



## Royal United Services Institute of Nova Scotia Dispatches 8 December 2023

*The Royal United Services Institute of Nova Scotia provides a forum for the study, promotion and debate of defence, security and safety issues.*

*Dispatches* is a weekly collection of news of interest, including posts to social media by the Institute. Links to articles are checked at the time they are put into *Dispatches* but may be unavailable at a later date or in some countries other than Canada.

Everyone is encouraged to submit links and other content to be included in *Dispatches*. Submissions and feedback are welcome anytime. Email to [RUSINSDispatches@gmail.com](mailto:RUSINSDispatches@gmail.com). Comments to articles can be from members or non-members of RUSI(NS). Any comment in *Dispatches* is the sole opinion of the author and does not necessarily represent the views of the Royal United Services Institute of Nova Scotia, the Department of National Defence or other government department, the Canadian Armed Forces, or the Royal Canadian Mounted Police or other agency.

If you wish to receive *Dispatches* at a different address (i.e., not your work address), please inform RUSI(NS). Past editions of *Dispatches* may be requested by contacting RUSI(NS).

### *Home Dispatches December 2023*

Submissions for the December 2023 edition of our internal quarterly are now being taken. If you have something for *Home Dispatches*, please email to RUSI(NS).

### *Dispatches 29 December*

There will be no 29 December edition of *Dispatches*.

Mayor Mike Savage @MikeSavageHFX 25 Nov posted: Folks of all ages are busy in HRM tonight celebrating the early holiday season. @HMCSSACKVILLE1 is one of our most important national treasures and tonight they did a great job hoisting and lighting the tree. Imagine being on cold Atlantic in ww2. #Sacrifice #Service.



### **Events:**

**12 December**, Tuesday - Georgetown University Wargaming Society presentation "The Tyranny of Binaries: how wargame rules build narratives." 7-9 pm AST. Online. For more info and to register: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/the-tyranny-of-binaries-how-wargame-rules-build-narratives-tickets-633057882167>.

**23 January**, Tuesday - Georgetown University Wargaming Society presentation "Wargaming's Influence on U.S. Navy Tactical Doctrine, 1906-1941." 7-9 pm AST. Online. To register: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/wargamings-influence-on-us-navy-tactical-doctrine-1906-1941-tickets-6397270999>

**17 January**, Wednesday - RUSI(NS) Distinguished Speaker Dr Jonathan Fowler, Saint Mary's University, "The Historical Archaeology of Halifax's Earliest Defences." 1300-1430. In-person. Royal Artillery Park Officers' Mess.  
Pre-event reading: Cemetery that tells of Halifax's naval history hides in plain sight  
<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/cemetery-naval-history-halifax-1.6901190>

**23 January**, Tuesday - Georgetown University Wargaming Society presentation "Wargaming's Influence on U.S. Navy Tactical Doctrine, 1906-1941." 7-9 pm AST. Online. To register: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/wargamings-influence-on-us-navy-tactical-doctrine-1906-1941-tickets-639727099977>

**30 January**, Tuesday - King's College London School of Security Studies presentation "Space power and Irregular Warfare in Space." 5:00-6:30 pm GMT. Online. To register: <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/events/space-power-and-irregular-warfare-in-space>

**New: 6 February**, Tuesday - Georgetown University Wargaming Society presentation "Saga: A Sub-threshold Conflict Wargaming System." 7-9 pm AST. Online. To register: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/saga-a-sub-threshold-conflict-wargaming-system-tickets-719821885637>

**21 February**, Wednesday - Distinguished Speaker MGen S.Y. Ménard, RCAF Chief Fighter and NORAD Capability (CFNC), speaking about the Future Fighter Capability Project (F-35 procurement) and about the RCAF Centennial. 1300-1500 Atlantic time. Via Zoom. Details to follow.

**22 February**, Thursday - Royal Alberta United Services Institute presentation "Beyond Greed: How Corruption Threatens Global Security" with journalist and political advisor Sarah Chayes. 6-7 pm MST (9-10 pm AST). Online. For more info and to register: <https://rausi.ca/info-events/rmcsd/622-beyond-greed-how-corruption-threatens-global-security>

**New: 9 May**, Thursday - Royal Alberta United Services Institute 2024 Keynote Lecture with LGen (ret) The Honorable Roméo Dallaire, discussing key strategic challenges facing Canadian leadership in the current geopolitical landscape. 7 pm MST (10 pm AST) (start time to be confirmed). Via Zoom. For more info and to register: <https://rausi.ca/info-events/rmcsd/625-romeo-dallaire>

### **Publications:**

Publications without links are available on request to [RUSINovaScotia@gmail.com](mailto:RUSINovaScotia@gmail.com).

RUSI(NS) Paper "Is another Cyclone about to form for the RCAF?" by Murray Lee and John McLearn, 26 November 2023, <https://rusi-ns.ca/p8-poseidon/>

RUSI(NS) Comments "White Hat Hackers" by David Swan, 25 November 2023, [https://rusi-ns.ca/white\\_hat\\_hackers](https://rusi-ns.ca/white_hat_hackers)

King's College London Wargaming Network presentation "Naval Wargaming Beyond the Classroom." video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VOemWKst2g0>

Canadian Gunner News 30 Nov 2023

Notable: Howitzer Statement of Capability Deficiency for 20 self-propelled howitzers.

Canadian Marine Industries and Shipbuilding Association *On Watch*, 22 November 2023

<https://www.cmisa.ca/cpages/on-watch-current>

Edmonton United Services Institute President's *Enews*, December 2023

Military Institute of Windsor *Communiqué*, Volume XLI, Number 11, December 2023

**New:** Royal Alberta United Services Institute *Dispatches*, December 2023

<https://www.rausi.ca/component/acym/archive/226-rausi-dispatches-december-2023>

**New:** Royal Canadian Naval Association Admiral Hose Branch *Scuttlebutt*, December 2023

**New:** Royal United Services Institute of Victoria (Australia) *Defence Update*, Volume 22, Issue 2, 4 December 2023

Vancouver Artillery Association and Royal United Services Institute Vancouver *Members News* 28 Nov 2023

**@RUSI NS on X:**

@RUSI\_NS posts may also be viewed by clicking on the icon at <https://RUSI-NS.ca>. To have something posted or reposted, email RUSI(NS).

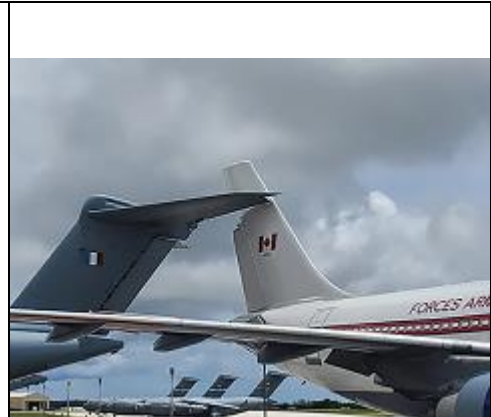
National Post @nationalpost 1 Dec posted: Air Force plane to be completely scrapped after collision with French aircraft  
<https://nationalpost.com/news/rcaf-plane-collision-guam-scrapped>

(Air Force plane to be completely scrapped after collision with French aircraft)

RUSI(NS) quoted: .@RCAF\_ARC CC150003 Polaris aircraft involved in ground collision July2023 to be scrapped.

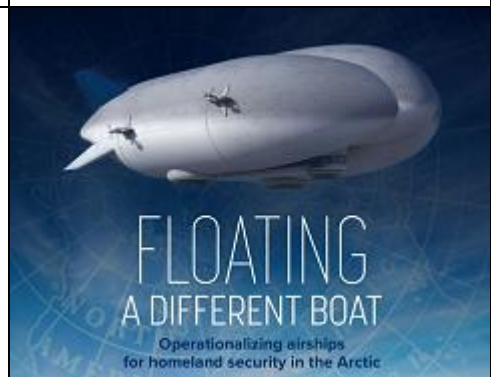
Fortunately a/c was due to be taken out of service shortly anyways & replaced by Strategic Tanker Transport Capability project new procurement CC330 Husky

<https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/procurement/strategic-tanker-transport-capability-project.html>



Macdonald-Laurier Institute @MLInstitute 28 Nov posted and RUSI(NS) reposted: In our most recent paper, LCdr Cam Kovarek of @USNavy explains how the #US, #Canada & other allies can employ #airships in the #Arctic to outmaneuver geo-political rivals & secure the region:

(Floating a different boat: Operationalizing airships for homeland security in the Arctic  
<https://macdonaldlaurier.ca/operationalizing-airships-for-security/>)



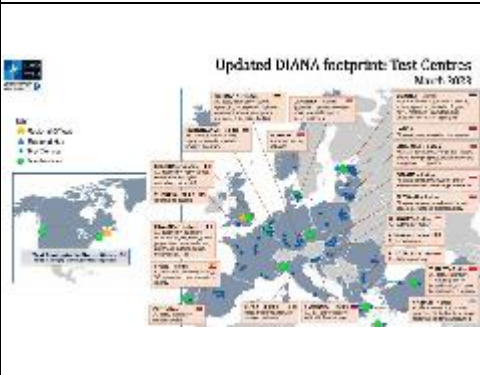
RUSI @RUSI\_org 6 Dec posted and RUSI(NS) reposted: 'In the right circumstances, public intelligence disclosure modelled on the UK's Ukraine updates has been demonstrated as a potent tool. However, it is not a silver bullet for countering #disinformation' writes Jack Duffield in the latest #RUSICommentary.  
 (The 'Ukraine Model' for Intelligence Disclosure May Not be the New Normal  
<https://rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/ukraine-model-intelligence-disclosure-may-not-be-new-normal>)



Defence Research and Development Canada @DRDC\_RDDC 5 Dec posted: Last summer, we conducted a seabed survey of Gascoyne Inlet in Nunavut, using an autonomous underwater vehicle to collect seafloor imagery, magnetic observations, and measure the temperature and salinity of the ocean.  
 #DefenceScience #ArcticScience  
 RUSI(NS) quoted: Comprehensive survey of #Arctic/Northern seabeds is excellent defence & security action, allowing identification when adversaries illegally plant sensors or otherwise attempt to misuse CAN🇨🇦 territory



NATO @NATO 23 Mar posted and RUSI(NS) reposted: NATO's Defence Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic's (DIANA) expands transatlantic footprint and gears up for first challenges. More information:  
[https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_213074.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_213074.htm)  
 RUSI(NS) quoted: Canadian🇨🇦 companies selected for #NATO DIANA pilot innovation challenges (1Dec23)  
<https://www.cmisa.ca/articles/ideas-canadian-companies-selected-for-nato-diana-pilot-innovation-challenges>  
*It is hoped to arrange a tour by RUSI(NS) of DIANA in Halifax someday.*



"Requiem for a Navy?"  
<https://www.navalreview.ca/2023/12/requiem-for-a-navy/>  
 CAN🇨🇦 public & government should debate what ops can be expected of under-resourced @RoyalCanNavy & @CanadianForces. Where globally to engage? What sort of ops (security, humanitarian)? How long? What conditions to dis-engage?



"CAN🇨🇦 taps into US military satellites for mobile communications" <https://spacenews.com/canada-taps-into-u-s-military-satellites-for-mobile-communications/>  
 @NationalDefence 1st int'l partner to access US Mobile User Objective System #MUOS narrowband network of satellites in geosynchronous orbit #PartnersInSpace



**“Royal United Services Institute of Nova Scotia” on Facebook:**

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**Ukraine says it blew up railway in eastern Russia**

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-67593041>

"Ukraine's security service has blown up a rail connection deep inside Russia, a senior official has told the BBC. Successive explosions are said to have happened on trains running first through a tunnel and then on a bridge in Russia's far east."



A mark of a military's professionalism. Target the enemy's logistics. Cut it and ensure it keeps cut.

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*More:* Russia's Main Link to China 'Paralyzed' After Tunnel 'Sabotage'—Reports

<https://www.newsweek.com/russia-railway-tunnel-china-explosion-sabotage-1848265>

**Navantia Commissions S-81 ‘Isaac Peral’ Submarine To The Spanish Navy**

<https://www.navalnews.com/naval-news/2023/11/navantia-commissions-s-81-isaac-peral-submarine-to-the-spanish-navy/>

The Commander Royal Canadian Navy has expressed a preference for an in-service submarine to meet the Canadian Patrol Submarine Project requirement, probably to ensure a capable solution on-time and on-budget. To date that has meant either Japanese or South Korean boats. With the commissioning (taking into active service) of the first of the Spanish S-80 class, there may now be a third contender.



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*See:* Spanish Navantia S-80 Plus Class Submarine eyes by several countries

<https://navyrecognition.com/index.php/naval-news/naval-news-archive/2023/november/13831-spanish-navantia-s-80-plus-class-submarine-eyes-by-several-countries.html>

"With the imminent delivery of the S-81 Isaac Peral to the Spanish Navy, five potential customers stand out: Turkey, India, the Philippines, **Canada**, and Poland."

**Roadrunner Reusable Anti-Air Interceptor Breaks Cover**

<https://www.thedrive.com/the-war-zone/roadrunner-reusable-anti-air-interceptor-breaks-cover>

"...a low-cost loitering anti-air interceptor with the ability to return home for refueling and reuse if it isn't expended in the course of its mission."

The impact of drones on the battlefield grows. Imagine a defensive cloud of loitering drones over one's own position. Or maybe a cloud over an enemy's drone base in order to suppress the base by preventing launches.



"The launch system for Roadrunner now is a self-contained box-like 'hangar,' also called a 'nest.'" Might nesting allow for the drones to be used from a variety of vehicles, maybe even technicals? Hmm, could such drones be used by ships?

Analysis: Royal Navy deploys seven ships on underwater infrastructure patrols

<https://www.navylookout.com/analysis-royal-navy-deploys-seven-ships-on-underwater-infrastructure-patrols/>

"The MoD says from December a 'task force of six RN ships and an RFA, supported by an RAF P-8A Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft based at RAF Lossiemouth will patrol the seas around northern Europe'."



That is a substantial group of resources tasked with patrol of underwater infrastructure (power and communications lines). The deployment says something about the importance of underwater infrastructure, about the focus on underwater infrastructure as part of defence considerations, and about energy security in policy and strategic considerations. Not just in UK eyes.

The article acknowledges that the ships will be engaged in other activities at the same time. That is normal for warships and aircraft. There is a feel of the deployment and reporting of it that it is intelligence-driven and/or has an element of strategic communications. Likely both; that, too, would be normal.

"To describe the RN's contribution as a 'task force' may be slightly misleading for some people who might expect this implies a great force of warships sailing in company."

The article is correct but may protest too much. Whilst 'task force', TF, is the correct naval organization term to apply, yes, it may be misunderstood by the media and public and therefore the wrong message delivered. The NATO definition of task force is: "A temporary grouping of units, under one commander, formed for the purpose of carrying out a specific operation or mission." There is nothing in the definition about the number of units or the rank of the commander or even that there are ships (this commentator served in a fleet where one TF of special operations personnel had no ships). Nor does it say anything about ships sailing in company (close formation). Task organization, of task forces, groups, units and elements, is for operational purposes. If used publicly, maybe it should be explained.

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Cool Joint Expeditionary Force graphic. →

*More:* Royal Navy task force to deploy with JEF partners to defend undersea cables

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/royal-navy-task-force-to-deploy-with-jef-partners-to-defend-undersea-cables>

and <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/joint-statement-by-joint-expeditionary-force-ministers-june-2023#>

and <https://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/news-and-latest-activity/operations/mediterranean-and-black-sea/joint-expeditionary-force-maritime>



## The U.S. Navy's Unmanned Future Remains Murky as China Threat Looms

<https://news.usni.org/2023/11/30/the-u-s-navys-unmanned-future-remains-murky-as-china-threat-looms>

"To keep sailors and Marines out of the deadliest of the Pacific crucibles, they want to overwhelm the invasion force with lethal drones to create what PACFLEET calls 'hellscape.'"

"This hellscape, this churn you cause in the invasion lets you mobilize, get your act together and start delivering the long-range fires that are going to actually take out the larger amphibious ships and surface ships..."

'Hellscape' may not enter the glossaries of official operations publications, but militaries are going to have to ready themselves to operate in such environments. It would be interesting to know to what extent the Canadian Armed Forces are planning, equipping and training for drone-intensive operations.



## IMO Adopts Tougher Resolution to Tackle 'Shadow' Tanker Fleet

<https://gcaptain.com/imo-adopts-tougher-resolution-to-tackle-shadow-tanker-fleet/>

The United Nations "International Maritime Organization's governing assembly session called upon flag states – which register ships – to 'adhere to measures which lawfully prohibit or regulate' the transfer of cargoes at sea, known as STS operations."

What is Canada doing to restrict or prevent transfer of cargoes, usually oil at sea? These transfers are funding Russia's war against Ukraine. Canada could be contributing to economic action against Russia by ensuring Canadian-flagged ships are not participating in illegal STS operations.

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Does Canada have a coordinating body governing Canadian 'economic warfare' action against Russia?



## Other Sources:

### #A2R #United Kingdom

Army poised to make major change to recruitment rule for first time in more than a century

<https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/24935954/army-major-change-recruitment-rule/>

### #Arctic

GAO Report on U.S. Arctic Priorities

<https://news.usni.org/2023/11/30/gao-report-on-u-s-arctic-priorities>

### #artificial intelligence

AI For Five Eyes? New bill pushes AI collaboration with UK, Australia, Canada, New Zealand

<https://breakingdefense.com/2023/11/ai-for-five-eyes-new-bill-pushes-ai-collaboration-with-uk-australia-canada-new-zealand/>

Proceed with Caution: Artificial Intelligence in Weapon Systems

<https://acrobat.adobe.com/id/urn:aaid:sc:EU:3973c946-b238-4fc7-940a-dc32da93c8d9>

UK House of Lords Committee on AI in Weapons Systems.

### **#Indo-Pacific**

The Department of the Navy and Strategic Competition with the People's Republic of China

<https://www.cna.org/reports/2023/11/department-of-the-navy-and-strategic-competition-with-the-prc>

China is using US-allied exercises to find 'soft targets': US Army's Pacific chief

<https://www.defenseone.com/threats/2023/12/china-using-us-allied-exercises-find-soft-targets-us-armys-pacific-chief/392538/>

"... aggressive acts beneath the threshold of armed conflict on land...", looking for 'soft targets' (not well defined in the article).

### **#information operations**

The Need for a Democratic Resilience Centre

<https://www.rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/need-for-democratic-resilience-centre>

### **#intelligence #public information**

The 'Ukraine Model' for Intelligence Disclosure May Not be the New Normal

<https://rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/ukraine-model-intelligence-disclosure-may-not-be-new-normal>

### **#legal**

Red Lines and Red Crosses

<https://www.rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/red-lines-and-red-crosses>

### **#environment**

Perhaps Lawful, but Awful: The Environmental Impacts of the Israel-Hamas War

<https://www.lawfaremedia.org/article/perhaps-lawful-but-awful-the-environmental-impacts-of-the-israel-hamas-war>

Note mention in the article of International Committee of the Red Cross Customary Law Study. See: ICRC Study on Customary Rules of International Humanitarian Law

<https://www.icrc.org/en/doc/resources/documents/misc/5mxlad.htm>

and

Customary law

<https://www.icrc.org/en/war-and-law/treaties-customary-law/customary-law>

### **#maritime security**

The United States Must Defend Critical Infrastructure

<https://www.usni.org/magazines/proceedings/2023/december/united-states-must-defend-critical-infrastructure>

Canada must defend critical infrastructure.



## **#naval force design #wargaming**

Naval Wargaming Beyond the Classroom

video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VOemWKst2g0>

Purportedly a presentation about ship design (the speaker is a naval architect and a member of the Royal Corps of Naval Constructors), it really is a presentation about force design.

## **#reading**

Chief of Staff of the Army Recommended Articles December 2023

<https://www.armyupress.army.mil/resources/csa-recommended-articles/>

### **#Russia-Ukraine War**

Is there Anything to Learn from Ukraine?

<https://warroom.armywarcollege.edu/articles/learning-lessons-1/>

A Containment Strategy for Ukraine

<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/ukraine/containment-strategy-ukraine>

More With Less: Ukrainian Strategy in the Battle of the Black Sea

<https://dsm.forecastinternational.com/2023/12/01/more-with-less-ukrainian-strategy-in-the-battle-of-the-black-sea/>

Frontline report: Ukraine strikes Russian rail lines to China

<https://euromaidanpress.com/2023/12/02/frontline-report-ukraine-strikes-russian-rail-lines-to-china/>

Russia is gearing up for a long war. Will the West follow suit?

<https://www.defensenews.com/outlook/2023/12/04/russia-is-gearing-up-for-a-long-war-will-the-west-follow-suit/>

### **#cyber operations #information operations**

Assessing Russian Cyber and Information Warfare in Ukraine

<https://www.cna.org/reports/2023/11/assessing-russian-cyber-and-information-warfare-in-ukraine>

### **#drones**

As Ukraine braces for winter drone attacks, allies rush to provide defenses

<https://www.defenseone.com/threats/2023/11/ukraine-braces-winter-drone-attacks-allies-rush-provide-defenses/391740/>

US Sending Experimental Anti-Drone Weapons to Ukraine

<https://www.defenseone.com/defense-systems/2023/04/us-sending-experimental-anti-drone-weapons-ukraine/384801/>

### **#space**

Clearing the Fog: The Grey Zones of Space Governance

<https://www.cigionline.org/publications/clearing-the-fog-the-grey-zones-of-space-governance/>

3 Canadian Space Division celebrates its first birthday

<https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/maple-leaf/rcaf/2023/06/3-canadian-space-division-celebrates-its-first-birthday.html>

*Missed this earlier:* "In fact, this year the Canadian Joint Operations Command (CJOC) issued the first named operation specific to space, Operation STRATUS, which directs the integration of space capabilities into all CAF operations."

### #strategy

On Strategy

<https://www.usni.org/magazines/proceedings/2023/december/strategy>

### #training

'Goodbye Mr Chips?' Modernising Defence Training for the 21st Century

<https://rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/occasional-papers/goodbye-mr-chips-modernising-defence-training-21st-century>

### #wargaming

The Value of AT/FP Tabletop Exercises for the Sea Services

<https://www.usni.org/magazines/proceedings/2023/november/value-atfp-tabletop-exercises-sea-services>

### Other:

#### **Poseidon Procurement**

NZ Defence Force @NZDefenceForce 1 Dec posted:  
Welcome to the wider P-8A Poseidon whānau @RCAF\_ARC  
🇨🇦🇩🇪 It's great to see a new fleet on its way to support maritime safety and international security. We look forward to flying alongside your teams some time. #Force4NZ (Whānau is the Māori language word for the basic extended family group.)  
Interoperability. NZ gets it.



**Naval Association of Canada** *Starshell* Fall 2023 Issue 99

<https://www.navalassoc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Starshell-Winter-LR.pdf>

#### **Canadian Warship Growth & Costing**

Norman Jolin

#### **China is on a Mission to Control the Arctic**

Rob Huebert

#### **Arctic Defence has to be Joint**

Adam Lajeunesse

#### **China's Arctic Ambitions, Worse for Russia**

Adam Lajeunesse

#### **Ops Update**

#### **Expanding Nanook to NATO**

Cate Belbin

#### **National Security Policy and Strategy**

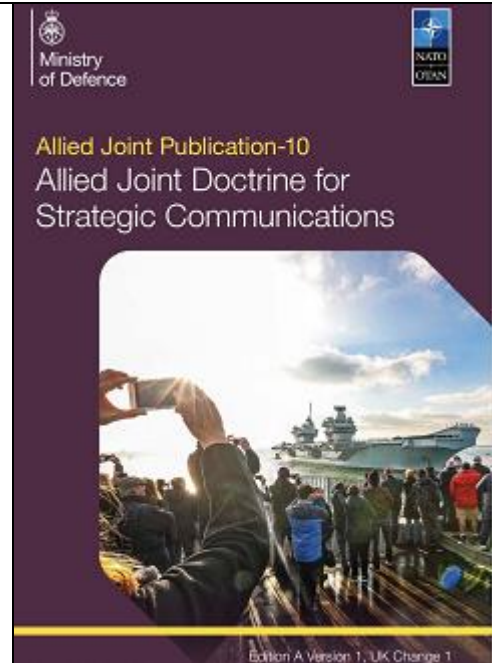
Ian Parker

## AJP-10 Allied Joint Doctrine for Strategic Communications

Air Vice-Marshal Fin Monahan, Director DCDC  
@DirectorDCDC 2 Dec 23 posted: My DCDC recommended reading list this weekend is Strategic Communication Doctrine. Everything we do or do not do sends a message. Understanding who the key audiences are and what to communicate to them is key to successful operations.  
@NATO @UKStratCom  
<https://gov.uk/government/publications/allied-joint-doctrine-for-strategic-communications-ajp-10>

"The UK defines Defence StratCom as: 'advancing national interests by using Defence as a means of communication to influence the attitudes, beliefs and behaviours of audiences.'"

A search of the pub doesn't seem to differentiate between influencing foreign and domestic audiences. Seems to treat audiences as audiences: "The behaviour-centric approach recognizes that people's attitude and behaviour are central to attaining the end state, and the Alliance has to take account of a much broader audience than simply the 'enemy or adversary'."



## Security Affairs Committee Synopsis

### O Canada

One has to congratulate the government for not bowing to pressure from two provinces and Bombardier and partners. The government chose to purchase the P-8 Poseidon aircraft from Boeing. The initial contract will be for 14 aircraft with options to purchase two more. That is good to this point. The problem is once again we are replacing what was originally 21 aircraft (18 Aurora and three Arcturus aircraft based on the original P-3 Orion) with a maximum of 16. This is a major reduction. When considering the Argus replacement, the CAF had determined that there was a minimum of 36 aircraft required to conduct surveillance and anti-submarine warfare in Canada's areas of responsibilities. Keep in mind Canada also retained other anti-submarine aircraft as well as the Argus. Successive governments have chosen to reduce and reduce and reduce the CAF's capability to virtually non-existent. One knowledgeable RUSI(NS) member stated the US uses the figure of 4.5 aircraft to maintain one in the air in operational squadrons. The US squadron for patrol aircraft is nine or two aircraft in the air per squadron. This does not include aircraft in maintenance or used for training. Based on this, Canada will be able to keep maybe two in the air over three oceans. Does this remotely make sense? The answer is no. Still to their credit the government made a purchase despite our moribund procurement system and the usual political interference.

Bombardier announced that it would continue with their proposed project and sell it to potential foreign governments. Canada has not bought sufficient number of P-8 Poseidon and the Bombardier product might be a good way to make up the lack of numbers and take over some of the mundane tasks such as coastal patrol which used to be conducted by the Tracker, a carrier-based anti-submarine aircraft formerly used aboard HMCS *Bonaventure*, Canada's last aircraft carrier. The Tracker served long after the retirement of the carrier. Perhaps this project would be useful if properly managed.

These past few weeks have seen all three environmental commanders (Navy, Army and Air Force) as well as the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) discuss the extreme shortfalls of their respective services. The single biggest issue is recruiting as the system is non-functional and some such as myself would say a waste of rations. Recruiting is not the only problem, retention also is poor with dissatisfaction with conditions and equipment. Apparently, members also feel there is a lot more effort being applied to the government's own priority over the role of the CAF. The CAF exists to provide deterrence along with allies and lethal action if deterrence fails. In this regard, the CAF is failing badly because of misguided priorities. Looking back on Canada's military history, McKenzie-King and Louis St Laurent understood the threats to Canada. There was never a thought of Canada not getting ready for war when required and doing its part as part of strategic alliances. One cannot say this about the current situation and Canada's ability to act to protect its own interests especially in a time of authoritarian regimes preparing for conflict. As a nation we have been ill-served by successive governments. The CAF and other security agencies are the insurance policy for the whole nation. No one likes to spend the money but listen to the howls when it is needed and no longer there.

The National Post reported on a Senate report about Global Affairs Canada which called for the reduction in senior administrators and a requirement for senior management to "have in-depth knowledge and experience in International Affairs" if GAC is to remain relevant. The report made 29 recommendations for further development...now all we need is an actual foreign policy worthy of the name! Minister Jolie, to her credit, had made suggestions similar to this in an earlier report.

### **United States**

The Biden Administration has requested more than 100b USD in aid for Israel and Ukraine from the US House of Representatives. This is being met with resistance in Congress despite Ukraine only having a small amount of assistance left available. Certain elements have chosen to play politics in a critical situation which will have severe consequences for Europe and the world situation.

### **Australia**

These are a series of articles from our Australian correspondent. As Canada and Australia have similar issues, the lessons from our Aussie friends seem more appropriate. Canada also has to deal with a hostile Northern environment that is far cry from Australia's environmental issues. Still there are lessons to be learned. Enjoy.

<https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/national-defence-and-the-ran-part-1-achieving-deterrence-by-denial/>

Australia has been forced to consider different ways of meeting the increasing threat from China. The ability of any country to deny access to key areas is a method of deterrence that may also be of consideration by Canada especially in the Arctic.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-09-12/png-tribal-violence-enga-escalates-into-guerilla-warfare/102826764>

Issues in Papua-New Guinea always catch the attention of Australia. Conflict there could cause refugees who are relatively near Australia and perhaps increased Chinese interference within Australia's area of interest.

<https://asiapacificdefencereporter.com/australias-maritime-defence-capability-to-be-strengthened-in-the-north/>

Australia is increasing its capability in the Northern Territory by increasing the ability of the base to maintain Royal Australian Navy's newest patrol vessels.

<https://asiapacificdefencereporter.com/new-report-sets-path-to-building-genuine-sovereign-defence-capability/>

This report advocates the creation of support facilities in the Northern Territory. Some of the reasoning could be used to justify our own requirements in Canada's northern territories.

### **Israel-Hamas Conflict**

Hamas is a criminal organization recognized by most of the Western democracies as a terrorist organization. It conducted an attack on 7 October 2023 that killed or wounded nearly 1k Israelis in an unprovoked attack. Their attack was brutal and their conduct well beyond unnecessarily savage, including rape, torture, killings by beheading and burning. One wonders if it occurred in Canada against Canadian citizens whether the calls for mercy, etc., would be so quickly mentioned. Israeli casualties would be the equivalent of 40k Canadians. Somehow the only Jewish state is not allowed to take action against an organization that has vowed in its own constitution that their goal is eradicating the Jews in Israel.

CBC has faithfully announced Hamas provided casualties from the conflict. The latest figure is 17k. CBC did not specify how many were actually Hamas fighters nor did it verify the numbers or even enter a caveat stating that the casualty numbers are unverified. The UN representatives are famous for parroting "official" casualty figures as well and therefore these must be considered suspect at best.

Israel has commenced the next phase of operations against Khan Younis in Southern Gaza. Although there have been announcements of safe areas, there have been hits in those areas. The Israeli Prime Minister has stated that maximum use of force will end the conflict sooner so the conflict is unlikely to end quickly. Israel has also used "sponge bombs" inside the tunnel system to close the system. Its utility is still not verified.

Hamas has used Palestinians as human shields and view all casualties as tools in their information warfare campaign. The "leadership" of Hamas reside in Qatar in relatively luxurious facilities far beyond the hopes of their own people. The Palestinian people are victims as well, not of the Israelis but of Hamas.

### **Moldova**

This week Russia has stopped the import of Moldovan fruits and vegetables and has now threatened further hybrid war against Moldova. Russia's efforts to date, especially in Transnistria, have generally failed as Moldova has taken a more pro-Western approach with increased agreements with the European Union despite Russia's best efforts.

### **Belarus**

Belarus is strangely quiet recently as they are increasingly concerned that the West is trying to view it as an aggressor country. Keep in mind that Belarus was used by the Russian forces as a jumping off point for its forces heading for Kyiv in the early days of Russia's 24 February 2022 attack.

Due to Western sanctions and a generally semi-hostile neighbour, Belarus is trying to create conditions for a better relationship with China. President Lukashenko visited China this past Monday. Lukashenko is trying to expand his relations beyond Russia and received a warm welcome from President Xi. President Xi spent three hours with the Belarus President during his visit on Monday.

## Russia Ukraine War

The war continues. Russia has taken the initiative on the battlefield near Kupiansk, Bakhmut and Avdiivka, expending vast amounts of equipment and manpower for minor gains. Most of the rest of the line remains relatively calm. Just as I finished writing this part of the note, Ukraine has been able to recapture most of the Russian gains around Avdiivka, causing relatively heavy Russian casualties. In this fight a Bradley infantry fighting vehicle was captured; it was the first of this kind of vehicle captured. It cost the Russians two recovery teams with their escort. They were able to keep the Bradley intact. It is now the main event on Russian television. In the south there were no major gains by either side. Ukraine allegedly moved the 47th Mechanized Brigade to the Avdiivka area. The brigade is mainly equipped with Western vehicles except the tanks are older Soviet tanks that have been modified. Apparently it was this brigade that recaptured recently captured areas around Avdiivka. Ukraine has also established its fifth tank brigade based on the Leopard 1. Approximately 200 plus Leopard 1 have been given to Ukraine. The Black Sea Fleet has been completely absent from effective operations. The Russians also lost a SU-24M this week to long range air defence missile fire near Snake Island, apparently with the loss of the crew. The war continues to be one where drones are the main combat element.

The Russian economy continues to slide as the war continues. Although the war has been going on since 2014 and Western countries have asked businesses with headquarters in the West to withdraw from the Russian economy, only 1/3 have actually left, about a third are keeping the option to return open and a third simply ignored their own government and remain in Russia and are conducting business as usual. It is disappointing that so many have remained thus allowing Russian citizens to continue to have access to certain Western made goods. Russia is facing several negative factors: lack of capital and investment, lack of modern industry due to a lack of local initiative and a large population decline. Sanctions, asset seizures, loss of trained and educated elements of the population, serious casualty rates have all caused large intractable elements within the economy which cannot be easily corrected according to the Business Insider. This has been further affected by the enormous spending on the military this year and in future which attack the small but significant social welfare system. This will directly affect Putin's main supporters.

The Russian elections for President are scheduled for 17 March 2024. President Putin has not announced his candidacy for re-election as yet although it is expected in the not too distant future. The war has not gone well as expected and although most Russians still support his government there are signs of cracks which are likely to grow larger in the future. The biggest threat to the Putin regime is Mothers of Soldiers. News is getting out about incompetence and corruption of senior leadership of the armed forces, mainly through access to cell phones of their husbands or significant others. There are demonstrations both approved and unapproved and the groups are using social media to slowly build support for ending the war. The official numbers cannot hide the growing cemeteries across the nation, especially in towns and villages where large numbers have been lost. Several Far Eastern autonomous areas have vowed not to allow any further recruiting although the outcome from such a declaration is unknown at this point. The National Guard have been sent to several locations though. Although there has not been an announcement of another mobilization, the Ministry of Defence is adding 170k to the Ground Force establishment bringing total forces in Russia to over 2.2m. This being stated, Russia continues to have problems keeping existing units functioning plus the need to allow skilled tradesmen to remain behind to build new equipment. The number of young men who left Russia is really unknown, but the numbers are large. Russian authorities have attempted to adjust by changing medical and education requirements. Whether this will be successful is another question.

The real questions are: will Russia with its larger population base continue to push Ukraine? Will Russia be able to replace key equipment rapidly with Western sanctions in place? Is the Russian

population healthy enough for their appalling casualty rate? Will the Russian economy slowly collapse? Can Russia squeeze out a victory of any kind in the near future? Will the Mothers achieve victory by collapsing the regime as they did for Afghanistan? Will Russia continue its hybrid war against the West using immigrants given the closure of most border points as completed by Finland recently?

For Ukraine, will the West continue its support financially or will the support in the West slowly disappear as we might be seeing now in the US? Time will tell.

## **China**

China is once again overwhelmed by a medical event as mentioned in the last synopsis. It appears that the Mycoplasma Influenza/Pneumonia has affected far more folks than originally reported. A large number of hospitals are overwhelmed throughout the country. Some areas have already instituted Covid-like screening and masking requirements in order to stem the disease. The current theory is because of Communist Chinese Party's (CCP) lock down policy and misinformation many Chinese citizens now do not have immunity from some normally minor ailments. The disease has apparently been found in Canada and the US and is not expected to have any major affect or concern here. The disease is well known and able to be dealt with by the medical community. Still, the CCPs actions have made this possible.

The Chinese economy continues to be affected by CCP incompetence. They have continued to throw more money after bad decisions on the property management sector. Apparently up to 20m houses were purchased by Chinese citizens to be built but were never completed. Loss of these houses would devastate China's middle class not to mention the failure of property development sector can and will have major effects on local government incomes and debt servicing. The central government has given further direction to banks to gives loans to essentially insolvent companies. The result is the loss of confidence throughout China. The knock-on effect will likely see the collapse of China financial and banking sectors. This would also include much of the "shadow banking system" that in the West might be referred to as a giant Ponzi scheme. There are different factions in the CCP, one of which is Xi's but the CCP is not monolithic. Several China observers such as China Update have suggested that Xi is no longer controlling the economy but rather Li Qiang, the new Chinese Premier has now taken over aspects of the economy. This is an interesting event if confirmed. Control of the economy is essential to the survival of the CCP which banks on a successful and growing economy for stability and therefore its survival. It will be interesting to observe over the next few months.

Hong Kong activist Agnes Chow Ting jumped bail in Hong Kong and now resides in Canada. She stated that she could not remain in China. She was arrested as a protest organizer after the widely criticized National Security Laws were put in place. Hong Kong's city leader has stated that she will be a fugitive forever. Keeping this in mind, China will try to use Interpol to have her arrested and returned or they may choose to threaten relatives or use local Chinese who are pro-Beijing to harass and control her. One hopes that the Canadian Government protects Ms Chow and other pro-democracy activists from the Chinese security forces and creates laws that give Canadian police authorities the necessary tools and resources stop Chinese security force incursions. China is an adversary, not a friend or partner. Canadian citizens should be warned to get out of China while they can.

## INTELLIGENCE UPDATE

- The Russian defence industry is moving to close the capability gap with Ukraine in the development of one-way attack uncrewed surface vehicles (OWA USVs). On 27 November 2023, Mikhail Danilenko, head of Russian firm KMZ, announced their USVs would be trialled in the 'special military operation' with a view to establishing series production in 2024.
- KMZ has previously manufactured a range of USVs, but in recent months they have started promoting their OWA capability. Danilenko said the boat could carry a munition of up to 600 kg.
- Navies have employed USVs since the Second World War. However, with modern types resembling speedboats packed with explosives, in the hands of Ukrainian forces they have emerged as a key capability in maritime domain since Russia's full-scale invasion.

## INTELLIGENCE UPDATE

- The Russian authorities are likely attempting to quash public dissent by wives of deployed Russian soldiers, including by attempting to pay them off and discrediting them online. This follows small scale protests in Moscow in November 2023.
- Research by independent Russia media outlets and comments by protesting wives themselves suggest that, in recent weeks, the authorities have likely offered increased cash payments to families in return for them refraining from protest.
- On 27 November 2023, one prominent online group for soldiers' wives published a manifesto against 'indefinite mobilisation'. Around 30 November 2023, the group was pinned with a 'fake' warning label – likely at the instigation of pro-Kremlin actors. The authorities are likely particularly sensitive to any protests related to those citizens mobilised in September 2022, who have now been at the front line for over a year.



## INTELLIGENCE UPDATE

- The efforts of both Russia and Ukraine to overcome their adversary's ground-based air defence systems continue to be one of the most important contests of the war. On the Russian side, the SA-15 Tor short-range surface-to-air missile system (SAM) is playing a critical and largely effective role.
- With a maximum range of 15 km, the SA-15 is operated by the Russian army air defence units and is designed to protect the front line of ground troops. This is in contrast with other short-range systems, such as SA-22 Pantsir, which are operated by Russian Aerospace Forces and typically protects command nodes, longer range SAMs, and air bases.
- Effectively acting as the front line of Russia's elaborate air defence network in Ukraine, the SA-15 is currently particularly utilised to counter Ukrainian uncrewed aerial vehicle operations. One of the key limitations of the system in the current war is likely the endurance of its crew. With an established allocation of only three personnel to each system, maintaining a high state of alert for extended periods is highly likely proving an extreme test of endurance.

## INTELLIGENCE UPDATE

- Between 24 February 2022 and November 2023, official Russian MoD forces likely suffered between 180,000 and 240,000 personnel wounded and approximately 50,000 killed. Wagner Group mercenaries likely suffered approximately 40,000 wounded and 20,000 killed.
- Therefore, overall, the Russian side has likely suffered around 220,000-280,000 wounded and approximately 70,000 killed. This gives an estimated range of between 290,000 and 350,000 total Russian combatant casualties. The median of the estimate range is 320,000 total Russian combatant casualties.
- Even amongst Russian officials there is likely a low level of understanding about total casualty figures because of a long-established culture of dishonest reporting within the military.

## INTELLIGENCE UPDATE

- Over recent weeks Russian forces have made creeping advances through the ruins of Marinka, a town in Donetsk Oblast. Russia now likely controls most of the built-up area. However, Ukrainian forces remain in control of pockets of territory on the western edge of the town.
- Marinka has been on the front line since 2014. With a pre-war population of 9000, it is comprehensively ruined– drone footage suggests that the vast majority of buildings have been reduced to rubble.
- Russia’s renewed efforts against Marinka are part of Russia’s autumn offensive which is prioritising extending Russia’s control over the remaining parts of the Donetsk Oblast – highly likely still one of the Kremlin’s core war aims.

## INTELLIGENCE UPDATE

- Since mid-2023, Russia has almost certainly augmented Iranian-supplied Shahed one-way attack uncrewed aerial vehicles (OWA UAVs) with similar weapons made in facilities in Russia. Russia is now almost certainly attempting to incorporate improvements to the OWA UAV designs based on operational experience.
- In late November 2023, a downed UAV was reported as being fitted with a Ukrainian SIM card and 4G modem. This is likely a Russian improvised modification to improve real-time guidance using cell towers to reduce reliance on satellite navigation. There is a realistic possibility that it is also attempting to mitigate Ukrainian electronic warfare measures.
- Some other Russian-made OWA UAVs have likely been painted with a black finish, making it harder to visually identify the incoming drones at night. Russia is increasingly employing OWA UAVs in large raids in an attempt to overwhelm Ukrainian air defences. However, Ukraine continues to successfully neutralise the majority of incoming weapons.

## INTELLIGENCE UPDATE

- On 1 December 2023, a new intake of Russian officers started their studies at the Russian General Staff Academy. The Russian MOD announced that over 60% of the intake has combat experience. Although it was not specified, the majority have likely gained this experience in Ukraine since 2022.
- Students at the academy typically rank between Major and General-Major (equivalent to a one-star General in the NATO system) and are earmarked as having the potential for senior command.
- While a high proportion of some specialists, such as pilots, deployed on operations in Syria, the Ukraine war means combat experience is now more widespread across this mid-level cadre of Russian officers. Over the coming years, this generation is likely to exert major influence over the future direction of Russia's military and whether it implements lessons learned from the war in Ukraine.

## Dressed for the Holiday Season

