Making Waves

Tradition, 'Branding' and the Future of the Canadian Navy

Dr. Ian Holloway

In January 2010, the National Post published an op-ed in which I argued that the Canadian Navy was squandering a once in a century opportunity to deepen affection among Canadians for their navy.¹ What the navy should have done, I asserted, was use the centennial year as an opportunity to introduce a Canadian version of the navy's traditional flag, the White Ensign. By not doing so - and instead opting for a corporate-style anniversary banner ("pseudo-corporate frippery" was how I put it) - the navy missed a chance to develop a symbol of Canada's maritime heritage that would resonate with the public. Since then, The Globe and Mail has published no fewer than four editorials urging the restoration of the name Royal Canadian Navy, to largely a supportive response. What is most interesting is that the coverage given by the National Post and the Globe to these issues amounts to more press than the navy had gotten in many years!

Not all the commentary was positive, though. In particular, retired Admiral Chuck Thomas asserted that I had gotten it wrong on the White Ensign issue. In a letter to the editor of the *National Post*, he wrote that while I was correct in suggesting that the navy is in trouble, "the problems are, however, not born of bad flags and waning respect for traditions."² He argued that the real issue is the lack of "a long-term capital intensive shipbuilding program." Admiral Thomas is both right and wrong. He is absolutely correct that the biggest issue facing the navy is a lack of new ships on the order book. And he identified the nub of the matter as being a lack of political will. But that is precisely why the navy needs to think more creatively about cultivating its image among the public.

We live in the era of the 24-hour news cycle. What is front page news today is forgotten tomorrow. The work done by the navy in Haiti was quickly overtaken in the public mind by new disasters in other areas, much like the service of our frigates in the Gulf is now forgotten by Canadians. This is what makes the development of political will so devilishly frustrating. Even at the best of times, public will is ephemeral. We have recently seen the announcement of a new shipbuilding strategy from the government, but this is not the same thing as actually funding new construction. The truth is that Canada is about to enter a period of extended financial stringency. For the navy to carve out for itself a protected space in the political consciousness in such a setting will demand far greater levels of commitment and political savvy than it is accustomed to employing.

In academic circles where I currently work, few things raise as much ire as the concept of branding. It reeks of 'corporatization,' 'selling out' and other associated sins. But a brand is simply a way of describing the association of ideas and feelings with something. Any businessperson will tell you that without a successful brand, a product is doomed to failure no matter how good its quality. A good brand is worth as much as a product itself, which is why corporations go to such lengths to cultivate brands. The brand that, say, Tim Hortons seeks for itself through its activities goes far beyond the quality of its doughnuts and coffee. Even countries seek to brand themselves. Singapore, for example, has successfully branded itself as a business-friendly and safe gateway into Asia.

The concept of branding is no less valid for uniformed organizations. In Canada, the RCMP provides the best



The new Canadian flag is hoisted for the first time in Esquimalt in February 1965 replacing the White Ensign previously flown in Royal Canadian Navy ships.

example of the power of a brand. Recent years have not been kind to the Mounties, but because of the depth of brand loyalty among Canadians, support for and public identification with the RCMP has not suffered nearly as much as one might have expected. The Mounties have been extremely astute in building their brand over many generations. Indeed, it is no surprise that the RCMP used the Olympics as an opportunity to display as much red serge as possible. It was a calculated attempt to reinforce its iconic association with Canada. Consider, too, the British Army. The one part that has not been tampered with is the Household Division. The public identification with the Household troops is so strong that it would be unthinkable for the British government to muck significantly with it.

It is clear that culturally, the navy suffered in the 1960s and 1970s. I was a Sea Cadet in the mid-1970s when we were still wearing the old blue uniform, but the navy had shifted into greens. Whenever we marched in a parade with our local Naval Reserve division, we received the loudest applause. I remember once hearing a reservist ask in a discouraged tone why it was that the public seemed to like us better. Even to my adolescent mind, the answer was obvious: because we looked like sailors. We were what the public wanted to see – not a group of men and women who weren't recognizable at all. The point is that in the public mind, navies are associated with a Jack Tar image of sailors. That is why, after only a brief experiment with a suit and tie uniform, the US Navy reverted to what Americans affectionately call the 'Crackerjack suit.'

This leads me to the Canadian Navy. In the 1990s it was decreed that we could no longer celebrate Trafalgar Day. What a foolish thing to do. Of course, it was appropriate to weave the Battle of the Atlantic into our public image but there was no need to throw out the connection with Nelson and the defeat of Napoleon. Likewise, how hamfisted was the move in 1999 to 'update' the traditional toasts of the day. To drink to 'a willing foe and sea room' may have little meaning today, but it has a dash that is more appealing than simply to raise a glass to 'our nation.' If there was any problem with the old toasts, it was that the navy didn't expose Canadians to them enough! The point is that in the military context, the brand is entwined with history and with martial values. And it is only once that brand is established that political capital will follow. That is why Admiral Thomas is incorrect when he says that the problems with the navy are not born of bad flags and waning respect for traditions. They have everything to do with them.

In the years since unification, the Canadian Navy seems to have gone out of its way to fight its natural brand rather than embrace it and use it to develop political will. During his early years as Prime Minister, when the navy was hoping for a program of fleet renewal, Brian Mulroney often referred to 'the Royal Canadian Navy.' Bizarrely, I remember hearing senior officers tut-tutting that the proper name was Maritime Command. We now have a Prime Minister and Minister of National Defence who reportedly are keen to restore some of the old traditions, including the name RCN and a Canadianized White Ensign, yet it seems that the navy wants to rebuff them. Unification was the navy's 'New Coke' moment, but unlike the Coca-Cola Company, which used the fiasco to its ultimate marketing advantage, our navy has seemed bafflingly resolute in ignoring the political opportunities it has been given.

Critics claim that these things would make the navy seem too British. I have never quite understood this. The Governor-General's Foot Guards and the Canadian Grenadier Guards haven't felt a need to change their uniforms simply because they inherited them from the Brigade of Guards in England. So why should the Canadian Navy feel insecure in its own traditions? Is our government somehow illegitimate because the legislature, and the names Parliament and House of Commons, came from Britain? Ought we to throw our system of rule of law on the scrapheap because we inherited it from Britain? And what about the English language itself? That must be equally suspect, given its origins.

The fact is that as a naval symbol, the White Ensign is just as Canadian as anything else. Legally, it became Canadian in May of 1910, when the RCN was established. But its connection with Canada is in fact older than the country itself. At Trafalgar, a young midshipman from Nova Scotia lay wounded beside Nelson in the cockpit of Victory, a ship bearing the White Ensign. In 1813, it was a Canadian, Lieutenant Provo Wallis, who sailed the captured American frigate Chesapeake into Halifax Harbour under the White Ensign. At Lucknow in 1857, African-Canadian AB William Hall from Nova Scotia won the Victoria Cross while serving under the White Ensign. The White Ensign's Canadianness was reinforced when four Canadian midshipmen went down with their ships at Coronel in 1914, and when the crew of Niobe tried to avert the Halifax explosion three years later. The White Ensign became thoroughly Canadian in the North Atlantic, the Mediterranean, the Pacific and everywhere else the RCN fought between 1939 and 1945. So, too, did it serve as a symbol of Canadian values in 1950 when Athabaskan, Cayuga and Sioux sailed for Korea in the first Canadian



mission on behalf of the United Nations. To suggest that the White Ensign was somehow un-Canadian simply because we inherited it from Britain suggests a level of insecurity and paranoia that is unfair to the navy and its accomplishments over the past century.

In the current fiscal environment, many might dismiss the re-naming of Maritime Command as the RCN or the adoption of a Canadian White Ensign as silly distractions from the real issue of maintaining a fleet in being. Clearly, these things will not lead to squadrons of new ships hurtling down the slips. What they would do, however, is send a signal to the Canadian public that the navy values its ancestry and embraces its identity as a fighting service with a glorious history. It would form the same sort of plank in the navy's branding program that red serge has done for the RCMP. Past experience with naval anniversaries tells us with absolute certainty that the naval centennial will represent a lost opportunity to develop the sort of political will of which Admiral Thomas spoke. The US Navy knows how to build a brand, as does the British Navy, but the Canadian Navy needs to learn this lesson too.

Notes

- 1. Ian Holloway, "A Flag that Falls Flat," National Post, 18 January 2010.
- 2. Admiral Chuck Thomas (Ret'd), "Letter to the Editor," *National Post*, 22 January 2010.

*Littoral and Riverine Operations** Wayne P. Hughes, Jr, Captain USN (Retired)

The Canadian Navy has had a long struggle to do the best it can with the funds available. The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, changed many things about war and defence in Canada and indeed throughout the world. American defence spending shrank by 40%, and so did the size of the US fleet. I have little doubt the effects on the Canadian fleet were as severe or worse.

During visits to Canadian Forces College in the past decade, I've followed the Canadian Navy's post-Soviet search for its proper role, but here – with one exception – I will stick to the US Navy's (USN) struggle. The exception is a personal opinion. It is my suspicion that the Canadian armed forces, after many years of planning for NATO operations in the Atlantic and Europe, could easily underestimate the cost of delivering forces and supporting them in littoral operations overseas. European armed forces – who are accustomed to defending their homelands from their homelands – have



USS San Antonio, a capability some in Canada would like to see acquired.

discovered even more forcefully than Canada the costs of putting out fires far from home.

The USN learned long ago how expensive are our amphibious, combat logistics, prepositioning and ready reserve ships for littoral operations around the world. Sea-based air is a vital element of all forward operations and American aircraft carriers are famous for operations in and across the littoral regions far from home. The cost of the system – a mobile airfield and the aircraft flying from it – is huge. The aircrews and ships' companies of 11 carriers absorb 46% of all billets in our 280-ship fleet. My rule of thumb – with no attempt at formal analysis – is that the ability to deploy and fight across the oceans at least doubles the cost of USN fighting forces.

The Canadian Navy and Coast Guard will be hard pressed to maintain homeland security of Canada's littoral regions, including coastal services of many kinds. And future Arctic Ocean traffic may entail new responsibilities. I am impressed with the number of icebreakers your Coast Guard maintains. I count at least 14, one as big as 15,000 tons. Close coordination with the USN and Coast Guard will offer substantial rewards for North American defence. This is consistent with both current US maritime doctrine and longstanding government cooperation on our common border.

The USN concentrates most attention on overseas operations because the US Coast Guard has primary responsibility for policing in home waters. But the nature of these overseas operations is changing. In the future we will be more concerned with the littoral areas – coastlines, deltas, estuaries and rivers. We are also going to become more



Artist's impression of the proposed Arctic Offshore Patrol Ship (left) and USS **Independence** (right), prototype of a Littoral Combat Ship (LCS). Is this a logical Canadian acquisition?

sensitive to protecting world trade and less concerned with projection of air and ground power into foreign hinterlands.

Forward operations, in cooperation with the many friendly navies around the world, are explicit and doctrinal tasks for the USN established jointly by the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) and the Commandants of the Coast Guard and Marine Corps.¹ I think of it as overseas offence to match homeland defence against terrorists and other threats to peace and prosperity. The best solution is to distribute some of our fleet capability in smaller, more single-minded patrol vessels and inshore combatants. A study team at the Naval Postgraduate School estimates that for 10% of an affordable shipbuilding budget, the United States can build and maintain more than 200 such littoral vessels, including eight or 10 small carriers of short takeoff and vertical landing aircraft (STOVL), helicopter and unmanned aircraft, and up to 400 riverine craft.

The USN is struggling to create the ships and other systems implied by the "Cooperative Strategy" adopted in 2007. I hope we develop new and smaller vessels – smaller and less expensive than either of the two Littoral Combat Ship (LCS) designs – but we are not there yet. A big reason is that logistic support of coastal patrol vessels and coastal combatants to conduct forward operations is a complicated subject and will take some new thinking and flexible solutions for a fleet that is used to large ships that carry much of their own fuel, food and ammunition.

It is insightful to point out that navies shifted from the carrier aircraft era to the missile era of naval warfare around 1965. Currently a further transformation into the robotics era is under way. In the future, autonomous vehicles will be prominent in operations on both sides of a coast. They will come in many sizes, capabilities and threats, including the ability to search and attack in

coordinated swarms. Canada must ponder the implications as the armed forces of the world exploit – or suffer from – the robotics era's effects.

Let me give a quick summary of littoral combat.² Experience in the missile era is well established. Setting aside the never-fired nuclear ballistic missiles, the missile era began in 1967 with the sinking of the Israeli destroyer *Eilat*. Since then there have been about 300 cruise missile attacks

on warships and shipping, the most recent of which was a land-launched missile that hit the Israel warship *Hanit* off Lebanon in 2008.³

Most attacks have been against tankers and other shipping, in which the hit probability of a missile was over 90%. Against warships that defended themselves, most examples occurred during the 1973 Arab-Israeli war. The probability of hit for all 122 missiles fired against warships that defended themselves was 27% – representing 33 hits.

There are three critical lessons learned from these examples. The first is that all occurred in littoral waters, including an attack in a port. The second is that the average masks the fact that the results were highly bimodal. Either a fleet was almost totally effective in defending itself or it was ineffective and suffered destruction. The third lesson is that the defender's success depended very heavily on soft kill – jamming or chaff – supplemented with a bit of hard kill point defence. There is only one instance in the entire history of missile warfare when a defending surface-to-air missile shot down an attacking anti-ship cruise missile.

A final category of attacks is upon warships that might have defended themselves but failed to do so. There have been 11 incidents involving 39 missiles. The hit probability against combatants that might have but did not defend themselves was 70%! As future missiles become more sophisticated, navies must develop new tactics, warship designs and search methods, or else the consequences of surprise attacks will become even more serious.

To conclude, there are four things about the littoral regions to ponder. First, "A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower" emphasizes partnerships. Canada should endeavour to have a strong maritime partnership with the US Navy and Coast Guard for mutual homeland security.



Second, "Cooperative Strategy" emphasizes partnerships overseas, too. Overseas participation in ground operations is expensive for any navy – in air support, delivery and sustainment. Do not underestimate the naval cost of littoral operations in distant waters.

Third, missile era combat has been fought entirely in coastal waters. The winner is the side with better detection, tracking and targeting, combined with (especially) soft kill defence. 'Attack effectively first' is still a sound maxim of all naval combat.



An autonomous underwater vehicle (AUV) being loaded into a US Navy submarine. Is this a capability Canada should acquire?

Finally, the transformation to the robotics era will see fulfillment of the long-anticipated 'revolution in military affairs.' Success with unmanned and autonomous air, surface and sub-surface systems, including tactically coordinated swarms not only entails an intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance advantage, but also more small, offensively powerful inshore combatants.

Notes

- ⁺ This is based on remarks made at the Maritime Security Challenges Conference, Maritime Forces Pacific, April 2010.
- General J.T. Conway, USMC, Admiral Gary Roughead, USN, Admiral Thad W. Allen, USCG, "A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower," October 2007.
- 2. For more information, see Wayne P. Hughes, *Fleet Tactics and Coastal Combat*, Annapolis, MD: US Naval Institute Press, 2000.
- 3. I take my data from a thesis by Lieutenant John Schulte in 1994, supplemented by research by Peter Swartz at the Center for Naval Analyses and my own *Fleet Tactics and Coastal Combat*.

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Taking the Navy out of (N) Lieutenant-Commander Gene C. Fedderly

In any organization the use of proper terminology is a hallmark of professionalism and the naval service is certainly no exception. In this day and age of casual speech there are many areas where we fail to achieve the mark. I would like to point out one issue that I have noted increasingly over the past several years, with the hope that Canadian Forces personnel in general and naval officers in particular will take it to heart.

When the separate services were abolished 1 February 1968 and the Canadian Armed Forces were established, the intention was for all environments to use a common rank structure based upon that of the Canadian Army. This was soon proven to be unworkable in the naval environment, partially due to the confusion caused amongst our allies, who primarily used naval ranks based on those of the Royal Navy, particularly for officers. It would indeed have been confusing in a ship to have the 'Captain' being a Lieutenant-Colonel, the Executive Officer a Major and the department heads being Captains.

I understand that various attempts were made to rectify the situation including the use of Captain (S), Major (S), etc., to indicate naval Lieutenants and Lieutenant-Commanders, with the S standing for sea. Finally, around 1973, it was settled upon that Maritime Command (the word navy was still considered anathema) would be able to revert unofficially to the usage of the traditional naval rank structure, although Lieutenants and Captains would append (N) to their ranks to distinguish them from the official CF ranks of the same name. As described in the CF Manual of Abbreviations, the (N) stands for 'naval rank.' Prior to the introduction of French translations for our ranks in the early 1990s, the French equivalent was (M) which meant 'grade de la marine.' Although I am uncertain of the exact date, it was some time in the early 1980s that naval ranks were officially authorized for use throughout the CF.

All this being stated, there has been a trend in recent years regarding the usage of naval ranks with which I must take issue. Specifically, this has been to take the (N) and use it as 'Navy' both in speech and writing. To begin with, this is contrary to both the official abbreviation and what I believe was the intent of the initial use of (N) as merely a method of differentiation in official documents. Although I'm sure the motivations behind using it this way have their root in naval pride, I think it is based on a lack of knowledge.

In the naval environment, it should be largely unnecessary and redundant to throw 'navy' in at the end of the two ranks in question. In addition to being technically incorrect, it also sounds quite clunky, and once led to the ridiculous situation where a reviewing officer for a parade was introduced as 'Captain Navy Davie.' If a situation does occur where a distinction needs to be made between 'aye, aye, sir' Captains and 'hey you' Captains, then a simple spoken 'N' can be used at the end of the rank, or if speaking in less savvy circles 'naval Captain Bloggins' would be the preferred manner, just as one will see in the media.

This may seem a small point, and I fear it might be a vain attempt at putting the genie back in the bottle, but shouldn't naval officers be the ones spearheading the charge to get these things right?

Pirates: Child Soldiers, the Canadian Navy and International Accountability Dr. Shelly Whitman

There has been a great deal of attention placed upon the incidents of piracy that have occurred in the Gulf of Aden in the last two years. It has sparked media and academics to look at the issue from security and economic perspectives. Some have briefly touched upon the security-development nexus by referring to the extreme poverty and relative statelessness that contribute to the proliferation of pirates off the coast of Somalia. However, very little has been written about the fact that a great proportion of the pirates who are encountered and then captured are children.

Under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Children (CRC), a child is any individual under the age of 18 years. The CRC is one of the most universally accepted international conventions, with 194 signatories as of 2009. (It should be noted that the two states which have not signed are Somalia and the United States.) In April 2009 child pirates were extradited to the United States from the coast of Somalia after a failed attempt to capture a frigate led to intervention by the US Navy. US Defense Secretary Robert Gates described the four pirates as "untrained teenagers with heavy weapons."1 In Somalia, of a total population of 9,832,000 it is estimated that 45% of the population is below the age of 14 years.² Hence the use of children by armed groups is a real possibility. UNICEF official Denise Shepherd-Johnson stated that "children are being systematically recruited and used in ever larger numbers for military and related purposes by all of the major combatant groups."3

Many Canadians, and this includes the naval staff, fail to understand that no matter how illegal the activities of these young pirates, they are children and, hence, under international law cannot be held accountable for their crimes. We must be prepared to treat children from the developing world with the same legal standards we expect our own children to enjoy. The Paris Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups defines a child soldier as "any person below 18 years of age who is or has been recruited or used by an armed force or armed group in any capacity, including, but not limited to children, boys, and girls used as fighters, cooks, porters, messengers, spies or for sexual purposes. It does not only refer to a child who is taking or has taken a direct part in hostilities." It is important to look at this definition, as many people who do not know or understand the definition mistakenly argue that the pirates are not child soldiers.

Using children for illegal activity is viewed as desirable by armed groups and criminal gangs for many reasons. They are vulnerable, fearless, relatively cheap to control, easily manipulated or indoctrinated, may not have alternative options and do not understand the long-term consequences of their actions. It is disturbing to note that the use of children by armed groups may be viewed as advantageous because they cannot be tried for their crimes according to international law. Any attempt at legal redress must therefore be sought from those who recruit and use the child soldiers. United Nations Security Council Resolution 1612 of July 2005 sets out specific obligations related to the accountability of armed groups that use and recruit child soldiers.

If Canadian troops are unaware of the international legal standards, one also suspects that they are unaware of the need to treat children – pirates or soldiers – differently from their adult counterparts. If they do not, there is the potential that mistreating the children may lead to international legal implications. Who is monitoring the children picked up by navies? Where are the children delivered? Is this a potential problem that could lead to human trafficking rings?

It has recently been reported that Somali pirates were killed after clashes with private security contractors which took place on 23 March 2010.⁴ The European Union Naval Force said guards were on board the Panama-flagged MV *Almezaan* when a pirate group approached it twice and on the second approach a shootout occurred. The details





HMCS **Winnipeg** escorting MV **Abdul Rahman** during counter-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden in April 2009.

of the pirates have not been released. This is not the first time pirates have been killed. Is it possible some have been children?

The Canadian Navy has recently been deployed to Haiti to give much-needed relief to the earthquake survivors. A great deal has been said about the role of our navy in disaster relief and humanitarian assistance. In the aftermath of the earthquake, youth gangs emerged as a natural response in a poverty-stricken country struggling to cope with the magnitude of surviving such devastation. Were our troops prepared and trained to deal with armed youth gangs? Thankfully we did not hear of any negative interaction between troops and youth in Haiti. But, if we are serious about taking on such roles, we need to be prepared for the possibilities.

It is time some attention gets placed on the readiness of Canadian Forces personnel for this issue. There is an urgent need for sensitization and training related to the interaction of our navy with child pirates. Failing to acknowledge the issue may not only lead to political and legal hot water, it may also lead to long-term psycho-social consequences for CF personnel when they return home. We need to generate the political will for international cooperation and information sharing that will create dialogue on best practices related to children as soldiers and pirates.

Notes

- 1. Glenda Kwek, "Fate of Teen Pirate Uncertain," *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 April 2009, available at www.smh.com.au/world/fate-of-teen-pirate-uncertain-20090414-a5ih.html.
- 2. *CIA World Factbook, Somalia*, available at www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/so.html.
- Denise Shepherd-Johnson, quoted in Katharine Houreld, "Children as Young as 9 Recruited by Somali Militants, given Power, Drugs and Weapons Training," Associated Press, 1 May 2010, available at www. biyokulule.com/view_content.php?articleid=2743.
- 4. "Somali Pirate Killed by Private Security," *The Globe and Mail*, 25 March 2010, p. A13.

Comments on the Spring Issue of CNR Editor,

Re the photo of *Bonaventure* on page 21: this could not have been taken 3 July 1970 for on that day she was alongside the Shearwater jetty for decommissioning ceremonies. I am sure the photo was taken in December 1969 as *Bonaventure* returned from her last operational cruise and was heading for Bedford Basin to fly off her aircraft for the last time. That day, the ship had to get up to 20 knots in the basin to allow free deck launch of the Trackers as the catapult was unserviceable. As a footnote, *Bonaventure* had two further cruises, one to the Caribbean in January 1970 to serve as a tanker, army vehicle carrier and helicopter repair ship and another to Narvik (sailing Good Friday) to pick up army equipment. These two last cruises came about because of the delayed entry into service of *Protecteur*.

Pat DC Barnhouse

Chairman

Canadian Naval Technical history Association

Editor,

Thank you for the excellent edition celebrating our navy's 100th. There is, however, one error that I would like to point out. The photo on page 16 refers to NCIOP Leading Seaman Matthew Wright when in fact the individual in the picture is clearly wearing PO1 epaulets. Oops! Alan C. Robb CPO1 (Ret'd)

Editor,

Congratulations on the Spring 2010 issue. It's timely and most informative. However, the caption accompanying the photo of five admirals on page 29 may require clarification. Four of the five served as Chief of the Naval Staff: Vice-Admirals Harold Grant, E. Rollo (not Roland) Mainguy, Percy Nelles and Harry DeWolf. Rear-Admiral Victor Brodeur's last appointment before retirement was Commanding Officer Pacific Coast 1943-1946.

Kind regards, Len Canfield

Response from CNR

Thank you for all the comments, especially the compliments, about the Spring 2010 issue of **CNR**. We appreciate readers taking the time to let us know what they think. We are also happy to know that everyone is looking at the photos so carefully. Your corrections are noted. Thanks for keeping us on our toes.