The Mobile Striking Force and Continental Defence 1948-1955

Sean M. Maloney

The need to project land force power within the confines of the northern portion of the North American continent may appear, at first glance, ridiculous in today's world. In the early years of the Cold War, both Canada and the United States gave credibility to a land supported air threat to North America and took steps to meet such a contingency. The Canadian response was to configure the small, almost token, active Canadian Army into an airtransportable formation called the Mobile Striking Force (MSF). Some have suggested that the creation of the MSF and its operations in the 1948-1955 period was not only a waste of resources but distracted the Canadian Army from training for other, more important tasks which would become apparent in the 1950s.[1] This may be an accurate assessment, but only in hindsight. The MSF did provide many positive benefits within the greater context of post-1945 Canadian defence policy. The aim of this study is to examine the MSF's organization, mission and planning in order to provide insight into these positive benefits.

Policy Background

The policy and organizational roots of the MSF extend back to the Second World War. The Ogdensburg Agreement of August 1940[2] that resulted in the creation of the Canada-United States Permanent Joint Board of Defence (PJBD) allowed for many forms of defence cooperation between the two nations during the Second World War. In addition to approving extensive joint construction projects like the land link with Alaska (the Northwest Highway System), the CANOL oil project and the Northeast Staging Route for aircraft,[3] the PJBD was also the clearing-house for continental defence planning. The most important aspect of the PJBD in this regard was the understanding that both Canada and the United States were equal partners in this endeavour. This appears unusual given the obvious disparities in population, military and economic potential. In the military sphere, where joint command usually resides with the nation with the greatest preponderance of local forces, Canada was able to retain not only operational control but strategic direction of her military forces after some bitter infighting.[4] This precedent was transferred and retained into the post-war period, as was the need to protect those facilities built during the war.

After the Second World War, with the rise of the Soviet Union as the new enemy, the PJBD continued in its role as the defence coordinator between the U.S. and Canada. To facilitate defence planning, the military members of the PJBD were formed into the Military Coordinating Committee (MCC) of the PJBD in 1946. Unlike the PJBD which was formed to "consider the broad sense of the defence of the northern half of the western hemisphere, "[5] the MCC was tasked to develop joint plans which would be submitted to Canadian and U.S. national military authorities for approval and

then implemented if a threat developed. In September 1946, the MCC developed a joint appreciation for defence requirements in North America with the intention of revising the wartime defence plan, known as ABC-22. Developed from a U.S. strategic study called PINCHER,[6] the MCC's appreciation was based on the premise that, by 1950, the Soviets would be able to hinder Canadian and U.S. industrial capacity in a global war through the use of guided missiles, conventional and atomic long range bombers, airborne and amphibious attack and internal subversion. The MCC appreciation emphasized the interdependency of Canada and the U.S. in continental defence; the U.S. was dependent on bases in Canada to project power from its bases in Alaska, Greenland and Iceland, while Canadian security was dependent upon the need to protect U.S. industrial potential that would be applied overseas against the Soviet Union and in the defence of Europe. The primary obstacle was the disparity in the size of military forces and Canada's continual insistence on retaining her sovereignty by not subordinating her military forces to the Americans. To overcome this problem, Second World War precedents were used to demonstrate that intimate joint cooperation could be achieved through the establishment of extremely close links between the Canadian Chiefs of Staff Committee and the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) using the MCC.[7]

The Threat

By October 1946, the U. S. JCS had developed a more complete threat estimate and response within the context of PINCHER. Known as BROADVIEW, the objective of defending North America was to "safeguard our military capability by protecting the vital elements of our war potential."[8] Since BROADVIEW provided the context of the Canada-U.S. Basic Security Plan (BSP), that is, the ABC-22 revision, its discussion of possible threats to North American security was notable. BROADVIEW anticipated that, up to 1950, the Soviets could use subversion and sabotage by internal groups; covert biological and chemical attacks; air attacks against Alaska, Iceland and Greenland and the use of airborne irregular forces ranging throughout the continent. By 1952, BROADVIEW planners projected the use of the atomic bomb delivered by long range aircraft and the occupation of Newfoundland, Alaska and Greenland for the forward basing of Soviet bomber aircraft and airborne forces.[9]

Come hither, come hither, come hither;
Here shall he see, No enemy
But winter and rough weather.

William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*

BROADVIEWs estimate of the potential threat to North America remained constant throughout joint Canadian-U.S. war planning in the late 1940s. Consistently, late war plans such as BROILER, DOUBLESTAR and CROSSPIECE focused on the ability of the Soviet Union to use the TU-4 aircraft to attack North America.[10] The TU-4, codenamed "BULL" by NATO, was essentially a "reverse engineered" American Boeing B-29 that had been impounded by the Soviets in the closing stages ofthewar. With a range of 3,450 miles, theTU-4 could only reach North American targets exclusive of Alaska on a one way mission, including Hanford, Washington, the only plutonium production facility in the United States at that time. If the TU-4 could be forward based however, two way bombing missions were possible.[11] Logical candidates for forward basing sites included the Aleutians, Alaska, Greenland or Newfoundland, that is, portions of the Northeast and Northwest Staging Routes constructed during the war to support the Soviet Union and Europe that were scheduled by the Americans for demolition.[12]

Defence planners at the time also extrapolated the extensive Soviet experience in airborne operations during the war and concluded that eight to ten airborne divisions existed in the Soviet order of battle, with 5,000 transport aircraft of the C-47 type; later, copies of the DC-4 four-engined transport would become available. Although not all would be used in a forward base seizure role, enough airborne forces and lift existed to pose a problem in Alaska and the Aleutians, and possibly Greenland as well if Iceland was seized. Experience also demonstrated that the Soviets were capable of operating brigade-sized airborne formations in a partisan support role.[13]

It is important to note that in the late 1940s, no NORAD agreement existed, the Distant Early Warning Line had not been constructed and the available numbers of long range interceptor aircraft were pitifully small. Even by 1953, American air defence planners believed they could only achieve a 20 per cent kill rate against any air attack on North America, be it one or two-way.[14] It should be noted that the Soviets were not able to field a droppable atomic bomb before the 1950-1952 time frame. The Soviets did, however, develop research and production facilities for chemical and biological weapons during the war and could have had a "poor man's atomic bomb" prior to 1950 and thus the air threat was a problem.[15] With regards to the popular scenario of the vast Soviet hordes descending upon North America over the North Pole, the Canada-U.S. BSP concluded that:

> A large scale Invasion of the northern portion of the Western hemisphere will be beyond potential enemy capabilities for many years. However, beginning about 1950, a potential enemy might support... on the order of 6000 men . . . [attacks] against Alaska or the Canadian north west . . .[16]

The immediate foreseeable threat was not an all-out land invasion and occupation of North America. Up to this point then, the scenario for continental defence in 1946-1950 was based on the need to prevent Soviet airborne forces from seizing and occupying forward bases from which other power projection forces could operate. These other forces might include strategic bombing aircraft carrying chemical, biological or atomic weapons, raiding parties, partisan support units or other diversionary forces which could seriously disrupt North America's ability to defend Western Europe and carry the war to the Soviet Union proper.

The MSF in Embryo, 1946-1948

Between 1945 and 1947, the Canadian Army at its wartime strength was reduced from 494,258 all ranks to 15,563. In this reorganization, an Active Force that included three infantry battalions, two armoured regiments, one artillery regiment, an engineer squadron and various support units was

A Canadian soldier standing beside a CG-4A Glider during Exercise Eagle, 1949. (CFPU ZK 1141-4)

Troops boarding a CI 19 Flying Boxcar. (CFPU PCN 2380)

created, while the Reserve Force theoretically could provide four infantry and two armoured divisions after a two year mobilization period. The initial task of the Active Force was to train the Reserve Force by keeping a cadre of skills available.[17]

The 1946 Canada-U.S. Basic Security Plan discussed previously required Canada to provide one airborne or airtransportable brigade group and its attendant airlift as part of the overall continental defence scheme. Initially, the Cabinet Defence Committee referred to this commitment as the Mobile Reserve, to be supplied from units of the Active Force to prevent the Soviets from gaining a lodgement in North America. However, no plans for its creation or composition were implemented before 1948. In 1948, the BSP requirement was reviewed in light of the Berlin Crisis and the Mobile Reserve was renamed the Mobile Striking Force or MSF and more concrete planning took place. Also in 1948, the PJBD MCC formed a joint sub-committee on mobile striking forces; the implication of this being that the MSF concept was a joint Canadian-U.S. creation.[18]

The concept of an airborne or air transportable infantry force capable of operating in an advanced arctic climate can be found during the Second World War. Although the post-war Canadian MSF was an autonomous Canadian formation, its genealogy can be traced to the First Special Service Force which was a combined airborne-trained Canadian/American unit equipped with oversnow vehicles originally conceived to conduct diversionary operations in Norway. Though it never served this purpose, one task of the "Devil's Brigade" was the Kiska operation in the Aleutians in 1943. As such, the "Devil's Brigade" provided the Canadian Army with doctrinal experience in arctic and parachute operations. It also helped to consolidate an already cordial relationship with the U.S. Army, their operational methods and equipment.[19] In addition, both the Canadian and U.S. armies conducted extensive tests to evaluate clothing, weapons and vehicles within the context of brigade level exercises between 1945 and 1947.[20]

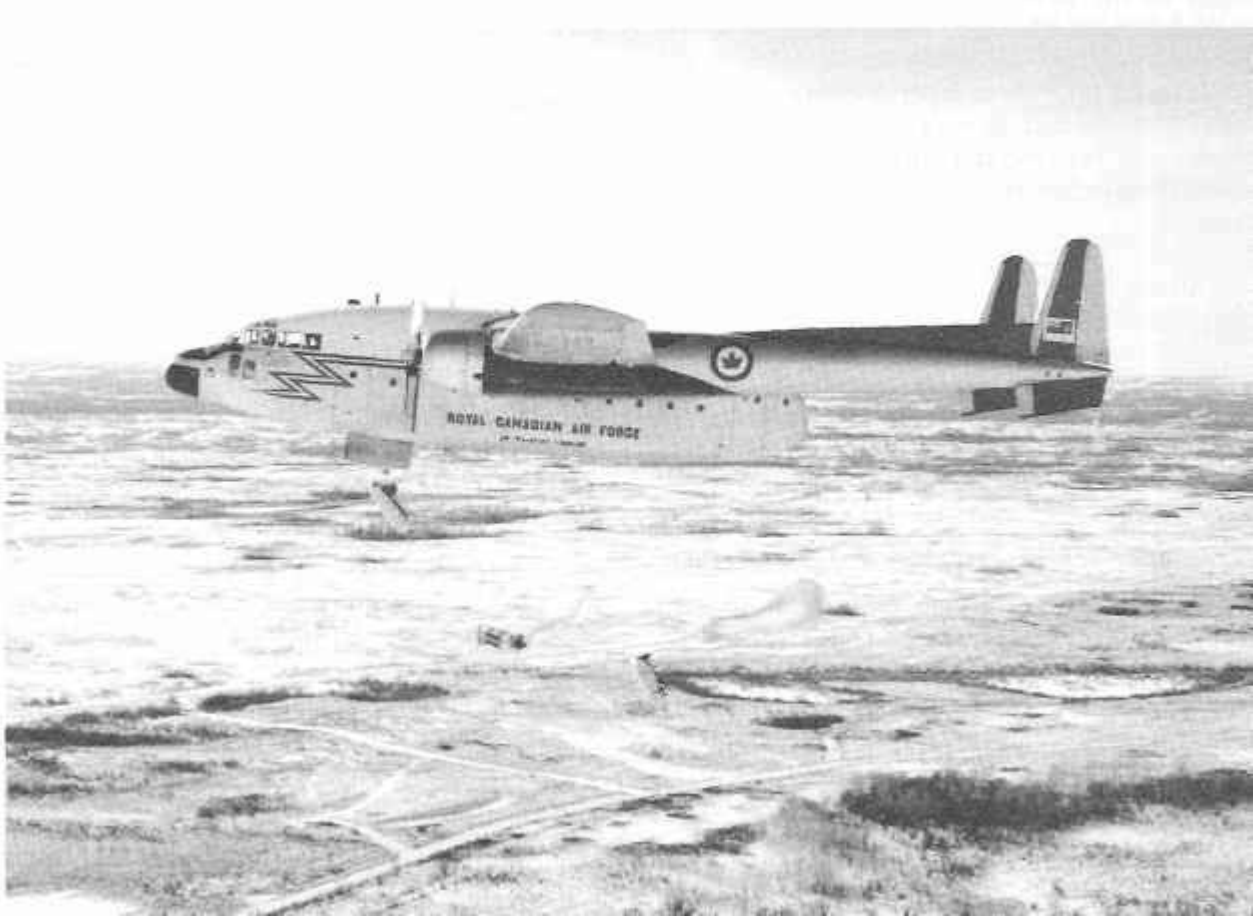
It should be emphasized that in 1948 the MSF was a very rudimentary organization. The MSF did not exist as a formation in the same sense that a brigade group of three battalions does; the Active Force infantry battalions, engineers, artillery and services were located in many different locations across Canada. The Active Force itself did constitute a brigade group with armoured support and it did train

for conventional combined arms operations on a limited basis. There was no MSF headquarters in 1948, no training higher than company level in parachute or arctic operations, no airtransportable oversnow vehicles nor was there any mechanism for coordinating with the RCAF, which was supposed to provide transport aircraft for the MSF.[21] The Army Plans Committee had drawn up a brief in which the three infantry battalions, an engineer squadron and some service support could be formed into an MSF brigade group but there were too many of the above factors militating against its creation. Additionally, under the terms of the BSP, the MSF could be airborne or airtransportable but the method of delivery had not been decided upon in 1948.[22]

Given this state of affairs within the context of the Berlin Crisis, the Army Plans Committee strongly recommended that these limitations be rectified so that Canada could meet the BSP requirement. In turn, the BSP requirement was altered so that the MSF could be fielded piecemeal if it was not ready as a coherent brigade formation. Thus, prior to May 1949, Canada was required to provide one parachute infantry battalion group on day 60 of a war, followed by one within 130 days and another in 180 days. After May 1949, Canada was expected to have one battalion group available immediately, followed by two battalions in the field within 60 and 120 days respectively.[23]

In early 1948, the only airborne trained elements in the Canadian Army were one platoon from each of the three Active Force infantry battalions; these made up the Canadian Special Air Service Company.[24] By the summer of 1948, these elements were consolidated in one of the Active Force battalions, the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, which then was entirely trained in the airborne role. The intent was to train the

CI 19 dropping cargo through a bottom hatch. (CFPU PCN 2381)



other two infantry battalions in airborne operations and then form a complete MSF Brigade Group.[25] Until this took place, the one existing airborne battalion would have to suffice.

The concept of a battalion group is thus integral to understanding the MSF in the early period. The size of enemy forces attempting to seize forward bases were believed to be of company strength and this dictated counterattacking forces of equal or greater strength. Generally, the smallest formation incorporating artillery, engineers, medical and other service support in the Second World War was the division consisting' of three brigades. Since Canada in 1946-1948 possessed only one brigade with some artillery, engineers and service support, it was in a sense, a mini-division and could operate independently in a conventional combined arms battle.

Since only one battalion of the Active Force brigade was airborne trained for the MSF role, some of the services and support normally available to the brigade were allocated to the battalion so that the single airborne battalion itself could operate independently in the MSF role. This formation was called the battalion group and became the cornerstones for MSF operations before the other two battalions were trained.

All equipment in the battalion group was airtransportable either by airdrop or glider. The four airborne infantry companies had their usual small arms, while the support company was equipped with 75 mm recoilless rifles and 3" mortars. Since the battalion group was an autonomous formation, it also included an airborne artillery troop which could include 75 mm pack howitzers, 4.2" mortars or both. A light anti-aircraft battery was also added, equipped with airtransportable 40 mm Bofors guns. Some thought was even given towards the acquisition of an airdroppable bulldozer that the engineer squadron could use to create an airstrip. The 75 mm pack howitzers and the 75 mm recoilless rifles were added after Exercises ADONIS and EAGLE in 1949 which demonstrated the need to increase the firepower available to the battalion group.[26] Although the M29C Weasel oversnow vehicle was large and required disassembly for the C-47 aircraft, the transport platoon was equipped with them on paper.[27]

To overcome the problems of mobility from dispersed location, the MSF was made both airborne and airtransportable in accordance with the original MCC concept. Since only one battalion was airborne trained in 1948-1949, the other battalions and support formations were designated airtransportable. The artillery was supposed to be airlanded by glider with the airborne force, while the rest of the MSF loaded on transport aircraft landed on an airfield secured by the airborne battalion.[28]

Thus far the MSF was an embryonic formation at the beginning of 1949. Only one third of its approved strength was airborne qualified, though the entire organization was equipped for operations. No liaison system with the RCAF existed. Only two maj or exercises were conducted between 1947 and 1949, not really a true test of the MSF concept though enough to conduct acclimatization tests for men and machines.[29]

The **MSF Matures, 1949-1955**

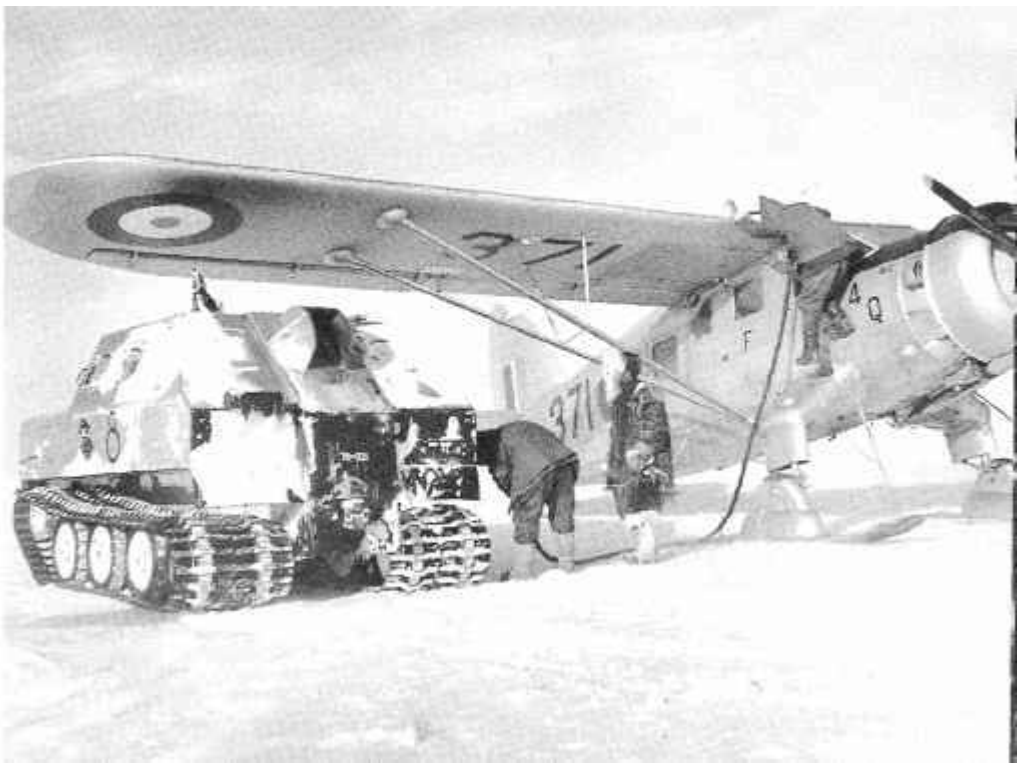
Exercise EAGLE in August 1949 was an important milestone in the short life of the MSF. Designed to validate Army-RCAF cooperation within the MSF concept, the tactical scenario was based on the requirement to reduce an "enemy lodgement" located at an airfield at Fort St. John, B.C. EAGLE featured the use of both parachute and gliderborne troops as well as close air support from RCAF reserve fighter squadrons. More importantly, EAGLE was instrumental in pointing out the many limitations that the MSF had to function under, primarily the lack of air support, the need for close fighter escort of the transport aircraft, problems in Army-RCAF cooperation, the need for security of forward based support units and the lack of firepower inherent to the battalion group. These limitations, which were displayed for all to see in the Canadian media, were instrumental in mobilizing public pressure and forcing the Canadian government to improve the MSF's capability.[30]

A "Penguin" oversnow vehicle refuels an RCAF Norseman in the Arctic during Operation Musk-Ox, 17 March 1946.
(Photo by R.W. Martin
DND/NAC PA 134303)

would become integral to the proposed MSF brigade headquarters, which would have an "Army Component" and an "Air Force Component." This arrangement was not permanent and only was formed for exercises and operations. Thus, by November 1949 the MSF headquarters problem was partially alleviated and a Joint Army/Air Headquarters was established in Winnipeg.[31]

There was, however, the nagging question of airlift. Since its inception, the MSF was hindered with a paucity of transport aircraft. Throughout the late 1940s, Canadian defence planners rigidly adhered to

The problems of command and control were addressed by the Army Planning Committee in 1949. Since any air movements necessitated coordination with the RCAF, the establishment of an MSF headquarters was imperative. It was uneconomical to have three independent formations of battalion size controlled directly from Ottawa, even though this might facilitate coordination with the RCAF. The RCAF "played ball" and created a Tactical Group Headquarters (Tac Gp HQ) to handle air movements and tactical air support to MSF operations. This eventually



A C-4 7 Dakota being unloaded of technical equipment and luggage at Cambridge Bay, N.W.T. during Operation Musk-Ox, 20 March 1946.
(Photo by R.W. Martin
DND/NAC PA 134304)

the BSP commitment of three troop carrier squadrons. This constituted the entire RCAF strength of 30 C-47 *Dakota* aircraft, each being capable of transporting 15-20 parachutists and their equipment. In essential terms, 30 C-47s could move most of a single battalion group in one lift. To transport the artillery troops and other vehicles, 8 CG-4A *Hadrian* gliders were available, though recovery after an operation remained an unsolved problem.[32] Canadian planners determined that 20 *North Star* long range transports would be available within one month of a conflict commencing. The *North Star* however was limited in numbers and had a plethora of other taskings.[33]

In the early 1950s the RCAF purchased 35 C119 *Flying Boxcar* assault transports, ofwhich 12 were allocated to the MSF at any one time. Though this did improve the airlift situation somewhat, MSF planners believed that 24 additional C119s would be required to conduct two battalion group operations simultaneously if all other C-47 and *North Star* assets were used, or 114 CI 19s to move the entire MSF.[34] With the usual maintenance problems associated with flying machines added to the multiplicity of tasks, the entire strength of transport aircraft allocated to the MSF could never be utilized at the same time. However, for tactical air support the RCAF pledged two squadrons of B-25 *Mitchell* light bombers from the air reserve; these would prove their value in later exercises in the long range reconnaissance and attack role.[35] In effect, the MSF would be hard pressed to conduct more than two different battalion group operations at the same time.

Organization of the MSF did not change significantly after 1949. In addition to the command changes referred to earlier, the intent of Army Headquarters was to have three battalion groups available for MSF operations. However, the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950 and the sudden Canadian commitment of one brigade group to NATO's integrated force in Europe in 1951 placed a great strain on mobilization and training in the army. In addition to its MSF role and its Reserve Force cadre training role, Active Force units had to provide cadre personnel to the Canadian Army Special Force (later 25th Canadian Infantry Brigade Group) mobilized for Korea and the Panda Brigade (27th Canadian Infantry Brigade Group) allocated to Germany. As such, MSF planners in Ottawa were greatly concerned:

> it is noted with alarm that the operational effectiveness of the Mobile Striking Force has been so reduced and continues to be threatened by the present expansion of the army . . .[36]

The threat estimate for 1950 concluded that "the possibility of a larger scale landing with more serious intentions [other than diversionary] cannot be overlooked entirely but it deserves secondary consideration"[37] and as a result, one option open to MSF planners was to form company groups out of the battalion groups by reallocating service and support elements to even smaller formations if smaller operations were required. Given the limits on air transport, the planning staff thought ten C-47 *Dakotas* would be sufficient lift.[38]

It does appear that two fully trained battalions were available for MSF operations during 1950-1951. Some thought was given to eliminating the MSF brigade headquarters, allocating one battalion each to the Western Command and the Eastern Command and calling the organization the Northern Combat Force. This idea was dropped since it included a proposal to forward base the company groups in the northern regions; this would have had severe morale repercussions and would have limited the ability of the MSF to react to a larger threat.[39] The Cabinet Defence Committee in its 1951 Service Programme continued to authorize one brigade group headquarters, three infantry battalions, one artillery battery, one engineer squadron and supporting services for the defence of North America exclusive of the expansion of the Field Army.[40] Thus, by 1951, MSF planners still emphasized the three battalion group concept and the joint headquarters system.

The missions of the MSF expanded after 1950. In addition to lodgement reduction and counterinsurgency against "partisans," a study

A soldier from the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry poses for the camera during a break in Exercise Sweetbriar in 1950. (CFPU ZK 1136-2)

was done to determine how the Army could contribute to the defence of two very important uranium mines at Port Radium and Beaverlodge, NWT. By 1953, these mines were providing more than 50 per cent of the uranium required to construct nuclear and thermonuclear weapons in the United States. It was believed that, if uranium production were interfered with by an airborne raid, bombing or sabotage, the development of the nuclear deterrent force that NATO relied on could be seriously affected.[41] Though Canadian planners decided that the stationing of a permanent force was not feasible, the MSF could have a role in counterattacking and retaking the facilities in an emergency.

Similarly, studies were conducted into finding the best means of defending the Alaska Highway system subject to BSP planning and MCC approval. The most obvious candidate for a blocking force should the enemy try to exploit down the highway was the MSF. However, after the problems encountered during Exercise EAGLE and a later U.S.-Canadian exercise, SWEETBRIAR, this responsibility was transferred to an armoured car squadron of the Active Force armoured unit, the Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadians), and elements of the Reserve Force. However, if push came to shove, the only formation that could reach the highway system rapidly was elements of the MSF; therefore, this was another possible tasking.[42]

In the same vein, the security of elements for the American Strategic Air Command (SAC) based in Canada was another possible task. In 1951,

> The Canadian Section of the Board [PJBD] was informed that the War Department [U.S.] regarded Goose Bay as probably the most strategically important air base in the Western Hemisphere . . ,[43]

This was no exaggeration. In addition to serving as the main staging bases for transport and fighter aircraft heading to and from Europe, five different radar stations and two squadrons of USAFF-94B *Scorpion* interceptors allocated for the air defence of North America were stationed there. More importantly, USAF KC-97 *Stratotanker* aircraft used to aerial refuel B-36 *Peacekeeper* and B-47 *Stratojet* nuclear deterrent bombers frequently used Goose Bay as their base.[44] If Goose Bay or the SAC base at Thule, Greenland were occupied by an enemy airborne force, NATO would lose a vital resupply link; worse, the nuclear deterrent on which NATO security was based would be threatened.

The intervention of the Chinese into the Korean War in late 1950 heightened international tension and prompted a reexamination of Canadian and U.S. continental defence planning. The Cabinet Defence Committee recommended in November 1950 that:

> . . . the Committee be authorized to study as a matter of urgency, preparations that could be made within the next few months to meet the dangers of air attack on central Ottawa in the event of war within the next twelve months . . ,[4S]

The PJBD MCC planners were already way ahead of the politicians. The General Officers, Commanding of Eastern Command and Western Command were authorized to conduct defence planning liaison with their American counterparts, Commander U.S. FirstArmyand Commander U.S. Sixth Army respectively. The defence of Alaska was the responsibility of a separate command, U.S. Commander in Chief, Alaska (CinCAL); GOC Western Command was tasked to liaise with it. By this point, the basic Security Plan of 1946 had evolved (in name only) into the Canada-U.S. Emergency Defence Plan (EDP) or MCC 300/2.[46]

The gist of MCC 300/2 allowed for the deployment of one U.S. Regimental Combat Team (RCT-American version of the brigade group) to Greenland (Plan DIAMOND), one RCT to Alaska,[47] one U.S. RCT would be deployed alongside a Canadian MSF battalion group in New Brunswick, P.E.I, or Nova Scotia if necessary (Plan GARNET). Newfoundland, Labrador, the North West territories and the Yukon were to be the responsibility of two MSF battalion groups and a third if one was not needed in the Maritimes. Plan SAPPHIRE allowed for the deployment of an MSF battalion group to the New England states if warranted.[48] Some additional thought was given to the use of MSF units in Plan DIAMOND but this was ruled out by Canadian planners who already had enough on their plate.[49]

It should be noted here that in 1950, the Americans determined that the minimum American forces required for the defence of Alaska was three Regimental Combat Teams, one of which was to be based on the MSF concept of airborne/airtransported battalion groups, along with appropriate airlift. Since CinCAL's objective included the denial of Alaska as an offensive base of operations, an additional "Arctic RCT" was scheduled into the MCC 300/2 plan: These forces will also be prepared for operations in support of Canadian forces in Canada,[50] while Canadian forces would support CinCAL if necessary. By 1952, the arrangements for the defence of Alaska and the Yukonbecame the subject of a separate defence plan called ALCANUS EDP 51, which was created within the context of MCC 300/2.[51] The aforementioned Exercise SWEETBRIARin 1950 was one joint Canadian-U.S. exercise designed to examine the defence of the Canadian northwest.

In addition to the uranium mines, air bases, air strips, U.S. LORAN sites and radar sites, the Department of National Defence possessed an extensive navigational aid and communications network, all of which could become targets for raids and other enemy action. With these additional missions and given the fact that the MSF formations were spread out all over the southernmost areas of Canada, a system of forward basing was created to improve reaction time over the vast expanse of the Canadian North.

Main bases for administration, logistical and operational control of the operation were required. Since these needed to be located at existing airfields near the locations of the MSF units, Edmonton, Three Rivers, Montreal and Moncton were selected as MSF Main Bases. Since logistical support for the MSF was dependent upon aerial resupply, items such as fuel, spare parts and rations were pre-positioned at civilian-manned advanced bases in peacetime. These advanced bases would then serve as the forward sites from which the airborne assault would be launched against an enemy lodgement. MSF advanced bases were located at Whitehorse, Fort Nelson, Yellowknife, Churchill, FortChimo, Frobisher Bay and Goose Bay allowing for extremely flexible movement across the Canadian northern approaches.

Depending where the threat originated, the MSF unit could be mobilized at its home station and moved by air, highway or rail to the nearest MSF main base. Then, assault elements would be transported from the main base by non-tactical airlift to the advanced base and the operation could then be conducted. After performing the tactical air assault from the advanced base, MSF engineers would improve the airhead to allow follow up glider or other airlandings. Once sufficient forces were on the ground at the airhead, a ground attack would take place against the enemy lodgement while casualties were evacuated back to the main base.[52]

Troops exiting from a CG-4A Hadrian glider during Exercise Eagle. (CFPU ZK 1141-6)

Thus, by 1951, a firm doctrinal concept of MSF operations existed based on the experience gained since 1948. Certain deficiencies such as the lack of airlift and the needs of the 25th and 27th Brigades militated against the full and simultaneous utilization of the Active Force Brigade Group's three MSF battalion groups; the MSF staff consistently emphasized that:

> if this force is to be an emergency force it must be trained now even if it seriously curtails the conventional brigade concentrations . . . we [must] bend all our energies towards preparing the Mobile Striking Force for its prime role that of preserving inviolate Canadian territory . . .[53]

This state of affairs continued between 1951 and 1955, the "halcyon years" of the MSF. No less than eleven MSF exercises, with colourful and uncolourful names like LOUP GAROU and PRAIRIE TUNDRA were conducted during this time, some in conjunction with the Americans providing more experience in arctic operations and validation of the MSF concept. However, even by 1955, the forces involved in Exercise BULLDOG III never exceeded a single battalion group.[54]

The decline of the MSF after 1955 was the result of many factors, not the least was the Soviet development in the mid-1950s of long range jet bombers such as the TU-16 *Badger*, the MYA-4 *Bison* and TU-20 *Bear* all of which could be aerial refuelled. This made obsolete the TU-4's forward basing requirement. The ability of these new aircraft to carry thermonuclear bombs in the megaton range posed a greater and more efficient threat to bases like Goose Bay than any party from a Soviet Guards Airborne division. The age of all consuming thermonuclear weapons eliminated most continental defence thinking from the land force point of view and focused it on air defence and NO RAD; the era of flexible response and the limits of nuclear power had yet to be demonstrated clearly. As a result, the MSF waxed and waned in the late 1950s. By 1957, airborne continental defence had come full circle as one company group from each of three infantry battalions based in Canada were assigned to the ambiguous "Defence of Canada Force" which possessed no brigade headquarters or joint liaison with the RCAF. By the early 1960s, the DCF was whittled down to a token company group.[55]

In the final measure, the MSF provided many positive benefits to Canada and Canadian defence in the 1946-1955 period. First, since many MSF exercises were widely covered in the media, the "man in the street" had something tangible to grasp onto regarding the defence of his nation, not something to belittle during the early part of the Cold War. Secondly, cooperation with the Americans at all levels preserved Canadian sovereignty. At the political policy level, Canada was an equal partner which was remarkable given the various disparities between the U.S. and Canada. At the military operational level, Canadian military personnel from an extremely flexible unit were able to work side by side with their American counterparts on an equal basis planning for the defence of North America. At the military tactical level, the exchange of ideas, doctrine and equipment was also significant. Thirdly, the MSF assisted in maintaining deterrence, not only by protecting the means to create a nuclear deterrent but by protecting the means of delivering it. Fourthly, the creation of a body of doctrine and experience in arctic operations allowed Canada to prepare for eventualities like the Norway commitment within NATO in the late 1960s. In closing, the MSF served certain elements of Canada's defence needs for a discrete period before fading into obscurity; its contributions were somewhat disproportionate to its numbers and it should not be forgotten.

NOTES

1. See Louis Grimshaw, "On Guard: A Perspective on the Roles and Functions of the Army in Canada." (MA Thesis, RMC, Kingston, 1989); David A. Charters, "Five Lost Years: The Mobile Striking Force, 1946-1951," pp.44-47, *Canadian Defence Quarterly.* Vol 7 No.4 Spring 1978.
2. DND Directorate of History (hereafter DHIST) 82/820, "A Brief History of the Canada-U.S. Permanent Joint Board on Defence 1940-1960."
3. See Stanley Dziuban, *Military Relations Between the United States and Canada 1939-1945* (Washington D.C.: Department of the Army, 1959) Ch. VIII; C.P. Stacey, Arms, *Men and Governments: the War Policies of Canada, 1939-1945* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1970) pp.344-346; K.C. Eyre, "Custos Borealis: The Military

in the Canadian North," (PhD Thesis, University of London Kings College, 1981) Ch.5.

4. Stacey, pp.349-353; W.G.D. Lund, "The Royal Canadian Navy's Quest for Autonomy in the North West Atlantic." pp. 138-157 in James Boutillier (ed) *RCNIn Retrospect 1910-1968* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1983).
5. DHIST 112.3M2 (D182)(5 August 1947) memo *to* Cabinet Defence Committee to ADP Heeney.
6. See *Records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Part II: 1946-1953. The JCS and the Soviet Union* (microfilm, University Publications of America 1980 -hereafter JCS&SU) (2 March 1946) "Concept of Operations for PINCHER;" (27 April 1946) "JointBasic Outline War Plan. Short Title: PINCHER."
7. DHIST 112.3M2.009 (D182)(9 September 1946) "Joint Appreciation of the Requirements for Canadian-U.S. Security;" *Records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Part II: 1946-1953. The JCS and the United States* (microfilm, University Publications of America 1980 -hereafter JCS&US)(4 February 1948) "The Command Structure for the Defence of the U.S."
8. JCS&US (24 October 1946) "Preparations for Joint Plan BROADVIEW."
9. *Ibid.*
10. For example, see JCS&SU (10 March 1948) "Joint Outline Emergency War Plan BROILER;" JCS&SU (19 May 1948) "Joint Outline Emergency War Plan DOUBLESTAR"; JCS&SU (8 November 1949) "Joint Outline Emergency War Plan CROSSPIECE." These plans all had Canadian counterparts. DOUBLESTAR was known to the Canadian planners as BULLMOOSE. See Public Record Office, Kew DEFE 6/7 (4 November 1948), "Meeting of U.S. and British Planners, October 1949."
11. John Prados, *The Soviet Estimate* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986) pp. 38-40; DHIST 112.3M2 (D400)(29 November 1949) RCAF to Army HQ, "An Appreciation on the Employment of the Mobile Striking Force in the Defence of Canada." For information on theTU-4, see Thomas B. Cochrane *etal, Soviet Nuclear Weapons.* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989) pp.228-229. For information on Hanford, Washington see *After the Battle Number 41: The Atomic Bomb.* (London: Plaistow Press, 1983).
12. This idea was firmly ensconced in the public mind. As early as 1944, TIME magazine displayed a map of North America entitled "America's Front Door" showing the "Northwest and Northeast Gateway" and pinpointing all primary air bases located in Canada's north. *Time,* 14 August 1944, p.8; JCS&US (13 October 1949) "Destruction of Unguarded and Abandoned Air Bases in Alaska."
13. JCS&US, (10 March 1948) "Joint Outline Emergency War Plan BROILER"; David Glantz, The *Soviet Airborne Experience* (Leavenworth, Ka: Combat Studies Institute. 1984) pp.34-35, 137-142.
14. JCS&US (May 1953) "A Report and Recommendation to the Secretary of Defence by the Ad Hoc Study Group on Continental Defence."
15. The Soviets did capture the Japanese chemical and biological research test facility in Manchuria in 1945. See John Bryden, Deadly Allies: *Canada's Secret War, 1937-1947* (Toronto: McClellan and Stewart, 1989) pp.218-219; Peter Williams and David Wallace, *Unit 731: Japan's Secret Biological Warfare in World War Two* (New York: the Free Press, 1989) Ch.13; Robert Harris and Jeremy Paxman, *A Higher Form of Killing* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1982) Ch.6 for discussions of Soviet capability in biological and chemical warfare.
16. DHIST 112.3M2(D125)(11 December 1947) memo to GOC Western Command to VCGS, "Situation Report - Canada-U.S. Basic Security Plan."
17. DHIST 112.012(D1)(19 October 1949) "Brief on Canadian Defence Organization"; George Stanley, *Canada's Soldiers: A Military History of an Unmilitary People,* (rev ed) (Toronto: Macmillan, 1960) pp.359-360.
18. DHIST 112.3M2(D368)(21 October 1948) Army Plans Committee, "Command of the Mobile Striking Force"; DHIST 112.3M2(D369)(29 November 1948) "Operational Requirements of Airborne Forces for the Defence of Canada"; Stephen J. Harris, "ReallyA Defile Throughout Its Length: The Defence of the Alaska Highway in Peacetime" in Peter Coates' *The Alaska Highway* (Vancouver: UBC, 1985) pp.122-123; DHIST 112.3M2.009(D182)(18 May 1948) U.S. Section, MCC. "Joint Canadian-U.S. Basic Security Plan No. 1 Draft, 5 June 1946"; National Archives of Canada [NAC] RG 24 vol 20758 file 5-11-12 vol 1 (6 October 1948) MCC. "Mobile Striking Forces Subcommittee Report."
19. See Robert H. Adleman and George Walton, *The Devil's Brigade* (New York: Chilton, 1966); Robert Burhans, *The First Special Service Force: A War History of the North Americans 1942-1944* (Washington: Infantry Journal Press, 1947) for a history of the 1 SSF. For information on Kiska, see Tony Foster, *Meeting of Generals* (Toronto: Methuen, 1986) Part 6.
20. Eyre, "Custos Borealis" pp. 151-157; DHIST 112.3M3.003(d2)(1955) "A Guide to the Planning and Execution of Operations in the North"; "Exercise SNOWDROP," pp.69-70, *Military Review.* June 1948.
21. DHIST 112.3M2(D368)(21 October 1948) Army Plans Committee, "Command of the Mobile Striking Force." For a more complete list of the MSF's deficiencies, see Grimshaw *On Guard.*
22. DHIST 112.3M2(D368)(21 October 1948) Army Plans Committee, "Command of the Mobile Striking Force."
23. DHIST 112.3M2(D369)(29 November 1948) "Operational Requirements of Airborne Forces for the Defence of Canada."
24. Floyd Low, "Canadian Airborne Forces, 1942-1978," (Honours BA Essay, University of Victoria 1978) p.63. This SAS company was only in existence for about one year and was trained in unconventional warfare tasks.
25. DHIST 112.3M2(D369)(3 December 1948) memo to BGS (plans) from DMO&P.
26. Harris, "Really a Defile . . ." p. 124.
27. DHIST 112.3M2(D369)(13 May 1949) "Appreciation on the Mobile Striking Force."
28. Ibid.
29. DHIST 112.3M3.003(d2)(1955) "A Guide to the Planning and Execution of Operations in the North"; Eyre, "Custos Borealis," pp.154-168.
30. Low, "Canadian Airborne Forces . . ." pp.64-65, Charters, "Five Lost Years . . ." p.46.
31. DHIST 112.3M2(D369)(29 April 1949) memo from Bde Hg, Army Component MSF to CGS; DHIST 112.3M2(D400)(16 November 1949) "Organization: Joint Headquarters, Winnipeg"; P.M. Simpson, "Introducing Canadian Joint Air Training Centre," *Roundel.* Vol 7 #5 May 1955.

32. DHIST112.3M2(D400)(16December 1949) memo Chief of Staff AFBG to HQ, Tac Gp RCAF, "Employment of the Mobile Striking Force in the Reduction of Enemy Lodgements in Canada," DHIST 112.3M2(D400)(27 December 1949) memo to Brigadier Commander designate AFBG HQ. "Employment of the Mobile Striking Force in the Reduction of Enemy Lodgements in Canada."
33. DHIST 112.3M2(D400)(27 December 1949) memo to Brigadier Commander designate AFBG HQ. "Employment of the Mobile Striking Force in the Reduction of Enemy Lodgements in Canada."

    The range of the C-47 *Dakota* 1600 miles while the range of the *North Star* was 3060 miles. See Enzo Angelucci and Paolo Matricardi. *World WarIIAirplanes Voll* (NewYork: Rand McNally, 1977) pp.36-37; Larry Milberry, The *Canadair North Star.* (Toronto: CANAV Books, 1982) p.21945.)
34. Grimshaw, "On Guard," pp. 123-124; Charters, "Five Lost Years . . ." p.46; "Modern Air Transport Support," *Canadian Army Journal.* July 1953, pp. 85-95.
35. DHIST 112.3M2(D400)(27 December 1949) memo to Brigadier Commander designate AFBG HQ. "Employment of the Mobile Striking Force in the Reduction of Enemy Lodgements in Canada"; "Exercise BULLDOG III" April 1955 *Canadian Army Journal,* pp. 10-18.
36. DHIST 112.3M2(D369)(9 April 1951) DMO&P to BGS (plans) "Operational Efficiency of Mobile Striking Force Battalions."
37. DHIST 112.3M2(D400)(1 November 1949) "Appreciation on the Employment of the Active Force Brigade Group in the Defence of Canada."
38. DHIST 112.3M2(D400)(8 June 1950) "Organization of the Airborne Company Group."
39. DHIST 112.3M2(D400)(2 October 1950) memo to: DMO&P from AFBG HQ, "Proposed Change in Concept, MSF-Army Component."
40. DHIST 112.3M2(D369)(6 April 1951) "Mobile Striking Force Operations: Army Organization."
41. DHIST 193.009(D53) Canadian Chiefs of Staff Meeting #544 15 October 1953, "Defence of Canadian Sources of Uranium Ore."
42. Harris, "Really a Defile . . ." pp. 125-126; DHIST 112.3M3(D369)(11 April 1951) BGS (plans) "Defence of Canada: Northwest Highway System and Western Yukon." As a sidebar, the infamous Kurt Meyer of the 12th SS Panzer Grenadier Division who was languishing in Dorchester Penitentiary, New Brunswick for war crimes was released temporarily to participate in a tactical exercise without troop which involved the defence of the Alaska Highway. It is possible that his recommendations included the stationing of an airborne formation. See Foster, *Meeting of Generals* p. 507.
43. DHIST 112.3M2(D308)(19March 195DDMO&P, "Goose Bay Lease Agreement."
44. John N. Cardoulis, *A Friendly Invasion: The American Military inNewjoundland: 1940-1990* (St. John's: Breakwater, 1990) pp. 122-130.
45. DHIST 112.3M2(D308)(18 November 1950) Cabinet Defence Committee Meeting.
46. It should be noted that the MCC continued to function as the primary Canadian-U.S. planning agency in spite of the creation of the NATO Canada-U.S. Regional Planning Group in 1949; this satisfied both Canadian and American desires to isolate continental defence from their NATO allies. See Sean M. Maloney. "Securing Command of the Sea: NATO Command Organization and Naval Planning for the Cold War at Sea, 1945-1956." (MAThesis, University of New Brunswick, 1992) Ch. 3.
47. The Americans sent the 196th RCT to Alaska in May 1951 where it remains today. JCS&US (18 May 1951) Chief of Staff US Army to JCS, "Deployment of the 196th Regimental Combat Team to Alaska."
48. DHIST 112.3M2(D400)(3 March 1951) BGS (plans) to GOC Eastern Command. "Operational Plans for the Reduction of Enemy Lodgements."
49. DHIST 112.3M2(D400)(13April 1950) "Supplement # 1 to Operation GARNET."
50. JCS&US (16 December 1950) "Force Requirements for the Defence of Alaska."
51. JCS&US (4 March 1952) "Review of Supporting and Service Plans Related to the Defence of the Continental United States."
52. DHIST 112.3M2(D369)(18 April 1951) CGS to GOC Eastern Command, "Stocking of Mobile Striking Force Bases"; DHIST 112.3M3.003(D2) (1955) "A Guide to the Planning and Execution of Operations in the North"; NAC RG 24 Vol 20758 file 5-11-12-1 vol 1. (13 November 1950) "Mobile Striking Force Operations"; and (4 January 1952) "AJoint Study on Mobile Striking Force Advance Base Deployment."
53. DHIST 112.3M2(D400)(19 May 1950) memo to Chief of Staff, Canadian Army from AFBG HQ. "Employment of the Mobile Striking Force."
54. "Exercise BULLDOG III," *Canadian Army Journal.*
55. Eyre, "Custos Borealis . . ." p. 168; Grimshaw, "On Guard . , ." pp.142-143.

Sean M. Maloney is currently working towards his Ph.D. at Temple University in Philadelphia, PA. He is the author of *War Without Battles: The Canadian Brigade in Germany 1951-1993,* soon to be published by *Esprit de Corps.*