

'We do not live in waters free of peril'

By Colin Robertson

A *Mari usque ad Mare* might be the only Latin phrase that Canadians understand. 'From sea to sea' is our national motto and it's inscribed into our coat of arms. Someday, we'll have to add another 'to sea' as the Northwest Passage becomes a commercial sea route through our Arctic waters.

Ours is the longest coastline in the world — enough to circle the equator six times. Always a sea-trading or seafaring nation, we have become a nation of traders, with a record number of discussions underway to further trading opportunities with, for example, the European Union, China and India. The Seven Seas are global highways for 80 percent of world commerce (valued at over \$12.5 trillion) but they are also inherently lawless.

Fortunately, first the Royal Navy and now the U.S. Navy have protected and policed the international sea lanes, although U.S. budgetary pressures now mean that allies have to do more.

As long-time beneficiaries and advocates of collective security, we need to remind ourselves that collective security means a contribution commensurate with our vast real estate and waterfront. All of which underlines the requirement for a strong Canadian Forces — Army, Air Force, and, in the wake of its centenary last year, our Navy.

Sustaining capacity is vital to sovereignty and this means both people and arms. Comparatively, we do defence on the cheap, spending a little over one percent of our GDP. The Americans, by contrast, spend about five percent and the British about two percent. We take justifiable pride in the quality of our contribution and the Canada First Defence Strategy combines both long-term planning and commitment to sustaining our forces.

Planning for the next campaign is always difficult because threats change and can come from unexpected places. It puts a premium on having a diversity of tools to deal with different situations. Always controversial, because of the price tag, is the purchase of new kit. Increasingly, to

meet the requirements of alliance interoperability, we design and buy collectively and then tailor to specific requirements, as we plan to do with the F-35. The new strike fighter is the aircraft of choice for most of the alliance, including the U.S. and the UK, as well as the Israelis, who live in a dangerous neighbourhood and put a premium on defence.

Smart procurement also means buying second-hand. We bought our first ships, the Niobe and the Rainbow, from the British and we continue this tradition with our four Victoria-class submarines. Submarines are the navy's special forces, providing additional flexibility in conducting covert surveillance of our maritime approaches. As we learned during the Battle of the Atlantic, their lethality permits them to dominate all aspects of maritime operations. A submarine at sea changes the calculations in an entire theatre of operations. In this decade, it is estimated that more than one hundred new boats will be added to navies' orders of battle. Most will be diesel-electric submarines like the Victoria class.

Later this year, the Victoria and Windsor will slip into our waters and begin patrol to defend Canadian sovereignty and contribute to collective security. Adapting our

submarines to Canadian requirements has taken longer and cost more than expected but in underwater operation there is no margin for error. The Chicoutimi tragedy underlines why we put a premium on quality. The emphasis on preparation saved the ship and all but one of its crew. We learn from the experience. Through incremental improvements, including a platform for the most advanced heavy-weight torpedo available anywhere, we are developing a world-class technical niche. Eventually we should aim to make the submarines operable under our Arctic ice.

This technical challenge is a reminder of the often forgotten fourth arm of our armed services — research and development. It is supported by our defence industrial sector that, if not forgotten, is not always appreciated in terms of innovation and its contribution to our economic prosperity.

Our defence industries employ more than 90,000 people. We export about half of what we manufacture as part of supply chain dynamics that date back to the Second World War. The coming years will see major procurement projects ranging from satellites to ships and we now need develop a coherent industrial defence strategy to match our forces strategy.

The world is a dangerous place. Serious nations prepare accordingly and, as we learned long ago, Canadians do not live in a 'fire-proof' house or in waters free of peril.

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HMCS Toronto does a sovereignty patrol in Frobisher Bay off the coast of Baffin Island during Operation NANOOK 09.

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