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RUSI VI

To promote national defence and security issues through discussion and engagement

Newsletter of the Royal United Services Institute of Vancouver Island

The Royal United Services Institute of Vancouver Island is a member of the Conference of Defence Associations. The CDA is the oldest and most influential advocacy group in Canada's defence community, consisting of associations from all parts of the country.

The CDA expresses its ideas and opinions with a view to influencing government security and defence policy. It is a non-partisan, independent, and non-profit organization.

September 2024

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President's Message

We have now confirmed a full speaker slate well into 2025. Note the change in date for our Xmas Meet & Greet to 8 Dec (was originally 15 Dec, but due to a scheduling conflict, this has changed). Our Speakers' Schedule is as follows:

- **11 Sep 2024- Col (Ret'd) Ross Fetterley: *The Palestinian Second Intifada 2000-2006*;**
- 9 Oct- Dr Bill Stewart: *Shoot All the Officers*;
- 13 Nov- RAdm (Ret'd) Nigel Greenwood: *Arctic Shipping Challenges and Maritime Security in the Arctic*;
- 8 Dec M & G- MGen (Ret'd) Ed Fitch: *Thoughts and Observations From His Recent Visit to Israel*;
- 8 Jan, 2025- Jonathan Manthorpe: *On Canadian Democracy* (his latest book);
- 12 Feb- BGen (Ret'd) Don McNamara, Col (Ret'd) Jamie Hammond, BGen (Ret'd) Greg Matte, and Dr. Jim Boutilier: *Open Discussion on National Defence*;
- 12 Mar- Ted Barris: *Battle of Britain: Canadian Airmen in Their Finest Hour* (his latest book);
- *Just added-* 9 April- Dr. David Zimmerman: *Death Rays and Defiants: RAF Technology in the 1930s*; and
- 14 May- TBC.

Remember annual RUSI-VI dues are now $50.00 for Regular and $60.00 for Family memberships, effective 1 September. Please pay your dues by cheque in the mail or E-transfer. Due to the absence of our Treasurer, Diana Dewar, until 22 September, we will not be able to deposit E-transfers until end September.

We have found more RUSI-VI ties, so these will be available for purchase, at $30.00 each, starting in September. Since stand down in May, we have gained two new Regular members for a total of nine new members for 2024.

Scott H. Usborne
President
Royal United Services Institute of Vancouver Island

Defence Industry Rep Says Canada on ‘Hamster Wheel’ of Red Tape as Ammo Contracts Fail to Materialize

“Put simply, the government's processes still haven't caught up with the grim reality of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.”

David Pugliese • Ottawa Citizen
Published Jul 24, 2024

A Canadian soldier prepares to fire the Carl Gustaf anti-tank weapon system. Photo by Sailor First Class Camden Scott /Canadian Forces

The Canadian government’s efforts to boost ammunition production among domestic firms is caught in a “hamster wheel” of red tape, the president of a defence industry association warns.

The Liberal government announced in early April a commitment of $9.5 billion over 20 years to accelerate ammunition production in the country. The push will also replenish the ammunition stocks of the Canadian military that had been depleted because of weapons donations to Ukraine.

Former chief of the defence staff Gen. Wayne Eyre, who retired on July 18, said several months ago the plan would involve some “quick hits” on ammunition production to signal the Liberals’ new defence policy was being taken seriously.

But Christyn Cianfarani, president of the Canadian Association of Defence and Security Industries, points out the initiative is mired in red tape. No major contracts beyond those that were previously anticipated have been issued.

Even if industry wanted to bankroll an increase in production of ammunition on its own, the companies wouldn’t be able to get loans from banks to do that because they have no signed orders from Canada, she added.

“The file appears stuck in a hamster wheel of bureaucracy, red tape and impediments,” Cianfarani told this newspaper. “Put simply, the government’s processes still haven’t caught up with the grim reality of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.”

National Defence spokesperson Cheryl Forrest said efforts on new contracts were underway. “Work is still ongoing to sign contracts with our industry partners,” she said. “More precise details will become available as these efforts progress.”

As of 2024, the department and Canadian Armed Forces have been authorized to make an immediate investment of $520 million into the acquisition of ammunition and explosives, Forrest noted. That money will be spent over a five-year period to replenish depleted ammunition stocks.

She noted that the department was working with Public Services and Procurement Canada, which manages the Munitions Supply Program, to secure the capability for supply of critical ammunition and small arms.

Jeremy Link, a PSPC spokesperson, stated that, since April, the department had awarded five ammunition contracts, all to General Dynamics-Ordnance and Tactical Systems Canada, for a total value of $85.5 million. All five contracts were for variations of 84-mm ammunition, he added. Such ammunition is used in the Carl Gustaf anti-armour system employed by the Canadian Army.

Last year, this newspaper reported that Bill Matthews, then deputy minister at National Defence, blamed Canadian industry for failing to come through with supplying ammunition and related material in the aftermath of Russia’s 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

Instead, Canada dipped into existing stockpiles to provide Ukraine with much-needed ammunition or has dealt with U.S. and foreign firms to provide munitions. In some cases, it has gone through Canadian-based firms, but those companies then acquired the ammunition from foreign sources.

But industry officials pushed back against Matthews' claims, pointing out that National Defence and PSPC with the munitions program had bungled keeping up with ammo purchases and making sure stockpiles were properly maintained.

In 2022, then-defence chief Eyre also pushed for companies to switch to what he called a "war footing" so weapons and ammunition production could be ramped up both for Ukraine and to replenish Canadian military stocks.

In response, defence industry officials privately noted Eyre didn't seem to understand that companies couldn't ramp up production without government contracts in hand since large-scale manufacturing required upfront purchasing of supplies and material.

Cianfarani told this newspaper she was recently in Paris for the Eurosatory defence show and there seemed to be a sense of urgency there to turn commitments into signed contracts. "The impression I got was that our allies don't think Canada will meet the mark for ammunition production," she added.

The Collapse of Social Cohesion and Crisis of Trust and Truth

Image credit: Image: @MyCarletonU / X.com

Canadian Global Affairs Institute / Commentary 2024 Articles

by **Frank Graves**

On June 21, 2024, Frank Graves was awarded the degree of Doctor of Laws, honoris causa, from Carleton University in recognition of a distinguished career in public opinion and policy research and outstanding contributions to research-based policy making. Below is his convocation address to Carleton University's 161st convocation ceremony.

First, let me express my deep gratitude at being honoured by my institution. In the next 5 minutes, I will try and distill some of the key insights I have drawn from the past 50 years. This gives me roughly a minute for every decade of research so I will speak briskly.

In looking at the constellation of trends that I have been studying I must note that I have never seen our country in such a dark and divided state. Whether looking at confidence in national direction, outlook on the future, fears of the external world or even basic attachment to our country and public institutions, I am recording unprecedented record low scores on key barometers of social cohesion. If anything, these nadirs are even lower amongst younger Canada and notably the incidence of

those who see a university education as a sound investment has plummeted from 85 to 45% over the past 20 years (lower still amongst young men).

We live in an era which sees a crisis of both trust and truth. A growing number believe that climate change is a hoax and forest fires are a product of arsonists. Nearly a third believe that governments have intentionally concealed the real number of deaths from vaccines. The web of designed deceit is broadening and deepening and we are losing this contest for the future. Disinformation is polarizing our society in ways that we have never seen. At best we can take some comfort in knowing that these forces are by no means unique to Canada but gripping most advanced western democracies.

The purpose of these observations is not to depress but to issue a call for action. If we are experiencing an epistemic and trust crisis what better stalwart against these corrosive forces than the university? A wonderful quote apocryphally attributed to Mark Twain notes that history does not repeat itself but it often rhymes. A century ago, the world was emerging from a great war in Europe, a global pandemic and gilded age economies with hyper concentration of wealth at the top were on the verge of collapse. A centrist populist movement in America led by the Roosevelt's produced a new deal which saw the rise of the middle class and shared prosperity. However, similar threats produced a very different populist response in Europe in the form of authoritarian populism and fascism and all of those ensuing horrors.

Societies and democracies need to choose wisely for our next 50 years and, despite a period of epistemic crisis, I believe that universities and their graduates are a precondition for negotiating a healthy path out of these dark forces. Patrick Moynihan's old saw that we can have our own opinions but we cannot have our own facts has sadly become a quaint anachronism. Passively charting these trends is not enough.

I remain optimistic but vigilant and I urge those going forward in their chosen careers and professions to be mindful of the depth of the historic challenges that we face and to use this as a spur to excellence and influence. Speaking truth to power in pursuit of a better world should be our lodestar.

Frank Graves is one of Canada's leading public opinion, social policy and public policy experts as well as being one of its leading applied social researchers. In 1980, he founded EKOS Research Associates Inc., an applied social and economic research firm. He is an Adjunct Research Professor, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Carleton University, Ottawa, and is a member of the Federal Vaccine Confidence Task Force Group and a Fellow of the Canadian Global Affairs Institute (CGAI).

Decoding Kursk: Is the End in Sight in Ukraine?

Dr Greg Mills, Alfonso Prat Gay, Juan-Carlos Pinzon and Dr Karin von Hippel

RUSI 21 August 2024

With insights gained from their latest visit to Ukraine in August 2024, the authors discuss the importance of the Kursk incursion in the Russo-Ukrainian war.

Underground in an anonymous building in the Kharkiv Oblast is one reason for Ukraine's defensive prowess against a numerically stronger and well-armed aggressor. Military teams work from makeshift briefing and ops rooms leading off corridors stacked with dusty and discarded office furniture, intently focused on an array of computers that access, control and act on live feeds from the battlefield.

'Attention', says one member, standing up, his voice slightly raised, and the room instantly stills. 'There will be a Russian helicopter attack at 1230'. His warning gives soldiers on the front a mere 10 minutes to pack up their artillery and move it discretely away.

It is a high-stakes gaming saloon, complete with Ninja-pro gaming chairs and many donning heavy metal goth T-shirts. 'The toughest lesson', remarks one commander, codenamed 'Cuba', is the 'cost of a mistake, in many cases irreversible'.

The previous day, 11 Russian tanks had attacked the Khartiia Brigade positioned north of Kharkiv. Five tanks were knocked out by a mix of missiles, artillery and mines dropped by drones.

Upstairs, the unit wargames Russian positions and movements, with intelligence fed by a combination of reconnaissance, open sources, local knowledge and intercepts. A chart with toy soldiers covers the table, while a three-dimensional depiction is screened on the wall behind. The aim is to interpret patterns from even one single troop movement, as the unit tries to discern Russian intentions.

A war of national survival has transformed some units to enable them to operate at 'NATO standard', one soldier explains. This war is producing, pound for pound, possibly the most effective armed forces in the world in Ukraine – even if not the best-equipped or trained – and certainly the most resourceful, innovative and now with significant battlefield experience.

The flip side of this, however, is that the Russians have also learned fast, although not quite at the same tempo as the Ukrainians. Their development of glide-bombs, each with 2,000 kg warheads, now being produced at a monthly rate of 30,000, has delivered a cheap, immensely destructive shock weapon. Russia's size and improving prowess should keep European defence planners up at night and remind them that they have an enduring strategic stake in Ukraine's success, no matter how much some Western politicians may want to cut and run from Kyiv.

No Time to Micro-Manage Kyiv

Now is not the time to micro-manage the risk in Ukraine's actions, hold back supplies or maintain strict caveats on the use of equipment, especially against military targets in Russian territory, out of fear that Putin might escalate, perhaps with a nuclear option.

Over the past few years, Ukrainians have learned that the externally imposed stipulations of keeping the war inside the boundaries of Ukraine have only enabled Russia, and tragically left Ukraine in a lethal war of attrition. It is still too early to say if Kyiv's surprise military incursion into Kursk Oblast, launched in early August, was the right approach, although it has succeeded in buoying Ukrainian troops and civilians alike, especially after the failure of its vaunted 2023 counteroffensive against stubborn (and closely knit) Russian defences. Ukrainians and allies have all been concerned that the maths of overwhelming Russian numbers would over time only serve to give Russia the upper hand against the plucky but quantitatively disadvantaged Ukrainians. Even though Russia has already suffered 600,000 casualties, with as many as 15–20% of them killed, its population is at least four times that of Ukraine and its economy 15 times the size. This is reflected in comparative mobilisation personnel numbers, as well as the ability of Russia's defence industry to scale up.

The Ukrainian intervention into Kursk has several aims, says Oleksandr Merezhko, the chair of Kyiv's parliamentary foreign affairs committee, including relieving the pressure on the front elsewhere and offering a physical buffer zone for hard-pressed Ukrainian army units around the eastern town of Sumy.

The Kursk advance offers space for diplomatic brinkmanship to seize the moment

Strategically it also shows, he says, 'that we can turn the tide … and show the results to Western taxpayers'. He is hopeful that the Kursk operation will provide a similar impact as the 'Prigozhin mutiny', referring to the drive from Rostov-on-Don towards Moscow in June 2023 by the late Yevgeny Prigozhin, founder of the Wagner Group. It ended in negotiations with a surprised Kremlin, but if nothing else, illustrated just how hollowed out and vulnerable the Russian state is.

The Kursk advance offers space for diplomatic brinkmanship to seize the moment. Until now the political dimension for peace has been behind the military curve.

Linking War and Peace

Ukraine's move into Russia should not be seen in isolation from the 10-Point Peace Plan proposed by President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. But for peace to take root, not only will Ukraine have to demonstrate to the Russians that there is more to be gained from peace than continuing the war, and that there is a method by which this can be achieved, but also that all external powers are pushing the parties to the negotiating table.

'Experience', says Ukraine's Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba in a meeting with us in Kyiv in August 2024, 'teaches us that Russia only negotiates in good faith when it is placed under pressure, and negotiation is the only option. And we also have learned from our own history that facilitators want to end the war rather at the expense of Ukraine, which is also often true for cases of war in other parts of the world'.

Enormous challenges remain, not least among the group of states that put narrow interests before people, and where politics trumps human rights. A number of key African and Latin American states, for instance, fall into this category, including Colombia and South Africa. The latter has been willing to pressure Israel over Gaza through the world courts, but not Russia, its ally in BRICS, over its invasion of Ukraine. Egypt and Ethiopia are similarly among the African fence-sitters, indicating as much about their preference for Putin's type of democracy as their interests in arms transfers and geopolitical allegiances. Brazil and China, with their own peace formula,

are running essentially a rival to Ukraine's own process – one which might even have Russia's tacit approval as a fellow BRICS country. (Ed: BRICS is the acronym for the countries in the group: Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.)

Rival processes usually expect Ukraine to make concessions that China, Brazil or any other BRICS member would be unwilling to concede. Most Ukrainians are committed to a single negotiating principle: the return of all Ukrainian territory as per the 1991 borders, including Crimea. That Ukraine is striving for its sovereignty should be important to African states in particular, given the continental propensity for weak borders that criss-cross ethnic allegiances and communities.

Neutrality in this war usually means being in favour of Russia. And victory for Russia would lead only to the conclusion that, as Yulia Tymoshenko, the former Ukrainian prime minister, explains to us, 'Dictators International would be'. This has consequences for democrats everywhere, from Venezuela to Zimbabwe, as civilians struggle against authoritarianism.

Goals Also Matter.

Ukraine's demands are not just about territory and its return. As the Ukrainian Nobel laureate Oleksandra Matviichuk clarifies in the same meeting, it offers 'an historic opportunity to change the approach to justice for war crimes'.

War usually visits poor places, making them even poorer. Ukraine's daily reality of war is brought home walking the streets of Kharkiv, where one drives by ravaged apartments and buildings eviscerated by supersonic missiles and hears the distant thundering of artillery shells in battlefields north of the city. These distant booms are regularly interrupted by ear-piercing wailing sirens, alerting incoming air raids.

The Costs of Double-Standards

The cost of discounting Russia's wanton destruction of communities across eastern and southern Ukraine lies not only in the loss of civilian lives and destruction of civilian infrastructure. It's that war puts the interests of the state above – and seemingly beyond – those of the individual, the opposite of the very premise of the human rights regime that followed the Second World War where, in the jurist Hersch Lauterpacht's words: 'The well-being of an individual is the ultimate object of all law.'

Lauterpacht was born close to Lemberg, now Lviv, in modern-day Ukraine. Other Ukrainians have taken up the same struggle, not least Matviichuk, whose Center for Civil Liberties has documented more than 78,000 war crimes so far. Digital technologies offer huge advances in tracking perpetrators, from soldiers to

commanders and even the silicon chips and production lines responsible for the missiles and drones raining down on Ukrainian cities.

Ukraine will need safeguards, such as through eventual Ukrainian membership of the EU and NATO (with NATO-like security guarantees in the interim). The Ukrainian ambition is to achieve the former by 2029 ahead of the next round of European parliamentary elections, confirms Maria Mezentseva, a Rada member from Kharkiv tasked with Euro-Atlantic integration. NATO membership should be easier 'since it is a political decision' she says, although admitting Ukraine while it is at war is unlikely. But even if the political risks of inclusion into Alliance remain, the obvious levels of NATO–Ukraine interoperability are routinely demonstrated by the likes of the Khartiia Brigade, among others.

Accelerating Integration

The Russian invasion has offered, in this way, an accelerant to Ukraine's Western integration. This has not only been expedited through accession talks, but also through the movement of people – there are now more than 5 million Ukrainian refugees in Europe – and through the deepening logistics chains with the West, not to mention Ukraine's now leading position in defence technology innovation. Much remains to be done, not least in improving governance, but the advantages of this inclusion are clear: Ukraine's per capita wealth is just $2,200, well below the Eurozone average of $37,400.

The pace of Ukraine's progress post-war will depend on the continued flow of money, and that will hinge on its role as a bulwark against Russia, but also its capacity to clean up its governance and put in safeguards against corruption.

Until then, the priority remains keeping money and arms flowing from the West, while talking peace, a balancing act so far carefully managed by Zelenskyy, with seemingly inexhaustible energy. This is driven by the fear of the costs of failure. When asked what he thinks about first thing in the morning, the governor of the Lviv Oblast, Maksym Kozytskyi, responds, 'My overriding daily fear when I wake up is learning that a close friend has been killed'. Everything else can be managed'.

Ukraine illustrates just how much technology matters to modern war. Without the internet and advances in drone technology, soldiers would be operating virtually blind. But it is also a reminder of war's constants, of the importance of logistics, training, mass, manoeuvre and fighting spirit. A Khartiia officer proudly described his troops' prowess with the Browning '5-oh', he said, termed a 'strategic weapon' by the

Russians at its sharp end. But he also bemoaned the shortage of artillery ammunition, especially of 'NATO standards'.

Ukraine itself can do more, not least in mobilising troops, despite improvements through its Reserve-Plus and Army-Plus apps. Only infantry can hold ground, not (yet) drones. Even so, Kyiv feels very different to a wartime city – eerily normal as opposed to some version of London in 1942. Managing debt volumes and spending finances well require sacrifices, everywhere. Sometimes 'your best isn't good enough', cautioned Churchill. 'You must do what is required.'

Ukraine should take care in this regard not to take offers of outside assistance for granted. Afghanistan is a recent reminder of the fickleness of friendships, no matter the catastrophic consequences.

Four Scenarios

Amid the ongoing Kursk intervention, leaving out the likelihood of Putin's departure and Russian economic implosion, four peace scenarios are imaginable. The *first* would be Ukraine's ejection of Russia, through military means or negotiations. This requires the on-time delivery of weapons promised by the West and required by Kyiv, and, for its part, Ukraine to turn out more trained and refreshed brigades. The *second* would be for Kyiv to negotiate from a position of weakness. A *third* would be to meet Putin's demands, and not strive for Ukrainian security guarantees through NATO (or EU) membership. But this presumes that Putin abandons what former Ukrainian president Viktor Yushchenko, who survived dioxin poisoning by Russian agents, describes to us as an 'imperial project to recreate the Russian empire, an ambition of Putin's which is impossible without including Ukraine'.

The *fourth*, wild-card, possibility is that an outsider – Donald Trump (should he win the US election) or even President Xi perhaps – threatens Russia and Ukraine respectively with an escalation and a reduction of support to Kyiv in order to cut a deal.

While militarily fraught with risk, Kursk has successfully changed the narrative of the war.

All this presumes, of course, that most Ukrainians would back negotiations. While support for Zelenskyy has decreased from his peak of over 90% at the start of 2023 to just 54% in June this year (albeit before the Kursk invasion), fewer Ukrainians support negotiations if they involve conceding post-1991 territory. The share preferring to seek a compromise to negotiate an end to the war fell from 43% to 26% in favour

when respondents were asked to choose between negotiating with Russia and continuing to fight.

Peace will fundamentally be a political decision. ‘We have lost too many Ukrainian lives’, says the Mayor of Kharkiv, Ihor Terekhov, speaking to us while sirens wail outside, ‘which is why peace has to be accepted by society as a whole’.

Decoding Kursk

The Kursk incursion is intended to offset Russia’s inexorable economic and numerical advantage through surprise, manoeuvre and Ukrainian tactical cunning. Until Kursk, ‘it appeared that Ukraine was going to fall,’ confesses Oleksandr Lytvynenko, a veteran intelligence officer and now the Secretary of Ukraine’s National Defence and Security Council, ‘one hundred to two hundred metres per day, very slow, but apparently unstoppable’.

Translating the tactical opportunity Kursk offers into strategic success will depend on many factors, not least, as Zelenskyy has pointed out, the scale, speed and type of international assistance. ‘It is undoubtedly important for us that our partners remove the barriers that prevent us from weakening Russian positions as required by the course of the war’, he said on 17 August, 11 days after launching the Kursk operation. ‘The long-range capabilities of our forces are the answer to all the most important, to all the most strategic issues of this war.’

To this imperative can be added the need to construct a diplomatic case, support and method, maintain current and future economic integrity, and build and rebuild armed forces capable of resisting Russia’s war machine.

While militarily fraught with risk, Kursk has successfully changed the narrative of the war. Whether that is in itself enough to keep the taps of international support turned on through and beyond the November 2024 US election will depend on Kyiv holding its ground to use as a bargaining chip in negotiations.

Whatever the political spin, support for Ukraine or Russia is about support for or against the current international rules-based order, in particular the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other states. While Russia and its supporters want to deepen that principle internally, permitting the right to conduct their own affairs free from the threat of international condemnation on the grounds of human rights for example, they want to retain the right to interfere externally.

With Kursk, the stakes have got higher. And they could be raised even further if other similar surprise Ukrainian actions, such as over Crimea or elsewhere, were to follow.

Lytvynenko says that Russia's approach towards his country is premised on the need to reject Ukrainian identity. 'But', he smiles, 'we don't think this way because, axiomatically, we are not Russian'. But he also warns against Ukraine trying to slug it out in perpetuity with Russia, given its relative numerical strength. Rather, Kyiv needs to focus on an asymmetric strategy, fighting a smart war. 'We have no territorial claims against Russia', he adds. 'We don't want to intervene in Russia to change its government or its way of life. We just want to determine our own future'.

This depends on success on the battlefield. Given the implications inside and outside Ukraine for the rule of international law, human rights and justice, and even more than Putin deserves defeat, Ukrainians deserve victory.

The authors visited Ukraine in August 2024 to launch the Foundation's latest publication The Art of War and Peace *(Penguin, 2024), and to research the security situation in the country. The views expressed in this Commentary are the authors', and do not represent those of RUSI or any other institution.*

Ignoring The Ukrainian Invasion of Kursk, Russian Regiments Keep Their Eyes on a Major Ukrainian Prize—Pokrovsk

David Axe Forbes Staff - *David Axe writes about ships, planes, tanks, drones and missiles.*

Forbes Web site www.forbes.com

Ukrainian artillery in action west of Pokrovsk. Ukrainian defense ministry

(Editors Note: Why hasn't this been more widely written about?)

If Ukrainian commanders were hoping their invasion of Russia's Kursk Oblast beginning three weeks ago would draw some of the best Russian regiments and brigades away from eastern Ukraine and relieve pressure on Ukrainian troops in the most vulnerable eastern sectors, they're surely disappointed.

The Kremlin has left its eastern forces in place, for the most part—and reinforced Kursk with young and poorly trailed conscripts, instead.

And that means Russia's eastern offensive, which kicked off last fall and widened around the New Year, has continued unimpeded through August. The consequences for Ukraine's defensive campaign in the east have been dire.

In essence, Russia is trading Kursk for part of eastern Ukraine. Ukraine is trading part of the east for Kursk. Whether either trade off is worth it is a political question—and one without an easy answer for either side.

The drumbeat of recent Russian advances east of Pokrovsk, northwest of Donetsk, should sound like an alarm in Kyiv. On Friday, Russian infantry marched into Novohrodivka, seven miles east of Pokrovsk. Firing a rocket-propelled grenade, they knocked out a Ukrainian tank.

Pokrovsk sits astride the main Ukrainian supply lines west of Donetsk. After weeks of steady Russian gains, the city is in increasing danger.

Analysts anticipated this development. In late July, Frontelligence Insight—a Ukrainian analysis group—described the situation around Pokrovsk as "critical." And that was before the Russians captured several more villages on the road to Pokrovsk including Orlivka and Mykolaivka.

Not even the Ukrainian army's elite 47th Mechanized Brigade with its two dozen or so surviving M-1 Abrams tanks has been able to halt the Russian advance.

If there's a glimmer of hope for the beleaguered defenders of Pokrovsk, it's that Russian losses in the sector have been "heavy," according to the pro-Ukraine Conflict Intelligence Team.

And there are signs the losses are weighing on the Russian advance. "On the Pokrovsk direction, the enemy is beginning to experience resource shortages," the Ukrainian Center for Defense Strategies noted. "The number of advance directions has decreased from seven to three in the space of two weeks."

But even a slower, narrower Russian advance is still an advance—and Pokrovsk is at ever greater risk of falling. If that results in a wider collapse of Ukrainian defenses in the east, commanders in Kyiv may regret deploying a large force—potentially a dozen front-line battalions, each with up to 400 troops—to Kursk instead of reinforcing Pokrovsk.

(Editors note: An interesting article if only from the viewpoint of how a community sees a major employer returning to their area.)

Is There a Military Base in Inuvik's Future?

Ollie Williams Tuesday August 20, 2024 at 7:10pm MT Cabinradio.ca

A CF-18 Hornet lands in Inuvik during an operation on August 6, 2024. Cpl Brock Curtis/Canada

Once upon a time, Inuvik hosted hundreds of military personnel. In the late 1980s, operations wound down and with it went that permanent Arctic presence.

While military exercises still take place in Inuvik and the Canadian Armed Forces still have assets in the town, the wheel has turned full circle and national defence leaders are once again looking to Inuvik as a "very important place" in a multi-billion-dollar plan to assert Arctic sovereignty.

Speaking while on a three-day trip to Inuvik this week, national defence minister Bill Blair told Cabin Radio: "We already have great, great ability here, but we see great potential to invest more, to do more here.

"I think we can anticipate that there'll be significantly more investment here in the region, whether it constitutes a full-time military base here or not."

Inuvik appears to be at the top of the list of northern communities hoping to be named a northern operational support hub.

Those hubs are a pillar of the defence policy update Canada released earlier this year, which committed $218 million over 20 years to setting them up.

Each hub – there are likely to be five – will "support a greater year-round presence across the Arctic and the North," and come with what Ottawa calls "multi-use infrastructure that also meets the needs of territories, Indigenous peoples, and northern communities where feasible."

In other words, being named a northern operational support hub sounds like a lucrative way for any community government to ensure its long-term infrastructure needs are met.

Pressed on when communities will discover if they're on the list, Blair offered no timeline and suggested a simple list of five selected communities may never emerge.

"We are looking right across the North all the way from Alaska to Greenland and to Labrador. I've engaged already quite extensively with the three northern premiers and we are working very closely with Indigenous governments, local governments, making sure we do it in the right place but also in the right way," the minister said.

"It may not be an announcement of 'here are the five locations,' but we are looking very strategically at where our best opportunities are and where the greatest need is.

"Quite frankly, here in the Beaufort Delta, it's very clear to me that this is an important location strategically. There's some existing infrastructure, we've got great local partners here, and I think this is rather obviously a location that will be given our highest consideration."

Below, read a transcript of our interview with Blair as he toured Inuvik.

This interview was recorded on August 20, 2024. The transcript has been edited for clarity and length.

Ollie Williams: Your message throughout your trip has been about Inuvik's importance as a key strategic location. What is it that makes Inuvik so vital in your assessment?

Bill Blair: Part of it is global positioning. One of the things we just recently acknowledged in our new defence policy is the importance of Canada's far north and

the Arctic. For a number of reasons, the Arctic is becoming more strategically important to Canada and in our national defence. Through climate change it's becoming far more accessible as a result of temperature changes, melting of the permafrost and the opening up of the Arctic Ocean.

But as well, we have very significant responsibilities to NORAD and our American partners for North American defence. For decades, Canada perhaps has under-invested in the infrastructure and resources we need to fulfill our responsibilities to defend the continent, defend the North. We acknowledge that, and it's important that we're going to have to make some very significant new investments in the infrastructure – not only that the Canadian Armed Forces and our air force are going to need, but also infrastructure that will benefit the people who live in the North.

People might conclude that must surely then mean a larger military presence in Inuvik, a full-time presence. Is that going to mean, eventually, you're building a base in Inuvik, perhaps as one of the new northern support hubs?

There used to be a base here, actually. It was closed in the 1980s, but the Royal Canadian Air Force has maintained a presence here. They've got residential facilities here. They've got hangars.

We are investing very significantly already in the Zubko airport and putting in $218 million with the Government of the Northwest Territories, the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation and the Gwich'in Tribal Council to extend the runway from 6,000 to 9,000 feet. That's going to be important, because with the new fighter jets we're purchasing and some of the larger aircraft we know we're going to have to bring into the region, we're going to need not just a runway, but facilities for them.

So, we've begun to make those really very significant investments. We acquired the green hangar, for example, which I think is another strategic asset we'll be able to utilize. But there's more investment that needs to be made.

Inuvik is a very important place. We already have great, great ability here, but we see great potential to invest more, to do more here. I think we can anticipate that there'll be significantly more investment here in the region, whether it constitutes a full-time military base here or not.

When we talk about the northern operational support hubs, we're talking about strategic placement of new infrastructure, new assets, the ability for people to deploy and train in the region. All of those things are going to take investment.

One of the reasons I came up here to Inuvik is to have conversations with the mayor, with the Gwich'in and IRC. I had dinner last night with the commissioner. I think it's going to be really important that we engage respectfully and collaboratively with the people who live and work in the region, because we know we want to make some new investments here, but we want it to be beneficial to the people that live here as well – to create job opportunities but also infrastructure in communications and fibre optics, in energy production, in highways and airport runways.

When do you expect to be able to confirm where those northern operational support hubs are going to be?

We have earmarked five opportunities that we're going to invest in. We are looking right across the North all the way from Alaska to Greenland and to Labrador. I've engaged already quite extensively with the three northern premiers and we are working very closely with Indigenous governments, local governments, making sure we do it in the right place but also in the right way.

It may not be an announcement of "here are the five locations," but we are looking very strategically at where our best opportunities are and where the greatest need is. Quite frankly, here in the Beaufort Delta, it's very clear to me that this is an important location strategically. There's some existing infrastructure, we've got great local partners here, and I think this is rather obviously a location that will be given our highest consideration.

You alluded to the green hangar in Inuvik that DND previously leased. It had fallen out of use over the past few years, so clearly DND not so long ago didn't really need that hangar. Now it's being called a strategic asset. What changed?

A couple of things have changed. First of all, in our new defence policy we've seen a renewed focus on our responsibilities to secure the continent, and in particular an acknowledgement that the world's changing rapidly through climate change, through some of the new technological advancements, and through the actions of some of our potential adversaries, most notably Russia and China. Our North is a new theatre of concern, and therefore an opportunity as well for us to make really significant new investments here.

We've already begun that, and one of the big changes, for example, is the investment in the extension of the runway at Zubko airport. It's going to enable us to bring fighter jets into the region and also land larger aircraft here, and to support that presence we're going to have to invest in new hangars and new maintenance facilities.

But the runway extension project was announced in 2019 and at that point, there wasn't much interest in this hangar. So, it can't have been the runway extension.

Well, it isn't part of the runway extension, but it's also a refocusing. We're going to need a lot more infrastructure at the Zubko airport. We're going to have to invest in new hangars. The commander of the Cold Lake Air Force Base flew up to meet with me yesterday. We went to the green hangar. We looked at what exists there now and there is potential. We can open the doors up and we can store, for example, a Hercules aircraft in there.

I think, a number of years ago, the air force perhaps did not anticipate they were going to get the funding necessary to make the required investments. Through our new defence policy, we've made a very significant commitment of nearly $73 billion over the next 20 years and lots of focus, all very clear and strategic focus, on our obligations to defend Canada in the North.

The timeline on the runway project is a late 2027 completion. Are there any other tangible milestones where people are going to be able to see the change coming from these investments?

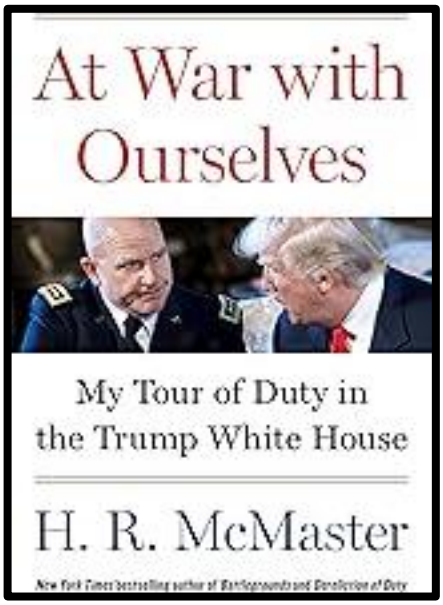
If they go by the airport, they'll see the runway extension construction ongoing. The dates that you mentioned, 2027 is when we'll receive the first of the F-35 aircraft. We're acquiring 88 of them. A number of them will be deployed in the North, some of them in Cold Lake, some in Comox and the East Coast. To deploy those aircraft, we'll not just need that runway. We're going to need new hangars. We're going to need new facilities.

We were the satellite station just south of town as well, that's another very important strategic asset for the Government of Canada and for our allies, and we're going to have to do more there.

Over time, I think the people of the region can anticipate that there's much more work to be done here, and that we are committed to doing it, but we're going to do it carefully. We've got to plan it out. We're spending Canadian taxpayer dollars, and I think it's really important that we get the best value for every dollar we invest of their money.

Book Review- At War with Ourselves: My Tour of Duty in the Trump White House August 27 2024, Amazon.ca

By LGen (Ret'd) H.R. McMaster



A revealing account of National Security Advisor H.R. McMaster's turbulent and consequential thirteen months in the Trump White House.

At War with Ourselves is the story of helping a disruptive President drive necessary shifts in U.S. foreign policy at a critical moment in history. McMaster entered an administration beset by conflict and the hyper partisanship of American politics. With the candor of a soldier and the perspective of a historian, McMaster rises above the fray to lay bare the good, the bad, and the ugly of Trump's presidency and give readers insight into what a second Trump term would look like.

While all administrations are subject to backstabbing and infighting, some of Trump's more unscrupulous political advisors were determined to undermine McMaster and others to advance their narrow agendas. McMaster writes candidly about Cabinet officials who, deeply disturbed by Trump's language and behavior, prioritized controlling the President over collaborating to provide the President with options.

McMaster offers a frank and fresh assessment of the achievements and failures of his tenure as National Security Advisor and the challenging task of maintaining one's bearings and focus on the mission in a hectic and malicious environment.

Determined to transcend the war within the administration and focus on national security priorities, McMaster forged coalitions in Washington and internationally to

help Trump advance U.S. interests. Trump's character and personality helped him make tough decisions, but sometimes prevented him from sticking to them. McMaster adroitly assesses the record of Trump's presidency in comparison to the Obama and Biden administrations.

With the 2024 election on the horizon, *At War with Ourselves* highlights the crucial importance of competence in foreign policy, and makes plain the need for leaders who possess the character and intellect to guide the United States in a tumultuous world.

About the Author

H. R. McMaster is a Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution and Stanford University. He is also the Susan and Bernard Liautaud Fellow at The Freeman Spogli Institute and Lecturer at the Stanford Graduate School of Business. He serves as chairman of the advisory board of the Center on Military and Political Power at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies and the Japan Chair at the Hudson Institute. A native of Philadelphia, H.R. graduated from the United States Military Academy in 1984. He served as a U.S. Army officer for thirty-four years and retired as a lieutenant general in 2018. He remained on active duty while serving as the twenty-sixth assistant to the president for national security affairs. He taught history at West Point and holds a PhD in history from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

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