

## **AFAC POSITION PAPER 01/2008**

### **Issue: The Importance of NORAD**

#### **Background**

- May 12, 2008 will mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the North American Aerospace Defence Command (NORAD), the alliance formed between Canada and the United States to integrate resources employed to defend against aerospace threats. Initially this defence addressed Soviet bombers and then cruise missiles during the Cold War, but has evolved to include threats from space, support for interdiction of drug traffickers, ballistic missile warning and, most recently, maritime warning. Additionally, since 9/11 NORAD has expanded its air defence mission to include a capability to respond to threats originating from domestic sources.
- The decision in February 2005 by the Canadian Government to decline participation in ballistic missile defence (BMD) dealt a serious blow to the potential for a positive future of NORAD. Mutual participation in this natural extension of the NORAD mission would have perpetuated an integrated approach to a common threat. Unfortunately, however, the current arrangement has limited Canadian involvement to the warning and assessment functions of BMD, stopping short of the actual defence, which remains a US-only responsibility.
- NORAD has, for the most part, been taken for granted. Few recognize that Canadian and US personnel are truly integrated into one command structure to perform a common mission. With a relatively small (and very manageable) proportional contribution, Canada is able to leverage the considerable resources of the US. Moreover, the value of the relationship extends beyond the visible mission to include an exchange of intelligence, shared exercises for training, cooperation in assessing future threats, etc.
- Some examples of recent and ongoing activities by NORAD are:
  - Provision of fighter aircraft, with the necessary support, to intercept unidentified 'targets' entering sovereign airspace
  - Escorting aircraft which could present a threat
  - Provision of defensive air cover for major events such as the North American leaders' summit in Montebello in 2007, the Super Bowl game, etc.



- Preparation and planning for airspace control during the 2010 Olympics in Vancouver
- Protection of sovereignty through monitoring and interception of Russian aircraft approaching North American airspace
- The general awareness of the scope of these activities, and the relative benefit to the defence and security of Canadians is not well appreciated, even by many in uniform who have not had any direct contact with NORAD operations.
- An understanding of NORAD is further complicated by the formation of Canada Command and the determination of how it will function with NORAD and the (collocated) US Northern Command. NORAD is a binational command which is overseen by the senior military officers in each of Ottawa and Washington, D.C. Accordingly, its functions cannot appropriately be delegated to a subordinate command in either country.

### **AFAC Position**

- Arguably, NORAD is the most successful military alliance that has ever existed. Canadians enjoy a unique partnership with the United States that is the envy of many other allies. For a relatively small investment, Canada is able to access significant resources for aerospace defence which would otherwise be unaffordable.
- The NORAD partnership should be retained as a binational command, with accountability to the strategic level in each country. Having said this, the functions of the command must evolve to ensure that it remains relevant to the defence needs of both partners. A mutually-agreed change in name might be useful in signaling future commitment to change and responsiveness.
- Canada must maintain its commitment to NORAD. This should involve at least the current level of personnel dedicated to NORAD operations, at Canadian and American locations. The ongoing modernization of the CF-18 fleet will enable Canadian fighters to continue their important contribution to air defence. Additionally, maintenance of an air-to-air refueling capability, along with the revitalization of tactical airlift, will provide the necessary support to CF-18 missions. The new operations control centre in North Bay, the maintenance of forward operating locations in the North, and continued support of long and short-range radars along the approaches to North America all constitute additional valuable commitments by Canada.



- Canada should seek other ways in which its contribution to NORAD can be strengthened. The planned deployment of a satellite (Project Sapphire) to provide surveillance of man-made objects in earth orbit is strongly supported. Re-examination of Canada's role in BMD is encouraged, especially if/when the US proposes to exclude Canada altogether due to the impracticality of partial involvement. Full implementation of the maritime warning mission added to the NORAD Agreement in 2006 should be actively pursued to strengthen information sharing and mutual arrangements on the prosecution of maritime vessels of interest. And, perhaps above all, the NORAD mission needs to be understood by Canadians in order to appreciate the value it presents to a 'Canada first' defence strategy.
- Every effort should be taken to expose influential Canadians, and citizens at large, to the importance, activities and benefits of NORAD. This can be done through a public display of NORAD capabilities, by open attribution of NORAD accomplishments, and by closer engagement of US and Canadian authorities at the strategic level.

### **Messages**

- NORAD is vital to Canada and Canadians. It is affordable and enables effective aerospace defence of North America against evolving threats.
- The close partnership ties created by NORAD allow the sharing of information and the exploration of other areas of potential defence cooperation. NORAD needs to continue to change as needed to stay relevant to mutual defence needs.
- Every effort should be made to help all Canadians understand the benefits and the importance of NORAD to Canada.

Developed by: Aviation Affairs Committee

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Date: Jan 2008

