

NORTHCOM

[DRAFT]

Sean M. Maloney, PhD

Dr. Sean Maloney teaches in the War Studies Programme at the Royal Military College of Canada and is a Research Fellow at the School for Policy Studies, Queen's University. He is the author of several books, including the forthcoming Learning to Love The Bomb: Canada's Cold War Strategy and Nuclear Weapons.

Thousands of American troops deploy to Newfoundland and Labrador with missiles, jet fighter aircraft, radar, amphibious landing ships, and even nuclear weapons. Their mission: secure the approaches to North America from attack by an implacable, ideologically-driven enemy led by a psychotic leader who might have weapons of mass destruction at his disposal. Canada's small army is fighting in an Asian country and the Liberal government is unwilling to increase the defence budget. A future planning scenario for the Department of National Defence? A response to the events of 9/11? No. The year is 1950 and the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff has just established Northeast Command as the Cold War is heating up in Korea and in Western Europe. Joseph Stalin's Soviet Union has just tested its first deliverable atomic bombs. The Canadian Army is engaged in Korea and the St Laurent government is procrastinating on expanding Canada's armed forces despite the looming threat.

On 30 September 2002, the United States created Northern Command (NORTHCOM), designed to command American forces operating in North America both inside and outside the continental United States (read: Canada, Mexico, and adjacent waters). Foreign affairs critics and anti-American bigots decry the establishment of NORTHCOM and continuously bleat on that Canadian sovereignty is about to be fleeced. This is all very tiresome, and not original. Rather than looking to the past to see how we as Canadians

addressed the same situation in 1950, today's critics are masochistically content to fall back on the learned helplessness they were indoctrinated with during the Trudeau era. Indeed, such thinking plays into the ridiculous notion that Canada has no means at her disposal to engage the United States creatively.

The basic facts are these. Canada has a strategic tradition of Forward Security to protect our interests overseas: we keep the violence as far away from North America as possible using a variety of means: warfighting, stabilization operations, and peacekeeping, but we also contribute to defending our home base, North America. We usually operate with allies in coalitions since we cannot meet their larger numbers of deployed forces because of our comparatively small population. We therefore contribute Salient forces which provide quality or unique capabilities to the coalition. We achieve Operational Influence in the coalition headquarters by providing Salient forces in order to ensure that Canadian soldiers are not misused like they were at Dieppe or Hong Kong. We then ensure that our national strategic and political objectives are achieved by using our Operational Influence where and when we can. It is a balancing act between North American commitments and overseas commitments and it always has been. We have to be able to contribute to both and do it effectively: that is the nature of our geography, economics and demographics. Whining on and on and spilling gallons of ink about our lot will not alter these facts.

By the mid-1950s, Canada was able to mobilize her industrial capacity and scientific communities so that salient continental defence forces could be fielded alongside those of our closest ally and trading partner: the Avro CF-100 Canuck fighters (twelve squadrons worth), state of the art St Laurent-class anti-submarine destroyers, the Mid-Canada Line, SOSUS underwater listening stations, the Alert signals intelligence base at the top of the world and then the ambitious Mach-2 Avro CF-105 Arrow....the sky way the limit, so to speak. Canada eventually went into space as the third nation to own an

artificial satellite. These forces were Canadian, commanded by Canadians, and ultimately reported to the Canadian peoples' elected representatives. We did not accomplish all of this by crying the blues. The Canadians of those days were unwilling to allow themselves to be turned into radiocative charcoal bricketts and were certainly not going to succumb to Communist blackmail. They were also not going to throw their hands up and turn everything over to the Americans.

Northeast Command was disbanded by the late 1950s once we were able to contribute effectively. Another structure, North American Air Defence Command (NORAD), commanded by both Americans and Canadians, took over control of American air defence forces stationed in Newfoundland and Labrador. In those days, NORAD was a mighty instrument with some 5000 nuclear air defence weapons at its disposal. When Canada upgraded her air defence forces in the early 1960s and acquired a nuclear capability, the Canadian deputy commander of NORAD was given control over all of these weapons. No other ally, NATO or otherwise, had this level of control over American nuclear weapons. It is indicative of the trust that was built up through the 1950s.

The salient forces 'currency' of the 1950s for continental defence may not be the same today. It may lie in other areas like special operations forces, unmanned combat aerial vehicles, or hacker regiments. Whatever it may be, we need to figure out what it is and fast or we don't deserve to have a sovereign nation.

Allons Y, Canada!