

# Militarization of the Arctic. Canada: Battle Line In East-West Conflict Over The Arctic

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Global Research, June 03, 2009

[Stop NATO](#) 3 June 2009

Region: [Canada](#)

Theme: [Oil and Energy](#), [US NATO War](#)  
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Referring to newly released documents, though not revealing what they were, a major Canadian press wire service reported on May 26 that the government plans to acquire a “family” of aerial drones over the next decade.[1]

The dispatch was only two paragraphs long and could easily be overlooked, as one of the two intended purposes for expanding Canada’s reserve of military drones was for “failed or failing states.” Afghanistan is unquestionably one such deployment zone and Ottawa sent its first Israeli-made Heron drones there this January for NATO’s war in South Asia.

Another likely target for “dull, dirty and dangerous” missions suited for unmanned aircraft is Somalia, off the coast of which the frigate HMCS Winnipeg, carrying a Sea King helicopter it’s had occasion to use, is engaged with the Standing NATO Maritime Group 1 (SNMG1) in forced boarding and other military operations. The use of unmanned aircraft vehicles (UAVs) in a likely extension of military actions on the Somali mainland would, unfortunately, not raise many eyebrows.

The last sentence in the brief report, though, says that “Senior commanders also foresee a growing role for drones in Canada, especially along the country’s coastlines and in the Arctic.”

To provide an indication of what Canada’s Joint Unmanned Surveillance Target Acquisition System (JUSTAS) has in mind for future use in the Arctic, a likely prospect is the “Heron TP, a 4,650-kilogram drone with the same wingspan as a Boeing 737,” which can “can carry a 1,000-kilogram payload and stay aloft for 36 hours at an altitude of about 15,000 metres” for “long-range Arctic and maritime patrols.” [2]

Project JUSTAS will “cost as much as \$750 million and...give the Canadian military a capability that only a handful of other countries possess....” [3]

The day after the first news story mentioned above appeared the same press source summarized comments by Canadian Minister of National Defence Peter MacKay as affirming “The global economic downturn won’t prevent the Canadian Forces from spending \$60 billion on new equipment.”

Although Canada’s federal deficit is expected to rise to \$50 billion this year from \$34 billion in 2008, “MacKay said the government’s long-term defence strategy would grow this year’s \$19-billion annual defence budget to \$30 billion by 2027. Over that time, that will mean close to \$490 billion in defence spending, including \$60 billion on new equipment.” [4]

It's doubtful that many Canadians are aware of either development: Plans for advanced drones designed not only for surveillance but for firing missiles to be used in the Arctic and a major increase in the military budget of a nation that has already doubled its defense spending over the last decade.

Of those who do know of them, the question should arise of why a nation of 33 million which borders only one other country, the United States, its senior partner in NORAD (North American Aerospace Defense Command), NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) and since 2006 increasingly the Pentagon's Northern Command (NORTHCOM) would need to spend almost half a trillion dollars for arms in the next eighteen years. And why in addition to acquiring weapons for wars and other military operations in Europe, Asia and Africa, Canada would deploy some of its most state-of-the-art arms to the Arctic Circle.

A French writer of the 1800s wrote that cannon aren't forged to be displayed in public parks. And the deployment of missile-wielding drones to its far north are not, contrary to frequent implications for domestic consumption by members of the current Stephen Harper government, meant to defend the nation's sovereignty in the region; only one state threatens that sovereignty, the United States, and Ottawa has no desire to defend its interests against its southern neighbor.

Recent unparalleled Canadian military exercises and build-up in the Arctic, of which the proposed use of aerial drones is but the latest example, are aimed exclusively at another nation: Russia.

A document from 2007 posted on a website of the Canadian Parliament states, "In recent years, Canada has been asserting its nordicite (nordicity) with a louder voice and greater emphasis than before. Such renewed focus on the Arctic is largely linked to the anticipated effects of climate change in the region, which are expected to be among the greatest effects of any region on Earth. By making the region more easily accessible, both threats and opportunities are amplified and multiplied. Canada's claims over the Arctic are thus likely to emerge as a more central dimension of our foreign relations. Hence, it appears timely to highlight the extent of Canada's sovereignty and jurisdiction over Arctic waters and territory, and to identify issues that are controversial." [5]

Canada's Arctic claims extend all the way to the North Pole, as do Russia's and Denmark's, as long as Copenhagen retains ownership of Greenland.

The basis of the dispute between Canada and Russia is the Lomonosov Ridge which runs 1,800 kilometers from Russia's New Siberian Islands through the center of the Arctic Ocean to Canada's Ellesmere Island in the territory of Nunavut, part of the Canadian Arctic Archipelago. Russia maintains that the Lomonosov Ridge and the related Mendeleev Elevation are extensions of its continental shelf. Russia filed a claim to this effect in December of 2001 with the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS), renewing it in late 2007.

The answer to what is at stake with control of this vast stretch of the Arctic Ocean and that to the earlier question concerning Canada's military escalation and expansion into the Arctic are both threefold.

Strategic Military Positioning For Nuclear War

Nine days before vacating the White House on January 20th, US President Bush W. Bush issued National Security Presidential Directive 66 on Arctic Region Policy. [6]

The document states that “The United States is an Arctic nation, with varied and compelling interests in that region” and “The United States has broad and fundamental national security interests in the Arctic region and is prepared to operate either independently or in conjunction with other states to safeguard these interests. These interests include such matters as missile defense and early warning; deployment of sea and air systems for strategic sealift, strategic deterrence, maritime presence, and maritime security operations; and ensuring freedom of navigation and overflight.” [7]

US Arctic claims are based solely on its possession of Alaska, separated from the rest of the continental US by 500 miles of Canadian territory.

National Security Directive 66 exploits Alaska’s position to demand US rights to base both strategic military forces – long-range bombers capable of delivering nuclear weapons and warships and submarines able to launch warheads – in the Arctic within easy striking distance of Russia, both to the latter’s east and over the North Pole.

It also, as indicated above, reserves the right to station so-called missile defense components in the area. The words missile defense are not as innocuous as they may appear. In the contemporary context they refer to plans by the United States and its allies to construct an international interceptor missile system connected with satellites and eventually missiles in space to be able to paralyze other nations’ strategic (long-range and nuclear) military potential and to prevent retaliation by said nations should they be the victims of a first strike.

US and NATO interceptor missile silos and radar sites in Poland, the Czech Republic, Norway and Britain to Russia’s West – already in place and planned – and an analogous structure in Alaska, Japan and Australia to the east of both Russia and China aim at the ability to target and destroy any intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) and long-range bombers left undamaged after a massive military first strike from the US and allied nations.

The term interceptor missile is deceptive. As America’s so-called missile defense plans prepare for knocking out ICBMs in not only the boost and terminal but the launch phases, it’s a single step from striking a missile as it’s being launched to doing so as it’s being readied for launch and even as it is still in the silo.

Although in theory both a first strike missile attack and an interceptor missile response need not involve nuclear warheads, they are almost certain to if aimed against a nuclear power, which would be expected to retaliate with nuclear weapons.

The third leg of a nation’s nuclear triad, in addition to long-range bombers and land-based missiles, are ballistic missile submarines equipped with submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs) capable of carrying nuclear warheads. These could be tracked by space surveillance and in the future hit by space-based missiles.

Russia is the only non-Western, non-NATO country with an effective nuclear triad.

Under the above scenario there is one spot on the earth where Russia could maintain a credible deterrent capability: Under the Arctic polar ice cap.

A report in 2007 said that “Amid great secrecy, NATO naval forces are trying to control the Arctic Ocean to continue the military bloc’s expansion to[ward] Russia, the newspaper Military Industry Herald reported....

“Like in the tensest times of the Cold War, troops from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization are trying to take control of the Arctic route, said the newspaper....[T]he US Navy, in conjunction with its British allies, is meeting the challenge of displacing Russian submarines from the Arctic region.” [8]

The US and Britain held Operation Ice Exercise 2007 under the polar cap and repeated the maneuvers earlier this year with Ice Exercise 2009.

During the 2007 exercises a US Navy website revealed that “The submarine force continues to use the Arctic Ocean as an alternate route for shifting submarines between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans....Submarines can reach the western Pacific directly by transiting through international waters of the Arctic rather than through the Panama Canal.” [9]

The subject of employing the Arctic, especially the long-fabled and now practicable Northwest Passage, for both civilian and military transit will be examined with the second component in the battle for the Arctic.

Also in 2007 Barry L. Campbell, head of operations at the U.S. Navy Arctic Submarine Laboratory, in referring to joint NATO war plans for the Arctic, said: “‘We’re a worldwide Navy and the Navy’s position is we should be able to operate in any ocean in the world....When you go through the Arctic, no one knows you’re there....We expect all our subs to be able to operate in the Arctic....Our strategic position is to be able to operate anywhere in the world, and we see the Arctic as part of that....[I]f we ever did have to fight a battle under there it would be a joint operation.’” [10]

In a previous article in this series, NATO’s, Pentagon’s New Strategic Battleground: The Arctic [11], it was observed that “with US and NATO missile and satellite radar and interceptor missile facilities around the world and in space, the only place where Russia could retain a deterrence and/or retaliatory capacity against a crushing nuclear first strike is under the polar ice cap....[W]ithout this capability Russia could be rendered completely defenseless in the event of a first strike nuclear attack.”

In 2006 a Russian military press source quoted Navy Commander Admiral Vladimir Masorin commenting on the requirement for Russian submarines to maintain a presence under the Arctic polar ice cap: “[T]raining is needed to help strategic submarines of the Russian Fleet head for the Arctic ice region, which is the least vulnerable to an adversary’s monitoring, and prepare for a response to a ballistic missile strike in the event of a nuclear conflict.

“In order to be able to fulfill this task – I mean the task of preserving strategic submarines – it is necessary to train Russian submariners to maneuver under the Arctic ice.” [12]

Northwest Passage Could Transform Global Civilian, Military Shipping: Canada Confronts Russia

In recent years a direct shipping route from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific in the Northern Hemisphere through the Northwest Passage has presented the prospect of cutting thousands of kilometers and several days if not weeks for ships – civilian and military – from the traditional routes through the Panama and Suez canals and for larger vessels even

having to round the southern tips of Africa and South America.

Arctic melting has reduced the ice in the area to its lowest level in the thirty three years satellite images have measured it, with the Northwest Passage entirely open for the first time in recorded history.

US National Security Presidential Directive 66 also includes the intention to “Preserve the global mobility of United States military and civilian vessels and aircraft throughout the Arctic region” and to “Project a sovereign United States maritime presence in the Arctic in support of essential United States interests.” [13]

Canada claims the Northwest Passage as its exclusive territory but Washington insists that “The Northwest Passage is a strait used for international navigation, and the Northern Sea Route includes straits used for international navigation; the regime of transit passage applies to passage through those straits. Preserving the rights and duties relating to navigation and overflight in the Arctic region supports our ability to exercise these rights throughout the world, including through strategic straits.” [14]

That is, the US bluntly contests Canada’s contentions about the passage, which runs along the north of that nation and no other, being its national territory and insists on internationalizing it.

Notwithstanding which there is no evidence that any member of the Canadian government, the ruling Conservative Party, its Liberal Party opposition or even the New Democratic Party has responded to the US National Security Directive, the first major American statement on the issue in fifteen years, with even a murmur of disapprobation.

Instead all concern and no little hostility has been directed by Canadian authorities, particularly the federal government, at a nation that doesn’t assert the right to deploy warships with long-range cruise missiles, nuclear submarines and Aegis class destroyers equipped with interceptor missiles only miles off the Canadian mainland in the wider Western extreme of the Passage and other naval vessels between the mainland and its northern islands: Russia.

The threats and bluster, insults and provocations staged by top Canadian officials over the past three and a half months have at times reached an hysterical pitch, not only rivaling but exceeding the depths of the Cold War period.

The current campaign was adumbrated last August after the five-day war between Georgia and Russia when Prime Minister Stephen Harper “accused Russia of reverting to a ‘Soviet-era mentality’” [15] and Defence Affairs Minister Peter MacKay said “When we see a Russian Bear [Tupolev Tu-95] approaching Canadian air space, we meet them with an F-18” [16] and has not let up since.

After then recently inaugurated US President Barack Obama make his first trip outside the United States in mid-February to the Canadian capital of Ottawa, Defence Minister MacKay stated regarding an alleged interception of a Russian bomber over the Arctic Ocean – in international, neutral airspace – shortly before Obama’s arrival:

“They met a Russian aircraft that was approaching Canadian airspace, and as they have done in previous occasions they sent very clear signals that are understood, that the aircraft

was to turnaround, turn tail, and head back to their airspace, which it did.

"I'm not going to stand here and accuse the Russians of having deliberately done this during the presidential visit, but it was a strong coincidence." [17]

Russia has routinely flown such patrols over the Arctic Ocean, the Barents and North Sea and off the coast of Alaska since the autumn of 2007. Moreover, depending on where in the Arctic the Russian bomber was at the time, it may well have been 6,000 kilometers from Ottawa, thereby posing no threat or constituting no warning to either Obama or Canada.

Prime Minister Harper echoed MacKay's tirade with:

"I have expressed at various times the deep concern our government has with increasingly aggressive Russian actions around the globe and Russian intrusions into our airspace.

"We will defend our airspace, we also have obligations of continental defence with the United States. We will fulfil those obligations to defend our continental airspace, and we will defend our sovereignty and we will respond every time the Russians make any kind of intrusion on the sovereignty in Canada's Arctic." [18]

After Russia announced that it planned to have a military force available to defend its interests in the Arctic by 2020 – eleven years from now – Foreign Affairs Minister Lawrence Cannon followed the lead of his predecessor and current Defence Minister MacKay and Prime Minister Harper and said, "Let's be perfectly clear here. Canada will not be bullied.

"Sovereignty is part of that (Northern policy). We will not waiver from that objective. Sovereignty is uppermost for us, so we will not be swayed from that." [19]

Cannon left it unclear in which manner Russia had questioned his country's sovereignty, except perhaps by not gratuitously ceding it the Lomonosov Ridge, though if Cannon had bothered to read US National Security Directive 66 he would have received a blunt introduction to the genuine threat to Canada's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

It will be seen later how Canada has matched the action to the word.

#### Control Of World Energy Resources And NATO's Drive Into The Arctic

A U.S. Geological Survey of May of 2008 on the Arctic "estimated the occurrence of undiscovered oil and gas in 33 geologic provinces thought to be prospective for petroleum. The sum of the mean estimates for each province indicates that 90 billion barrels of oil, 1,669 trillion cubic feet of natural gas, and 44 billion barrels of natural gas liquids may remain to be found in the Arctic, of which approximately 84 percent is expected to occur in offshore areas." [20]

"The unexplored Arctic contains about one-fifth of the world's undiscovered oil and nearly a third of the natural gas yet to be found....The untapped reserves are beneath the seafloor in geopolitically controversial areas above the Arctic Circle." [21]

Four days ago Science magazine published a new US Geological Survey study that "assessed the area north of the Arctic Circle and concluded that about 30% of the world's undiscovered gas and 13% of the world's undiscovered oil may be found there, mostly offshore under less than 500 meters of water. Undiscovered natural gas is three times more



abundant than oil in the Arctic and is largely concentrated in Russia.” [22]

The full report is only available to subscribers, but the Canadian Globe and Mail provided this excerpt: “Although substantial amounts as may be found in Alaska, Canada and Greenland, the undiscovered gas resource is concentrated in Russian territory, and its development would reinforce the pre-eminent strategic position of that country.” [23]

In addition to estimating that the Arctic Circle contains 30% of the world’s undiscovered natural gas, the survey increased its figure for potential oil there from 90 billion barrels last year to as many as 160 billion in this year’s report.

A news report summarized the findings on the region’s natural gas potential by saying “The Arctic region may hold enough natural gas to meet current global demand for 14 years and most of it belongs to Russia....” [24]

A website report adds this perspective on the importance of the new estimate: “The new discovery amounts to over 35 years in US foreign oil imports or 5 years’ worth of global oil consumption.

“Canada, Greenland/Denmark, Norway, Russia and the United States, all of which border the Arctic Circle are racing to compete for the untapped resource.

“The oil reserves could fetch a price of \$10.6 trillion dollars at current oil prices. Most of the reserves are in shallow waters – less than 500 meters (about 1/3rd of a mile) – making extraction relatively easy.” [25]

And a Canadian newspaper offered this terse reminder: “The updated estimates of the North’s promising oil and gas resources comes as Canada and its polar neighbours aggressively pursue competing claims to vast areas of continental shelf under the Arctic Ocean.” [26]

Where vast, previously unexploited hydrocarbon reserves are discovered or suspected NATO is never far behind, from the Caspian Sea to Africa’s Gulf Of Guinea to the Arctic Ocean. On January 28-29 of this year the North Atlantic Treaty Organization held a meeting on the Arctic in the capital of Iceland entitled Seminar on Security Prospects in the High North.

It was attended by the bloc’s Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, NATO’s two top military commanders and the Chairman of the Military Committee “as well as many other decision-makers and experts from Allied countries.” [27]

Scheffer’s address was marked by a fairly uncharacteristic degree of candor, at least when he said, “[T]he High North is going to require even more of the Alliance’s attention in the coming years.

“As the ice-cap decreases, the possibility increases of extracting the High North’s mineral wealth and energy deposits.

“At our Summit in Bucharest last year, we agreed a number of guiding principles for NATO’s role in energy security....

“NATO provides a forum where four of the Arctic coastal states [Canada, Denmark, Norway, the United States] can inform, discuss, and share, any concerns that they may have. And

this leads me directly onto the next issue, which is military activity in the region.

“Clearly, the High North is a region that is of strategic interest to the Alliance.” [28]

Also addressing the meeting was NATO Supreme Allied Commander and the Pentagon’s European Command chief General Bantz John Craddock, who “opined that NATO could contribute greatly to facilitating cooperation in areas such as the development and security of shipping routes, energy security, surveillance and monitoring, search and rescue, resource exploration and mining....” [29]

Craddock inherited his dual assignments from Marine General James Jones, the architect of the new US African Command and current National Security Adviser, who is certainly overseeing the role of the US military and NATO in securing control of world energy supplies.

#### Peaceful Multilateral Development Or War In The Arctic?

US and NATO designs on the Arctic for strategic military purposes, for the potential of the Northwest Passage to redefine international shipping and naval commerce and for gaining access to and domination over perhaps the largest untapped oil and natural gas supplies in the world are hardly disguised.

As with numerous energy transportation projects in the Caspian Sea Basin, the Caucasus, the Black Sea region and the Balkans, Iraq and Africa, for the West oil and gas extraction and transit is a winner-take-all game dictated by the drive to master others and share with none.

The recent US Geological Survey study suggests that the Arctic Ocean may contain not only one-third of the world’s undiscovered natural gas but almost two-thirds as much oil as Saudi Arabia, the world’s largest producer, is conventionally estimated to possess: 160 billion barrels to somewhere in the neighborhood of 260 billion barrels.

That Russia might gain access to the lion’s share of both is not something that the US and its NATO allies will permit. The latter have fought three wars since 1999 for lesser stakes. Iraq, for example, has an estimated 115 billion barrels of oil.

Last month Russian President Dmitry Medvedev approved his nation’s National Security Strategy until 2020 document which says that “the main threat to Russia’s national security is the policy pursued by certain leading states, which is aimed at attaining military superiority over Russia, in the first place in strategic nuclear forces.

“The threats to military security are the policy by a number of leading foreign states, aimed at attaining dominant superiority in the military sphere, in the first place in strategic nuclear forces, by developing high-precision, information and other high-tech means of warfare, strategic armaments with non-nuclear ordnance, the unilateral formation of the global missile defense system and militarization of outer space, which is capable of bringing about a new spiral of the arms race, as well as the development of nuclear, chemical and biological technologies, the production of weapons of mass destruction or their components and delivery vehicles.” [30]

The strategy also, in the words of the Times of London, “identified the intensifying battle for ownership of vast untapped oil and gas fields around its borders as a source of potential military conflict within a decade.”



“The United States, Norway, Canada and Denmark are challenging Russia’s claim to a section of the Arctic shelf, the size of Western Europe, which is believed to contain billions of tonnes of oil and gas.” [31]

In a foreign ministers session of the Arctic Council in late April Russia again warned against plans to militarize the Arctic. Its plea fell on deaf ears in the West.

On May 28 the Norwegian ambassador to NATO took his British, Danish, German, Estonian and Romanian counterparts on a “High North study trip” near the Arctic Circle where the Norwegian foreign minister “emphasised the importance of NATO attention to security issues of the High North.” [32]

Three days earlier the same nation’s State Secretary, Espen Barth Eide, addressed the Defence and Security Committee of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly in Oslo and said, “Russia has shown an increased willingness to engage in political rhetoric and even use of military force....NATO has a very important role to play and Norway has argued the case for a long time. The Alliance is at the core of the security and defence strategies of all but one Arctic Ocean state.

“NATO already has a certain presence and plays a role in the High North today, primarily through the Integrated Air Defence System, including fighters on alert and AWACS surveillance flights. Some exercise activity under the NATO flag also takes place in Norway and Iceland....We would like to see NATO raise its profile in the High North.” [33]

#### Canada: West’s Front Line, Battering Ram And Sacrificial Offering

As tensions mount in the Arctic, especially should they develop into a crisis and the military option be employed, Norway will play its appointed role as a loyal NATO cohort, as will its neighbors Denmark, Finland and Sweden, the last two rapidly becoming NATO states in every manner but formally.

Yet the battle will be joined where three of the four NATO states with Arctic territorial claims – the United States, Canada and Denmark – base them, in the northernmost part of the Western Hemisphere.

And having by far the largest border with the Arctic and the most sizeable portion of its territory, Canada is the shock brigade to be used in any planned provocation and open confrontation.

Nine days ago it was reported that “Canada’s mapping of the Arctic is pushing into territory claimed by Russia in the high-stakes drive by countries to establish clear title to the polar region and its seabed riches.

“Survey flights Ottawa conducted in late winter and early spring went beyond the North Pole and into an area where Russia has staked claims, a Department of Natural Resources official said Sunday.”

The account continued by stating, “If Canada eventually files a claim that extends past the North Pole, it could find itself in conflict with Russia.

“Canada and Russia have both committed to a peaceful resolution of conflicts over claims submitted under the international process, a pledge [that] will be put to the test if Ottawa

and Moscow submit overlapping stakes.

“Canadian scientists contend that the underwater Lomonosov Ridge is an extension of the North American continental shelf.

“It is estimated that a quarter of the world’s undiscovered oil and gas lies under the Arctic.” [34]

Canadian military and civilian leaders have been laying the groundwork for this confrontation since the advent of the Harper administration.

In August of 2007 the prime minister “announced plans to build a new army training centre in the Far North at Resolute Bay [east end of the Northwest Passage] and to outfit a deep-water port for both military and civilian use at the northern tip of Baffin Island.

“His trip to the Arctic earlier this month was accompanied by the biggest military exercise in the region in years, with 600 soldiers, sailors and air crew participating.” [35]

A year later the Harper and Bush governments laid aside a long-standing dispute in the Arctic’s Beaufort Sea “in the name of defending against Russia’s Arctic claims, which clash with those of the US, Canada, Denmark and Norway.” [36]

In the same month Canada conducted what it called the first of several military sovereignty exercises in the Arctic, a full spectrum affair including “In addition to the army, navy and air force, several federal agencies and departments are participating, including the Coast Guard, RCMP, CSIS, Canada Border Services Agency, Transport Canada and Health Canada.

“Military officials say this year’s exercise involves the most number of departments and agencies ever.” [37]

Later in August of 2008 Harper and Defence Secretary MacKay visited the Northwest Territories to inspect “four CF18 Canadian military jets sent to Inuvik in response to what officials said was an unidentified aircraft that had neared Canadian air space.” [38]

Last September the Canadian Defence Ministry launched “Operation NANOOK 2008, a sovereignty operation in Canada’s eastern Arctic. Not only that, but Harper also voiced support for plans to build a military port and a military base beyond the Polar Circle.”

This at a time when “The United States has joined the race, too, teaming up with Canada to map the unexplored Arctic sea floor.” [39]

On September 19th Harper was paraphrased as saying “Canada is stepping up its military alertness along its northern frontier in response to Russia’s ‘testing’ of its boundaries and recent Arctic grab.

“We are concerned about not just Russia’s claims through the international process, but Russia’s testing of Canadian airspace and other indications...(of) some desire to work outside of the international framework. That is obviously why we are taking a range of measures, including military measures, to strengthen our sovereignty in the North.” [40]

In December of last year defence chief MacKay “singled out possible naval encroachments from Russia and China, saying, ‘We have to be diligent.’” [41]

This March MacKay “announced...the locations of the two satellite reception ground stations for the \$60 million Polar Epsilon project designed to provide space-based, day and night surveillance of Canada’s Arctic and its ocean approaches. [42]

In April Canada held Operation Nunalivut 2009, the first of three “sovereignty operations” scheduled in the Arctic this year.

MacKay said of the exercises, “Operation Nunalivut is but one example of how the Government of Canada actively and routinely exercises its sovereignty in the North. The Canadian Forces play an important role in achieving our goals in the North, which is why the Government of Canada is making sure they have the tools they need to carry out a full range of tasks in the Arctic, including surveillance, sovereignty, and search-and-rescue operations.”

Vice-Admiral Dean McFadden, Commander of Canada Command, added:

“In keeping with the Canada First Defence Strategy, we are placing greater emphasis on our northern operations, including in the High Arctic. This operation underscores the value of the Canadian Rangers, our eyes and ears in the North, which at the direction of the Government are growing to 5,000 in strength.”

Brigadier-General David Millar, the Commander of Joint Task Force North, contributed this:

“This operation is a golden opportunity to expand our capabilities to operate in Canada’s Arctic. In addition to air and ground patrols, this operation calls on a range of supporting military capabilities—communications, intelligence, mapping, and satellite imaging.” [43]

The Commander of Greenland Command, Danish Rear-Admiral Henrik Kudsk, attended the exercises to “discuss military collaboration in the North.” [44]

To further demonstrate NATO unity in the face of a common enemy, Russia, “A Canadian research aircraft is expected to fly over 90 North this month as part of a joint Canada-Denmark mission to strengthen the countries’ claims over the potentially oil-rich Lomonosov Ridge.” [45]

In the same month, April, this time in a show of bipartisan unity, a Liberal Party gathering in Vancouver discussed “a tough Arctic policy that calls on the government to ‘actively and aggressively’ enforce Canada’s sovereignty in the North, including expanding its military role.” [46]

A major Canadian daily revealed information on the Canadian Department of National Defence’s Polar Breeze program, referring to it as a \$138 million “military project so cloaked in secrecy the Department of National Defence at first categorically denied it even existed.

“Today – apart from backtracking on their denial – the military is refusing to answer any questions on the project that experts believe has a role to play in protecting Canada’s Arctic sovereignty and security.” [47]

The newspaper also said that the project “involves the Canadian Forces’ secretive directorate of space development, computer networks and geospatial intelligence – data gathered by satellite” and that it “could have farther ranging functions including sharing sensitive military intelligence across the various branches of the Canadian Forces and with

key allies.” [48]

In early May the Canadian Senate issued a report demanding that “Canada should arm its coast guard icebreakers and turn the North’s Rangers into better-trained units that could fight if necessary.” [49]

Slightly later in a news report called “After Russian talk of conflict, Tories say military is prepared,” Foreign Affairs Minister Lawrence Cannon said the “government’s defence strategy will help the military ‘take action in exercising Canadian sovereignty in the North,’ and highlighted plans for a fleet of Arctic patrol ships, a deepwater docking facility at Baffin Island, an Arctic military training centre and the expansion of the Canadian Rangers....” [50]

The repeated, incessant references to Russia and to no other nation while Canada boosts military cooperation with fellow NATO Arctic claimants leave no room for doubt regarding which nation Canadian military expansion in its north is aimed against. Recent deployments and new and upgraded installations cannot be used to fight a conventional conflict with any modern military adversary. But they are indicative of an intensifying campaign to portray Russia as a threat – as the threat – to Canada.

Piotr Dutkiewicz, director of Carleton University’s Institute of European and Russian Studies, is quoted in a Canadian online publication recently as worrying that “There is a very strange rhetoric that is coming in recent months as to portray Russia as a potential enemy....” [51]

The rhetoric is backed up by action and it isn’t strange but perfectly understandable.

Canada is primed for a role much like that of Georgia in the South Caucasus has been for the past several years, as a comparatively small (in terms of population) nation close to Russia which will be employed to play a part on behalf of far more powerful actors. And should Russia respond in any way to attempted Canadian efforts to “stand tall” against it, from scrambling jets to shooting down a bomber – bravado can always go awry – the US and NATO will be compelled to offer support and assistance, including military action, under the provisions of NATO’s Article 5. In fact that may be exactly what Washington and Brussels have planned.

Rather than continuing to lend Georgia diplomatic and military support, it would behoove Canadians to borrow a lesson from last August’s war in the Caucasus: A war can be launched on an aggressor’s terms but end on someone else’s.

- 1) CanWest News Service. May 26, 2009
- 2) Canwest News Service, December 11, 2008
- 3) Ibid
- 4) Canwest News Service, May 27, 2009
- 5) Library of Parliament, December 7, 2007
- 6) National Security Presidential Directive 66 on Arctic Region Policy  
<http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nspd/nspd-66.htm>
- 7) Ibid
- 8) Prensa Latina, March 29, 2007
- 9) Navy NewsStand, March 20, 2007
- 10) Navy NewsStand, March 29, 2007
- 11) Stop NATO, February 2, 2009

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/stopnato/message/37104>

- 12) Interfax-Military, September 26, 2006
- 13) National Security Presidential Directive, January 9, 2009
- 14) Ibid
- 15) Canwest News Service, August 19, 2008
- 16) Canwest News Service, September 12, 2008
- 17) CBC, February 27, 2009
- 18) Ibid
- 19) Vancouver Sun, March 27, 2009
- 20) U.S. Geological Survey, May, 2008  
<http://geology.com/usgs/arctic-oil-and-gas-report.shtml>
- 21) Live Science, July 24, 2008
- 22) Science, May 29, 2009  
<http://www.sciencemag.org/cgi/content/short/324/5931/1175>
- 23) Globe and Mail, May 28, 2009
- 24) Bloomberg, May 29, 2009
- 25) Daily Tech, June, 1, 2009
- 26) Globe and Mail, May 28, 2009
- 27) NATO International, January 29, 2009
- 28) Ibid
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