

18 September 2019

Letter to the Editor

Why the U.K.'s brutal Brexit mess could pose an existential threat to Canada's shipbuilding plan (OPINION)

Dear Sir/Madam,

I regret to inform Ken Hansen that no, Canada did not decide to go forward with the BAE Global Combat Ship design (the British Type 26 frigate) for the Canadian Surface Combatant (CSC) project because of "*some misguided sense of loyalty to our common military lineage and historic economic ties with Britain*" but rather after a lengthy and very thorough procurement process that reflected Canadian, not British, requirements. To remind, the process started in 2015 with the pre-qualification of the warship design bidders and the subsequent announcement of the preferred design almost three-years later in 2018. The Canadian defence procurement process has input and oversight from PSPC, ISEDC and Treasury Board - not just the DND. All have a say in the final determination of the winning bidder and a procurement of this magnitude (the largest in Canadian history) simply must reflect *bona fide* Canadian requirements and not personal desires. This 'all of government' oversight has often been criticized for the length of time it takes, but it is designed to be thorough and reflect multiple issues, which include total project costs, as well as Industrial Technological Benefits (ITBs). Finally, under the National Shipbuilding Strategy (NSS) the ships will be built by Irving Shipyards in Halifax, NS – not the UK. Simply put, the reason the BAE Global Combat Ship design was chosen for the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) was because it is the best available baseline warship design adaptable to meet extant Canadian requirements within the assigned budget, and allow future growth through a multi-decade service life. Indeed, the final Canadian design of the CSC, developed in Canada will be owned by Canada, not the UK and built in Canada. Thus one wonders why Mr. Hansen asserts that the project needs to be reassessed, is "*untenable*" and "*is simply too expensive*".

It is important to note that Canada has different requirements than that of Britain, as the CSC will become Canada's sole class of major warships for a significant part of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Whereas, the British operate a much bigger and balanced fleet which in addition to their current frigates includes two aircraft carriers, six air defence destroyers, two amphibious transports, six nuclear-powered attack submarines, as well as supporting the national nuclear deterrent of four Vanguard-class nuclear ballistic missile submarines – none of which are inexpensive to acquire and operate and none of which represent a naval capability that Canada has decided to undertake. Canada is committed to operating a modest fleet of ocean-going warships that can perform a multitude of missions, including anti-submarine warfare (ASW) of which this specialized

capability must be built into the design. The RCN has never been able to afford the luxury of multiple fleets of ships tailored to specific missions and has always sought a common multi-purpose warship that includes an ASW capability. This the baseline Type 26 designed modified to meet exacting Canadian requirements delivers.

He knows better – shame on him.

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