



**CANADIAN GLOBAL AFFAIRS INSTITUTE**  
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**Military Training and Co-operation:  
Diplomatic Instrument and Combat Force Multiplier**

by Andrew Rasiulis  
June 2018

# POLICY UPDATE

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## **MILITARY TRAINING AND CO-OPERATION: DIPLOMATIC INSTRUMENT AND COMBAT FORCE MULTIPLIER**

by Andrew Rasiulis

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**W**ithin the construct of Canada's defence policy rests a sublime instrument of military training and co-operation. This instrument acts as a strategic Canadian diplomatic door-opener, as it does a combat force multiplier for Canada's defence partners. In both cases, military training and co-operation use the capacity of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) and Department of National Defence (DND) civilian staff to bolster Canada's defence and foreign policy objectives in a strategically effective and efficient manner.

Originally termed military training assistance, the long-standing practice involves stronger or more developed states using their armed forces to assist and train allied armed forces for synergistic effect. During the Cold War, military training assistance was the keystone of the softer defence diplomacy end ideological rivalry between NATO and the Soviet Union/Warsaw Pact. In fact, this form of defence diplomacy was not restricted to the rival Cold War powers, but states such as Israel used it in an independent fashion to support their particular strategic objectives. (In Israel's case, its training assistance effort with Uganda in the 1960s paid dividends in its 1976 hostage rescue mission in Entebbe).

Canada's military assistance post-1945 was focused on the developing Commonwealth countries. These Third World countries – the Second World being the Communist or Eastern bloc and the First World the Western democratic and capitalist bloc – were seen as an important battleground for hearts and minds between the rival blocs. This battle widely used military training and assistance to alter the Cold War balance between East and West.<sup>1</sup>

During the Cold War, East and West tried to draw countries of the developing world into their respective camps and thereby improve their relative advantage in the war's zero sum competitive nature.

As military co-operation in this context was driven by foreign policy interests supported by military assets, the Department of External Affairs was the lead department for Canada. In addition to the political or ideological aspect of winning the hearts and minds of developing countries, there was also the lucrative interest in the sale of armaments and equipment.

During the 1950s and 1960s Canada's armaments industry, particularly aircraft, was an important consideration for its military training assistance efforts. The various interests driving Canadian military assistance policy were rationalized in 1964 with the creation of the Military Assistance Committee. External Affairs chaired the committee and set the policy priorities. With the advent of Pierre Trudeau's government in 1968, Canada's military assistance efforts suffered a near death due to Trudeau's perception that military co-operation was tantamount to interference in the internal affairs of developing countries. Such is the flip side of diplomatic influence.

This low ebb in Canada's military co-operation program lasted from the 1970s to the early 1990s. The end of the Cold War and the urgent policy imperative to stabilize and integrate the

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<sup>1</sup> For an excellent history of Canada's military assistance to the developing world 1945-1975, see Christopher Kilford's *The Other Cold War* [publication.html](#).



former countries of the Warsaw Pact and Soviet Union led to a renaissance of Canada's military co-operation efforts in the early 1990s.

Due to budget issues at External Affairs in 1991, the lead for military training co-operation was transferred to DND. The military assistance committee was renamed the Military Assistance Steering Committee (MASC). The agent for the co-ordination and disbursement of funding, the DND Military Training Assistance Program (MTAP), which had been funded from the External Affairs budget since 1970, was now funded directly from DND's budget.<sup>2</sup>



*Figure 1: Members of Joint Task Force-Ukraine teach the 55-day training cycle at the International Peacekeeping and Security Centre to the Rotational Training Unit (RTU), alongside the Ukrainian Armed Forces instructors, in Starychi, Ukraine on October 26, 2017. (Source: Canadian Armed Forces)*

The renewed imperative for Canadian military co-operation to act in support of wider NATO efforts for the stabilization, reform and integration of Central and Eastern Europe post-Cold War gave a major boost to MTAP's funding base and focus within DND and the federal government, specifically the partner departments of Foreign Affairs and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

In many ways, this was a defining moment for the evolution of Canadian military co-operation policy. The enormity of the task in addressing the challenge for the reform and transformation of

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<sup>2</sup> For a more detailed analysis of MASC and MTAP from 1991 to 2001, see the author's "The Military Training Assistance Programme (MTAP): An Instrument of Defence Diplomacy," in *Canadian Military Journal*, Issue 2, No. 3, 2001 [63-64-eng.pdf](#)



the multitude of states formerly part of the Warsaw Pact and Soviet Union required a comprehensive policy that prioritized Canadian strategic interests and the capacity of the CAF/DND, and matched these to the aspirant partner countries.

MASC took a key policy decision that military training assistance would be focused on a few strategically targeted countries corresponding to particular Canadian interests, rather than simply reaching out to all aspirants. The latter approach would have thinned out the impact of Canadian assistance beyond any meaningful critical mass, other than a diplomatic handshake.

The second half of this decision for the selection of strategic partners for MTAP, was to focus Canada's assistance on a few military/defence training assets in which it excelled. In this way, the Canadian flag would be registered with recipient countries in a practical and meaningful manner, rather than parsed out in a nickel-and-dime approach that would not accomplish capacity building.

These two elements of the guiding principles of military co-operation policy were applied on a global scale among all current and aspirant partner countries of MTAP. They were matched to a capacity-building toolbox that focused on the major pillars of language training, professional development (e.g., staff training), peacekeeping/peace support and expert teams. These policy principles have stood the test of time and continue to guide MTAP's current manifestation, whose name was changed to the [Military Training Cooperation Program \(MTCP\)](#) in 2010, to better reflect the co-operative nature of capacity building, rather than the asymmetric assistance approach.

Canada's focused military training assistance and co-operation efforts have also been designed to lessen the burden on the CAF. By building the capacity of strategically targeted partner-country armed forces, the effects of MTAP/MTCP have been to use CAF training assets to enable partner countries to engage in military operations that support Canada's foreign and defence policy interests.

The evidence is reflected in the success of the combined NATO Partnership for Peace (PfP) program which was initiated in 1994 to stabilize post-Cold War Europe and build the capacity of the former member states of the Warsaw Pact and Soviet Union. Many of these states chose integration and membership in NATO, while others have remained strong NATO partners. In both cases, the newly reformed armed forces of these countries have engaged alongside Canada and other NATO countries in mutually supporting operations from Africa to Afghanistan.

Similarly, the success of Canada's military co-operation capacity-building efforts have contributed to African partner countries undertaking a growing burden of the peacekeeping and peace support operations in Africa. Canada has done similar work with select Asian partners whose armed forces are actively engaged in worldwide peace support and peacekeeping operations.

Closer to home, in the Caribbean, which may be termed our strategic backyard, Canada has long been active in capacity building of the local defence forces. The Caribbean is the gateway to drug and other criminal traffic that finds its way directly onto Canadian streets. By working with our



Caribbean partner countries, Canada has built up the local forces' capacity to assist Canadian authorities in combating these threats to our security. As an example of these efforts, MTAP/MTCP has over a number of years worked with the Jamaican Defence Force to build three regional Caribbean training centres of excellence that exemplify Canadian standards and values: the Caribbean Junior Command and Staff Course, Caribbean Military Aviation School and the Caribbean Military Maritime Aviation Centre.

Canada's efforts in capacity building ramped up to an industrial scale after 9/11. With the war on terror beginning in Afghanistan and then moving into the Middle East and Africa, the CAF embarked, along with key allies, to operationalize the capacity building of partner countries. Under [Operation IMPACT](#), the CAF has been using the train-the-trainer approach with partners such as the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) to build their capacity to prevent the spread of violent extremism. In addition, two CAF training assistance teams have deployed to Jordan and Lebanon, and a CAF brigadier-general now leads the global coalition ministerial liaison team to provide support to Iraqi PM staff, the MOD and Ministry of the Interior.

Finally, under [Operation UNIFIER](#), the CAF has built upon the groundwork established under the auspices of MTAP/MTCP since 1993, to further enhance the capacity and reform of the Ukrainian armed forces. Projects such as the Lithuanian-Polish-Ukrainian Brigade had their antecedents in the late 1990s with the establishment of the Maple Arch series of exercises. Whereas MTCP's efforts continue to build capacity in professionally developing the Ukrainian armed forces, Op UNIFIER is focused on tactical soldier training, and collective and small-team training.

These examples of Canadian military training and co-operation demonstrate their efficacy and efficiency in furthering the interests of Canadian defence and foreign policy objectives. Through these efforts, the CAF and DND civilians are fully engaged in combating terrorism and enhancing stability operations in various international theatres of operation.

## ► About the Author

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**Andrew Rasiulis** completed his undergraduate study in Political Science/History at the University of Toronto in 1978 and received his Master of Arts from the Norman Patterson School of International Affairs, Carleton University, in Strategic Studies in 1979. In 1979 Mr. Rasiulis was appointed a commissioned officer in the Canadian Forces Primary Reserve (Governor General's Foot Guards).

He joined the Department of National Defence in 1979 as an analyst with the Directorate of Strategic Analysis, specializing in strategic politico-military issues pertaining to conventional forces. These issues included emerging concepts of conventional defence strategies for Western Europe, as well as the Canadian Government's efforts in the area of conventional arms control. In 1987, Mr. Rasiulis was promoted to Section Head, within the Directorate of Nuclear and Arms Control Policy, responsible for conventional arms control policy. He was also the Department of National Defence representative on NATO's High Level Task Force for conventional arms control from its inception in 1986 to 1989.

In June 1989 Mr. Rasiulis was posted as a Defence Advisor to the Canadian Delegation for Conventional Arms Control Talks in Vienna. Upon completion of his tour Mr. Rasiulis returned to National Defence Headquarters in April 1992 as Section Head responsible for policy on Central and Eastern Europe, including the Department's Military Training and Assistance Program (MTAP) with Central and Eastern Europe. In May 1996, Mr. Rasiulis was also assigned the responsibility of Programme Manager for the entire MTAP. He was subsequently designated as Director, Military Training Assistance Programme (and Eastern European Policy) in 1998.

Reflecting the growth of responsibility within the area of defence diplomacy, Mr. Rasiulis was re-designated Director Military Training and Cooperation in 2009. His responsibilities included the development of the policy for defence training cooperation with developing countries world wide, as well as overseeing its operational implementation.

Mr. Rasiulis' MA thesis, *On the Utility of War in the Nuclear Age*, developed a theory on limited conventional war. It was subsequently published as a Wellesley Paper in 1981 by the Canadian Institute for International Affairs and the Canadian Institute for Strategic Studies. He has also published numerous articles on conventional strategy, arms control and international military training cooperation.

Mr Rasiulis is retired from the Public Service and is now a freelance consultant with Andrew Rasiulis Associates Inc.

## ► **Canadian Global Affairs Institute**

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