

## NORAD and Canada's National Strategic Relations

**Dwight N. Mason**

Senior Associate, Center for Strategic and International Studies  
Washington

It is a pleasure to be here to speak to you at this conference on "Canada's National Strategic Relations: NATO and NORAD." I would like to thank Professor Bercuson and General Macnamara for the invitation to do so.

These remarks are my own and are not intended to represent the views of the Center for Strategic and International Studies or any other entity.

The background material prepared for this conference describes NATO and NORAD as traditional pillars of Canadian strategic defense policy. The conference organizers ask what are or should be the strategic defense policy options for Canada now, in the light of NATO's performance in Afghanistan and of Canada's decision not to participate in North American missile defense, thus perhaps fatally weakening NORAD. They have asked me for a United States perspective on the NORAD pillar. While I cannot offer an official American perspective, I can certainly offer my views.

Here they are: First, since 1938, it has been the view of the United States and Canada that successful defense of North America depends on their cooperation. To quote President Kennedy, "necessity has made us allies."

Second, I think it is right to say that post World War II Canadian strategic defense policy has had two aspects: a home game and an away game and that NATO and NORAD have been central to those games.

Third, the nature of both games has greatly changed since World War II and will undoubtedly continue to change. The away game is no longer focused on defense against the Soviet Union in Europe, and the home game is no longer primarily about defense against Soviet bombers but has moved on to Russian ICBMs. But here, the perceived threat level is much reduced while other threats – principally asymmetric – have emerged. Now, from an American perspective, the home game goes well beyond military defense and is about security broadly defined. A new and central American player is the Department of Homeland Security.

Fourth, playing in either game requires adequate resources. Here the Canadian Forces face serious challenges. Much has been said about this, and I do not propose to add to it except to call attention to Martin Shadwick's article in the latest issue of the *Canadian Military Journal*. After examining testimony of the three service chiefs before the Senate Standing Committee on National Security and Defence, Shadwick concludes that absent "timely political decisions and funding, the Canadian Forces of 2015 -2017 will look much different from and possess significantly fewer capabilities than the Canadian Forces of today." Pretty clearly he does not expect such decisions. He cites Lt. General A.B. Leslie, Chief of the Land

Staff, as testifying “a tremendous amount of funding is required to maintain [army infrastructure], and it is clear that the required funds will probably not be available.” The United States and Canada’s other allies can not ignore this situation, and it must affect their planning and expectations.

Finally, given the changed circumstances, it is time to take a new look at North American defense arrangements, an idea suggested over the last several years by a number of Canadians. In my opinion, the Canadian way ahead on this subject is to revisit the interim and final recommendations of the Bi-National Planning Group as well as the defense suggestions of the Canadians cited above. I believe that if Canada were to arrive at a clear picture of the arrangements it would like, the United States would probably be forthcoming. But it will require a Canadian initiative to start this process. There will be no American proponents for change without strong evidence that Canada is seriously interested. The Canadian decision on ballistic missile defense created some doubts on this point.

Modern Canadian defense policy has traditionally had two aspects: the use of multilateral alliances and organizations to keep security problems at a distance and to manage global threats, particularly those presented by nuclear weapons and now also terrorism on the one hand and direct (often institutionalized) cooperation with the United States to defend North America on the other. From a Canadian perspective, both strategies also have the advantage of dealing with the United States in a structured, rules based manner. NATO has been a primary vehicle for the first principle and NORAD for the second accompanied by a number of other arrangements with the United States including the Bi-National Security Document, the Continental Defense Plan, the Permanent Joint Board on Defense and the Military Cooperation Committee.

During this period, the defence problems facing Canada and the United States and our NATO allies have changed and certainly will continue to do so. But the policy underlying United States – Canadian security cooperation since 1938 has not changed. That policy was established in an exchange of remarks between President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Mackenzie King.

After President Roosevelt said at Queen’s in August of that year that “the people of the United States would not stand idly by if domination of Canadian soil was threatened by any other empire”, Prime Minister Mackenzie King replied several days later that “...we too have our obligations as a good friendly neighbor, and one of them is to see that ...our own country is made as immune from attack or possible invasion as we can reasonably be expected to make it, and that should the occasion ever arise, enemy forces should not be able to pursue their way either by land, sea, or air to the United States from Canadian territory.”

That understanding is fundamental to United States -- Canadian defense and now security relations. What it has come to mean is that North America is a single military and now security theater, that each country has a duty to the other to defend North America, and that they will do this together. This has led to significant coordination and, in the case of air defense, integration of United States and Canadian North American defense activities often managed through shared

institutions. The Canadian commitment not to permit use of its territory for attacks on the United States is now particularly relevant in the light of the terrorist threat.

The path of defense institutionalization is clear from 1938. The understanding of that year was followed by the establishment of the Permanent Joint Board on Defense (PJBD) in 1940, the Military Cooperation Committee (MCC) in 1946, and the North American Air (later Aerospace) Defense Agreement and command (NORAD) in 1957. The relationship is now both broad and dense.

NORAD is the best known and perhaps the ultimate example of this. Here we see personnel assigned by both countries working in a single structure sharing leadership and resource responsibilities and doing so with great success over a period of fifty years.

However, the importance of NORAD has declined because of the changing threat, for technical reasons and also as a result of Canadian political decisions. The threat to North America, first from Soviet bombers, then from Soviet and now Russian ICBMs has diminished while the cluster of asymmetric threats including terrorism has become very important. Warning sensors have moved to space. United States missile defense, such as it is, does not depend on NORAD or Canada. The Canadian decision on North American missile defense not only marginalized NORAD in a key area but also has influenced American strategic thinking about Canada because that decision pushed the United States into the position of managing one part of North American defense without Canada.

Prior to that decision, as Joseph Jockel shows in his most recent book on NORAD, the United States had thought of NORAD as the primary vehicle for North American air defense with other commands supporting it. And this view came to include missile defense. It had been the United States expectation that North American missile defense, like air defense, would be operated by NORAD. In 1999, Jockel shows that there was some discussion of giving NORAD expanded defense responsibilities. After 9/11 this thinking continued and was discussed informally in the PJBD. This may well still be the preferred United States position. This may be true because of the strong cultural effects of United States- Canadian defense cooperation since 1940.

However, nothing came of these ideas, and Canada also declined missile defense. We now have Northern Command and Canada Command plus NORAD. The missions and bilateral relations of those two commands leave NORAD in an odd, uncomfortable position. It is hard to see how this situation can or should continue indefinitely.

The lack of enthusiasm in Canada for a NORAD-run continental defense system was surprising to Americans. First, it would have been in the tradition of the 1938 understanding. And secondly, many had thought that it was so clearly in Canada's interest to do this (thereby maximizing Canadian influence in continental defense

planning and execution and reducing Canadian costs though the use of United States assets), that this would be the way ahead.

Although United States - Canadian military cooperation in North America has changed with circumstances and the importance of Canadian air space has declined, the importance of Canada to United States security has not changed. Rather it has taken on an additional, different dimension because of the threat presented by terrorism.

Cooperation with Canada on terrorism is important to the United States because of the increasing economic integration in North America. This integration has created an expanding zone of interdependence and resulting vulnerabilities requiring ever more cooperation and active, indeed sometime intrusive, management. An important consequence of this is that more and more players are brought into the game and more and more peoples' interests are affected in both countries. Managing the relationship is becoming more difficult and demanding. This trend and its effects are likely to intensify in the future.

From an American perspective, a consequence of this trend is that cooperation with Canada in intelligence, law enforcement, and management of people and things at the border has become very important. North America is still a single theater – only a larger and more complex one than in World War II and the Cold War.

Both countries have created new military and civil structures to cope with this new situation. In the United States we have Northern Command and the Department of Homeland Security. Canada has created similar structures. The future of North American security cooperation in the broadest sense lies in how these organizations develop and how they work together at home and across the border with their counterparts. This is the new home game. How this cooperation should be managed needs thought and political attention if we are to achieve the level of effectiveness that now exists in the military domain as exemplified by NORAD, the PJBD and the MCC.

The current NORAD Agreement calls for a review of NORAD in 2010. Such a review offers an opportunity to look at this subject, and in particular at how its military aspects including missions ought to be organized and managed in the current environment. This is timely because NORAD, as it now exists, does not look like an adequate pillar for Canadian strategic policy. It is too narrowly focused in the light of current threats. It does not fit well with Northern Command and Canada Command.

It seems to me that a good place to start in a Canadian examination of what might be the basis for a revised Canadian strategic policy for North American defense would be to revisit the recommendations of the Bi-National Planning Group. They recommended a new North American Defense Agreement building on the NORAD model as well as similar ideas put forward by a number of Canadians mentioned above. I think they have a good point. We should remember that no matter what

difficulties NORAD may now have, its way of doing business has had a successful track record for 50 year

## Endnotes

<http://csis.org/expert/dwight-n-mason>  
, <http://scholar.google.com/scholar?start=10&q=dwight+mason&hl=en> (both accessed 11-10-09)  
[http://www.ushistorysite.com/kennedy\\_quotes.php](http://www.ushistorysite.com/kennedy_quotes.php). Accessed 10-15-09.  
Martin Shadwick, "State of the Forces," *Canadian Military Journal*, Vol. 9, No. 4, 2009,  
(Ottawa: Department of National Defence) pp. 100-102.  
Indeed, many suggest a broader, integrated look at all aspects of the relationship.  
See, for example: Canadian Council of Chief Executives  
[http://www.ceocouncil.ca/publications/pdf/b10f11c9777f6bcf34fa14e57a594c3c/presentations\\_2003\\_01\\_14.pdf](http://www.ceocouncil.ca/publications/pdf/b10f11c9777f6bcf34fa14e57a594c3c/presentations_2003_01_14.pdf) , Ambassador Allan Gotlieb [http://www.cdhowe.org/pdf/benefactors\\_lecture\\_2004.pdf](http://www.cdhowe.org/pdf/benefactors_lecture_2004.pdf), and Carleton University, *Canada –U.S. Project: From Correct to Inspired : A Blueprint for Canada – U.S. Engagement*, January 19, 2009, <http://www.ctpl.ca> and its associated background papers, as well as John Noble, *Fortress America or Fortress North America?*  
<http://www.irpp.org/events/archive/apr04/noble.pdf> and Daniel Schwanen, *Deeper Broader: A Roadmap for a Treaty of North America*, [http://www.irpp.org/books/archive/schwanen\\_roadmap.pdf](http://www.irpp.org/books/archive/schwanen_roadmap.pdf)  
.and Alexander Moens, *Canadian American Relations in 2007*, [http://www.fraserinstitute.org/commerce.web/product\\_files/CanadianAmericanRelations2007.pdf](http://www.fraserinstitute.org/commerce.web/product_files/CanadianAmericanRelations2007.pdf)  
and The introduction and articles by David Bercuson, D.H. Burney, George E.C. Macdonald and James Fergusson in *In the Canadian Interest? Assessing Canada's International Policy Statement*, Canadian Defence and Foreign Affairs Institute, Calgary, October 2005,  
<http://www.cdfai.org/PDF/In%20The%20Canadian%20Interest%20E.pdf> (All accessed 11-10-09).  
Final Report is at [http://ottawa.usembassy.gov/content/can\\_usa/pdfs/bpg\\_finalreport\\_040606.pdf](http://ottawa.usembassy.gov/content/can_usa/pdfs/bpg_finalreport_040606.pdf)  
(accessed 11-10-09).  
This has also been a favored US approach to Canada and indeed it is probably the favorite approach of both countries and is characterized by a large number of formal and less formal binational organizations. See John Higginbotham and Jeff Heynen, *Advancing Canada's interests in the United States*, Canada School of Public Service, 2004, [http://www.csps-efpc.gc.ca/pbp/pub/pdfs/P127\\_e.pdf](http://www.csps-efpc.gc.ca/pbp/pub/pdfs/P127_e.pdf) for a very long and detailed descriptive listing of such organizations. (Accessed 11-10-09)  
Quoted in James Eayrs, *In Defence of Canada*, vol. 2, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1959), pp. 177-93.  
See Dwight Mason, *A Flight from Responsibility, Canada and Missile Defense of North America*, Center for Strategic & International Studies, Washington, February 25, 2005,  
[http://csis.org/files/media/isis/pubs/050225\\_mason.pdf](http://csis.org/files/media/isis/pubs/050225_mason.pdf) (Accessed 11-10-09)  
Joseph T. Jockel, *Canada in NORAD 1957-2007: A History*, (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007), pp. 75, 149, 161, 172-4, and 178.  
Any resident of North American in the 17th, 18th or 19th centuries would be surprised by the current relationship between the United States and Canada. See Dwight Mason, "Is Canada a Threat to U.S. Security?" *The New Security Equation*, Eds. Gordon Mace & Catherine Drupes, (Québec City: Center detruces Interamericanes, Université Laval, 2007), p. 165, [http://www.cei.ulaval.ca/fileadmin/cei/documents/Colloques\\_et\\_conferences/Activites\\_passees/Actes2007.pdf](http://www.cei.ulaval.ca/fileadmin/cei/documents/Colloques_et_conferences/Activites_passees/Actes2007.pdf) (accessed 11-04-09)  
Text of 2006 NORAD Agreement is at <http://www.treaty-accord.gc.ca/text-texte.asp?id=105060>. The review requirement is in Art III. (accessed 11-10-09)  
See Dwight N. Mason, "Time to Expand NORAD" in "Security and Sovereignty: Renewing NORAD," Authors: Dwight Mason and James Fergusson, *One Issue, Two Voices*, Issue three, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, [http://www.wilsoncenter.org/topics/pubs/OneIssue\\_TwoVoices.pdf](http://www.wilsoncenter.org/topics/pubs/OneIssue_TwoVoices.pdf) (accessed 11-04-09.)