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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Hello all USINNI Members. Well, another month has flown by, and despite still being in this COVID-19 situation, restrictions are starting to be lifted - slowly, very, very slowly, but lifted none the less.

It is still the ambition of your Board to resume "normal" as possible USINNI activities for our September luncheon/

meeting. We have been working actively to get the fall schedule of guest speakers all lined up. Later next month, we will approach those organizations that would normally provide us with our luncheon venue if a September lunch would be possible, and then confirm meal arrangements. As I said, slowly, very slowly.

I have heard from several of our Members that staying at home during this time has not been all bad. It has given them more time to do small home projects and general gardening in and around the house. In fact, one member told me that "it's been such a joy being home with my wife for the past 2 months. We've



A Canadian Forces CT-114 Tutor "Snowbird" Jet

caught up on all the things I've done wrong in the past 30 years". (Sorry, just could not resist).

A reminder to all that Canada's birthday is coming up shortly. Now is the time to check out your national flag, avoid the rush and replace it if need be. Fly it high and fly it proudly.

Sadly, again, I must ask you, when

Military & Security Musings:

History as Lessons Learned or Not Learned

Nanaimo, 5 June 2020... Ed asked me a few days ago if I had "anything in the can" in the way of a Musing Column. I didn't, having been ruminating over an Opinion Piece on the viability of the Canadian Armed Forces as structured, funded and equipped today for a major, maybe inevitable, "incident" abroad. While I collect my thoughts on this, here's a reminder of

what happens when you're not viable: ...not ready; not secure; not engaged.

On the 5th of June 1940, just 80 years ago today, the last British and French troops able to do so, escaped Dunkirk. The rest were dead, dying, or, "in the bag." Earlier, in the late Summer of 1939, Britain, Canada & others were as unready for war then, as they had

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been in 1914; inexcusably so at that. Hitler's intentions should have been clear to all but the blind, the naive or the stupid; the "BNS" with whom we all have to live. However, by early June 1940, after just nine months of war, Britain, best-

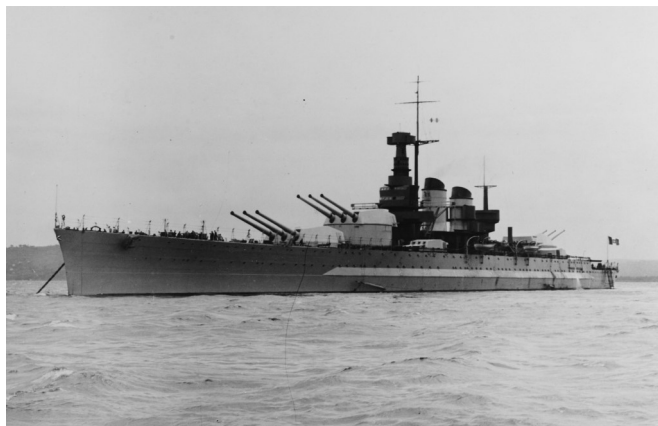


The Evacuation of Dunkirk as painted by Charles Cundall

ed on the Continent, was closely besieged from the air and by blockade at sea, with a much larger, better equipped, competently led & well-blooded German army poised along the English Channel, ready for "the starters gun" and invasion of the UK. The British Expeditionary Force(s) (BEF) had been soundly defeated earlier, first in Norway in April-May, and, then in May-June in Belgium & France. The remnants of the BEF were retrieved from the beaches of Dunkirk, but they did so, leaving almost all of their equipment behind, along with 40,000 British troops taken prisoner by the Germans.

With the subsequent loss in Central France of the 51st Highland Division *en masse* and France's quitting-of-the-war, the defence of the British Isles was vested in some thirty odd skeletal divisions, almost none of which were remotely battle-ready. Along with just one demi-brigade of the 2nd New Zealand Division and a smattering of the 2nd Canadian Infantry Division, the 1st Canadian Infantry Division represented roughly half of the only mobile forces available for a counter-attack on any successful German lodgement of the British Isles. There would have been one crack at that. But, with a bit of British luck & pluck, Hitler's own miscue by procrastinating at the prospect "getting his feet wet" in the Channel, and, at considerable cost to the RN & the RAF, the British Army survived to rearm, refit & regroup, ready to fight another day..."*it was a very close-run thing!*"

Meanwhile, in the Mediterranean and Middle East, the Brits were fighting a multi-front war there, all on a shoe-string. While Italy had by now come into the war as Hitler's ally, the Italians had not done



The Italian Battleship "Vittorio Veneto" almost completed.

well. Plagued by poor intelligence & indifferent sailing, the Italians lost five capital ships in the only significant naval battle (Cape Matapan) of the Mediterranean War. In Egypt-Libya, the Italians, having mounted a large but lethargic invasion of Egypt, were then crushed by much smaller but better-handled British Empire forces in series of winter 1940-spring 1941 counter-attacks. Besides losing Eastern Libya, 130,000 Italians ended up as POW. At about the same time, Italian forces in Eastern Africa were completely crushed by much smaller Empire forces. Another quarter of a million Italians ended up "in the bag."

However, the British advantage was put at risk when, for political reasons, Empire forces were diverted to a lost-cause campaign in Greece. The re-

President's Message Continued from page 1

you are in prayer, to think of your brothers and sisters in uniform, for once again we have lost one. A tragic incident that reminds us of the dangers our Soldiers, Sailors and Air Men/Women face every day. RIP.

Stay well my friends. Remember that if you find yourself in a situation whereby you need some help during this COVID-19 "stay-at-home" era, please, don't be afraid to call and let us know that we can help you.

Edwin

Military Musing continued from page 2

sult was a predictable defeat, with the loss of a large part of four divisions committed. The troops lost included those that just might have been enough to blunt Erwin Rommel's advent to desert warfare. Instead, with the Germans now committed to an African Adventure, fighting in North Africa would now drag on until May 1943, when, finally, a quarter of a million Germans and Italians would end up in Allied POW stockades. Allied casualties, all in, ran to another quarter of a million

However, there is one more less evident dimension to the British intervention in Greece. For Germany, its own counter-intervention in the Balkans resulted in a five-week deferral of Operation Barbarossa; the invasion of Russia. Late, Barbarossa kicked off on 22 June and took the Wehrmacht to within 12 miles of the Kremlin in under five months of vicious fighting. But the six weeks lost in the Balkans meant the advent of winter in Russia, with the outcome there still in the balance. On 5 December, the German advance finally stalled, frozen solid. Assured that the Japanese were planning to take advantage of the European preoccupation in a European war, without going to war against the Russians, the Siberian Army was already on route to a winter war for which Germany simply was not ready, but the Russians were. Although not evident at the time, Winter 1941 marked the beginning of Nazi Germany's eclipse. Hitler was simply piling up too many enemies and too many dead along the way.

For Canada's Armed Forces, the early war years were marked by a parsimonious Mackenzie King Government that only grudgingly formed up and kitted out our growing forces with the kind of gear needed to win, not just fight a war. For the first two years, most of Canada's load was carried by our growing Navy and Airforce; painfully so for both in the Battle of the Atlantic, and, for the latter, in the skies over Britain & Western Europe. For much of the Army, the early war years were a hiatus. It's early bloodings were to be seen first in the December 1941 Hong Kong disaster, followed by an even costlier one at Dieppe the following summer. Then, as now, we just weren't ready; not Strong; not Secure; not fully Engaged. Not by a country mile, political "BNS" trumps all!

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Canadian military to take part in world's largest maritime exercise as navies struggle to deal with COVID-19

David Pugliese, Ottawa Citizen, 2020-05-08

The Canadian military plans to take part in the world's largest maritime exercise this summer even as the U.S. Navy, which is hosting the event, struggles to deal with coronavirus outbreaks that have sent two of its ships back to port.

There have also been COVID-19 outbreaks on French, Belgium and Taiwanese navy ships. There are COVID-19 cases among the crews of 26 U.S. Navy ships.

But that won't stop the U.S. from holding its Rim of the Pacific or RIMPAC exercise in August.

The Canadian Forces is planning to attend although military officials haven't outlined yet which Canadian ships and aircraft will take part.

"The Canadian Armed Forces remains committed to participating in the Rim of the Pacific Exercise 2020 in a significant way in order to maximize the unique training opportunities this biennial exercise provides as well as strengthen relationships with allies and partners in the Pacific," Department of National Defence spokesperson Jessica Lamirande said in an



Corporal Jay Naples. HMCS Regina (front) followed by HMCS Brandon, HMCS Nanaimo, Patrol Craft Training vessel (PCT) Cougar and PCT Wolf, sail in formation in the Strait of Georgia on Canada's west coast on April 14, 2020.

email.

She said Canadian military officials are in discussions with their U.S. counterparts and are "currently evaluating options to adapt our participation accordingly."



Your friends and colleagues of the United Services Institute of Nanaimo North Island are concerned and are standing by to help if you are in need or difficulty during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Please contact our President WO (Retd) Edwin Peeters at 250-751-2360 or by email at ejpeeters@shaw.ca if you need help.

And, one final current thought: watch the Federal Government **cut** Defence Spending because of the COVID-19 Pandemic... "sayonara... *Strong; Secure; Engaged!*" We just never learn! Butter beats bullets every time in Ottawa.

***"Igitur qui desiderat pacem,
praeparet bellum"***

Vegetius Rhenanus; 364-450
AD



The author of this column is Colonel (Retd) W.J. (Bill) McCullough, a Past President of our Institute and the former 16-year Chair of our Military & Security Committee. His columns are the product of his own experience, re-

search, midnight musing & wishful thinking.

Further Reading

While Waiting for the 2nd Wave of COVID-19 or the Advent COVID-20

- *The Role of the Militia in Today's Canadian Forces* (Sept 2011) by LCol (Retd) Jack English
- *Canadian Centre for Strategic Studies: Special Report on Defence Policy*: 20 June 2017
- *CDA: The Strategic Outlook for Canada: 2018 & Outwards*: Vimy Paper #36: 20 Feb 2018
- *Amateur Hour: The Interim Super Hornet Saga & the Perils of Prioritizing Politics Over Defence* (Jan 2018) by Richard Shimooka: Macdonald-Laurier Institute