,971 killed and 7,434 wounded. Other BROADSWORD planners developed a smaller estimate in which 3,000 killed and wounded would need replacement after thirty days. Another DND agency put the rates at 1,000 killed and 3,472 wounded- It appears as if these estimates were based on the Iran-Iraq War, which was a First World War attrition-type of conflict. They also failed to take into account the fact that the allied coalition being formed was in every way a far superior military machine than what Iraq

could muster in terms of overwhelming air support, initiative and manoeuvrability.

By 20 November the window on deployment was closing fast. On 29 November, the U.N. Security Council passed Resolution 678, which set a 15 January 1991 deadline for Saddam Hussein to move his forces out of Kuwait. When asked on 7 December 1990 as to the feasibility of BROADSWORD in light of this development, 1st Canadian Division planners replied: "There are no show stoppers per se but one issue, the composition and availability of battle casualty replacement could impose limitations on the employment of 4 CMB(G) plus."

BROADSWORD hung on the wall for the next month. On 12 January 1991, an anonymous military source recently returned from Germany leaked significant aspects of BROADSWORD to the media, including the size, composition and the possibility that the brigade might come under British command. The source was motivated by a belief that BROADSWORD planning was being done behind the backs of the Canadian people under instructions of the Mulroney Government, and that the Canadian people were not being given a say in the deployment of troops overseas. He was mistaken in his assertions. BROADSWORD planning was anticipatory on the part of the



military in the event the Government wished to select a ground force option. It was not designed to circumvent the democratic process. Naturally, parliamentary critics of the Government's handling of the Gulf situation pounced on the issue without having the facts and roundly criticized the government. By 14 January, Minister of National Defence Bill McKnight told the media that the Government had no intention of sending a brigade to the Gulf. Two days later the air assault started, and by 28 February the land portion of the campaign was complete.

It is easy to say that 4 CMBG was not needed in Saudi Arabia, that it could not have arrived in time to do anything, and that it was not sustainable. Comments such as this can only be made in retrospect, however, since we know now how short the war actually was. At the time many planners believed that the ground war would last several weeks to many months. There was no indication that it would last only 100 hours. If it had been a longer war, Canadian land forces would have been a valuable contribution.

Why was Operation BROADSWORD not implemented? The answer to this question is multi-faceted and the reasons are found at many levels. It is unclear at this point which level of command made the decision not to go. There are four possibilities here. The first is that the politicians wanted to go with ground troops but were convinced by the highest military level that BROADSWORD was not a feasible undertaking. The second option is that the politicians did not want to go and told the military no. There could have been a combination of these reasons, whereby the political level did not want to go and the highest military level did not encourage them to implement BROADSWORD. Fourthly, the highest military level might not have passed on or recommended to the political level the existence and advanced nature of BROADSWORD beyond the list of options created in August.

Some were *not* convinced of BROADSWORD'S feasibility. Let us briefly explore some reasons why BROADSWORD was not considered to be a viable operation:

1. BROADSWORD was not logistically feasible; we could not get enough lift in time, existing lift was dominated by the Americans.
2. If we had gotten to Saudi Arabia, our equipment (particularly tanks) was not

capable of matching Iraqi equipment on the battlefield; there was not enough equipment.

3. BROADSWORD was not sustainable from a personnel and equipment battle casualty replacement point of view.
4. There was not enough time to get to the theatre, train and acclimatize before the ground war started.
5. The Canadian people would not have supported the ground war or we didn't need to deploy ground forces.
6. BROADSWORD was a fundamentally flawed concept because it was based on a mechanized brigade group.
7. BROADSWORD would have cost too much.
8. BROADSWORD demonstrates that the NATO Central Region commitment was not workable either.

The lift, deployment time and equipment questions can be discussed together. The assumption that 4 CMBG would be operating with VII (US) Corps (and probably with 1st (US) Armored Division) was based on the close relationship 4 CMBG had developed with the Americans since 1971. Four CMBG already had liaison officers with VII (US) Corps and 1st (US) Armored Division (two of them, Major K.D. Mohr and Lieutenant-Colonel N.H. Connally were invited to go and were given permission to do so, Major Mohr seeing action with 1st (US) Armored Division) and the Americans respected Canadian capabilities on the battlefield. The U.S. did sound out Canada on the ground forces issue while they were deciding if and when to send VII (US) Corps. If Canada had decided to go at that time or even late in November, arrangements would have been made to deploy 4 CMBG to Saudi Arabia using the ILOC agreement; the Americans constantly pushed for "more flags" and if Canada seriously demonstrated it was interested, American support would have been there. In terms of time, the British were able to deploy their 4th Armoured Brigade (similar in composition to 4 CMBG) from BAOR making the decision on 22 November with the first units arriving on 10 December. The Americans had a constant flow of forces throughout the period.

There is no doubt that some of Canada's equipment was in poor shape, not only for the

Gulf but for Germany as well. The Leopards were showing their age, particularly when one compares their protection and firepower to the T-72. In terms of interoperability, some equipment could receive spare parts through the U.S. system since a M-113 is a M-113, an M-109 is an M-109 and a C-7 is similar to an M-16A2. Other non-standard equipment like the Leopard, the litis and the MLVW would have posed logistical problems. The solution here was to acquire equipment from the Americans. In fact, the Americans unofficially offered enough M-60A3s, M-2s and M-109A2s to equip and sustain a Canadian brigade group in the same way the Americans helped some of the gulf Cooperation Council countries (the M-60A3 offer was apparently changed to M-1 Abrams tanks later). These vehicles were already in-theatre and it would have been relatively easy to deploy Canadian troops and small equipment by air. It takes less than two weeks to retrain on a new tank and this retraining would have been done concurrently in the operational desert environment.

There have been arguments made that too many "bells and whistles" were added to the existing brigade structure, that this drove up the cost of deployment and that the refitting increased the deployment time. This argument does have some merit, but there were numerous cases where BROADSWORD planners "just said no." On the other hand, if 4 CMBG were operating as part of VII (US) Corps, why did it need its own decontamination capability, target acquisition battery, an EW squadron, its own field hospital and the brand new AD ATS system? Could these resources have been provided by division or corps? Exercises in Germany demonstrated time and again that 4 CMBG was capable of assimilating non-Canadian units into its organization and planning structure or utilizing support provided by a higher headquarters. Canada had a "free ride" with these resources in Germany since the 1970s; why change now?

The sustainability question is important for it shows a weakness that has existed in the Canadian Army since the Diefenbaker Government decided that sustainability forces were no longer required. The destruction of the Militia in the early 1960s was so profound that attempts to remedy the problem still baffle defence planners today in 1994. The four-brigade

group army concept such as it existed in 1953 was designed to fight two wars; one in Germany and one in Korea, with sustainability coming from the two Militia division equivalents. The draw down in Army strength in 1970 ensured that there were four partially manned brigade groups. The events in 1990 show that the wisdom in this draw down was more than flawed. The Oka Crisis in 1990 occupied an entire brigade group (Canada even had to approach SACEUR to explain why half of 1st Canadian Division was tied up in an internal security situation) and this stretched Army resources thin. Since the Militia was untrained and unequipped for the internal security missions, regular forces had to be used and flexibility was lost.

The political problems with calling out the Militia to sustain BROADSWORD were insurmountable. No job protection legislation existed. Problems with neglected training and a lack of equipment meant that Militia personnel would have to undergo a significant period of training before they were ready to fight in a Middle East environment. Despite the limited steps taken in the late 1980s (the Total Force Concept) to correct this, the Militia's ability to provide battle casualty replacements was an unknown factor in BROADSWORD planning. The politicians feared an opposition backlash and thus would probably not have supported such measures early on in the deployment.

The most open-ended argument made against BROADSWORD was the belief by some that the Canadian people would not have supported such a deployment and would have become disillusioned when it started to take casualties. The Canadian public was overwhelmingly in favour of military operations within the context of the U.N. resolutions. There was only a minuscule "peace movement" consisting of a few students. Naturally, the media made this movement out to be more than it was and the Opposition parties played this for all it was worth to embarrass the Mulroney Government as much as possible. If the Prime Minister chose to deploy ground forces to Saudi Arabia, he would have done so after explaining the reasons for his decision. These reasons would probably have focused on the need to limit existing aggression and deter future aggression and the need to provide economic stability in the West. The spectre of Saddam Hussein developing nuclear weapons only increased the reasons for

the DESERT STORM. Canadians are a practical people who have fought wars for lesser reasons in the past.

Suggesting that a Canadian brigade group was not needed in such a conflict is an extension of the argument against having a Canadian brigade group in Europe. Canada cannot afford to be isolationist in the world community and must act in difficult situations. The loss of prestige is not an easy thing to measure but the deployment of low risk forces like two combat ships and a squadron of fighters to protect them certainly made Canada look cautious and minimalist. The ridiculous political debate over how "defensive" the FRICTION and SCIMITAR forces were supposed to be was laughable. The deployment of a Canadian field hospital to Saudi Arabia and medical personnel to U.S. ships was less laughable, particularly to the casualties that they treated, but Canada perhaps could have done more in other areas.

As to the financing of a Saudi Arabia deployment, it is conceivable that many of Canada's out of pocket costs would have eventually been funded by Saudi Arabia and the Japanese. Participating in a war of liberation not only carries with it a sense of moral satisfaction but also provides business opportunities for the inevitable reconstruction effort, as discussed by the British commander, General Sir Peter De La Billiere in his book *Storm Command*.

Was a mechanized brigade group the only option for a Canadian Army deployment to the Gulf? A number of officers have questioned this basic assumption in the BROADSWORD planning process and they have a valid point. There were other options; how many of them saw light of day in high level planning discussions is unknown. The CDS believed that only an independent brigade group-sized commitment would be a viable one for political purposes within a coalition. One possible option was a light infantry brigade group of three infantry battalions operating with, say, the 101st (US) Airborne Division (Airmobile) or the 82nd (US) Airborne Division. Units from the Special Service Force based in Canada had good working relationships with these formations. Such a brigade group could have been delivered by air in a timely manner.

If the viability of a Canadian mechanized brigade group operating in the Middle East was

in question, one should examine the forces deployed by the British and the French. The British 4th Armoured Brigade was deployed in less than a month from its bases in Northern Germany. It consisted of an armoured regiment, two mechanized infantry battalions and an artillery regiment; almost identical to 4 CMB in Germany but with better equipment. Its performance in the Gulf War, though overshadowed by 7th Brigade, was particularly effective in reducing bypassed Iraqi strong points.

The French 6e DLB (6th Light Armoured Division) had three mechanized infantry battalions mounted in VAB wheeled APCs, three armoured regiments (one tank and two heavy armoured car), an artillery regiment and two attack helicopter regiments with 60 anti-tank helicopters. This formation was unsuited to a frontal assault role against the enemy's main defensive positions; as a result it was relegated to the very important role of flank guard on the left flank of the main effort. 6e DLB did not sit out the war; it operated in an aggressive fashion within the limits of its capabilities.

Unlike the British and French forces, a Canadian mechanized brigade deploying to the Gulf would not have been sustainable over a long period without a radical change in Canadian mobilization policy. This dictated that the operational employment of the Brigade in the Gulf would have to be considered carefully. These employment options were considered by a planning cell in Ottawa and this cell concluded that a brigade based on the existing European commitment could have fulfilled a number of roles in the Coalition plan, that is, flank guard/screening, counter-penetration and blocking. These employment options were based on the assumption that the Brigade would not be sustainable for a long period, the same assumptions which had been used in Central Region planning for twenty years. However, these employment options as developed by this planning cell do not appear to have been disseminated widely and there is little discussion of them in the BROADSWORD plan.

Though many shortcomings (specifically equipment and lift) were "overcomable" if the effort and initiative had been made in November, the casualty estimates and the sustainability problem gave the higher level military and political

leadership cold feet. One BROADSWORD planner thought that this was the primary reason for not deploying to the **Gulf**:

I honestly believe the reason that it got handicapped or turned off was that people realized there would be casualties. There was DEATH involved! It was pretty easy to continue to sit offshore, embargo shipping, fly some airplanes, come back to a relatively secure environment....The government could see that we were talking 30 casualties a day, half of them being deaths. That was startling to the politicians...

Another planner had a similar point of view:

We may have been too pessimistic. The casualty estimates were up there and the shopping lists too big. That was the straw that broke the camel's back. When all was accumulated, with the high risk assessment and a long shopping list, the thing became intolerable and it was cancelled. I wonder what would have happened if we had gone with a less grandiose shopping list....The Chief [ultimately] did not recommend it to the political level.

The operational commanders for BROADSWORD certainly believed that the plan was a good one and that it was capable of being executed. Many logisticians also believed that the movement problem could have been overcome, and that the equipment could have been acquired quickly. What was lacking was the will to do it.

The most important question here is, does the failure to execute BROADSWORD "prove" that the NATO brigade commitment was not a viable one? (At least one Canadian Admiral has made this assertion). Many well informed people think that the answer is no. To redeploy a brigade group to an entirely new and unfamiliar theatre of operations against a new enemy cannot be compared to having a brigade in-theatre with intimate knowledge of the ground, its allies and its enemy. There is no doubt that the sustainment and logistical problems were significant, and would have posed problems in NATO's Central Region. This ignores that fact that Canadian planners knew what the problems were and were not given the guidance and political support necessary to fix them prior to 1985. The Canadian soldier's ability to improvise and make things happen should never be underestimated. A NATO war would have been more important than a Gulf

deployment, and the entire national effort would have been directed to supporting the Central Region.

In sum, Operation BROADSWORD represents possibly one of the biggest "what if s" in Canadian military history. It was not only a missed opportunity. BROADSWORD also highlighted some of the structural weaknesses that have existed in the Canadian Army since 1970 and should provide guidance for future defence policy makers and military planners.

### A Note on Sources

The public version of *War Without Battles: Canada's NATO Brigade in Germany, 1951-1993*, from which this article is derived, contains no footnotes. The book is based on the full range of primary and secondary sources, including a large number of interviews. The primary sources are not, as yet, in the public domain. A public official history of Canada's participation in the Gulf War produced by the Director General History will be released in 1995; its interpretation differs from the one presented here. The authors of that study have produced a fine work which is much more detailed with regards to the decision-making process. Some of the secondary source literature I used for this presentation includes:

- Bergot, Erwan et Alain Gandy. *Operation DAGUET: Les Français Dans La Guerre Du Golfe* (Paris: Presses de la Cité, 1992)
- De La Billiere, Sir Peter. *Storm Command: A Personal Account of the Gulf War* (London: Harper Collins, 1992.)
- Deere, David N. (ed) *Desert Cats: The Canadian Fighter Squadron in the Gulf War* (Stoney Creek: Fortress Publications, 1991)
- Department of National Defence. "Canadian Forces in the Persian Gulf (2nd ed)" (Ottawa: DND Media Liaison Office, 23 Jan 91).
- Kindsvatter, Peter S. "VII Corps in the Gulf War: Deployment and Preparation for Desert Storm", *Military Review* January 1992 pp. 2-16.
- Kindsvatter, Peter S. "VII Corps in the Gulf War: Ground Offensive", *Military Review* February 1992 pp. 16-37.
- Kindsvatter, Peter S. "VII Corps in the Gulf War: Post-Cease-Fire Operations", *Military Review* June 1992 pp. 2-19.
- Morison, Bob. *Operation Desert Sabre: The Desert Rat's Liberation of Kuwait* (Hong Kong: Concord Publications, 1991).

Sean M. Maloney is currently working towards his Ph.D. at Temple University in Philadelphia, PA. He is the author of *War Without Battles: Canada's NATO Brigade in Germany, 1951-1993*, soon to be published.