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Standing Committee on National Defence
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
Canada, K1A 0A4

NAVAL ASSOCIATION OF CANADA SUPPLEMENTAL INPUT TO THE HOUSE OF COMMONS STANDING COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL DEFENCE

The following input is submitted as a follow-up to the Naval Association of Canada's presentations by Vice-Admiral (retired) Robertson and Commodore (retired) Sing to the Committee's hearing of Tuesday 18 October 2016.

Maritime Capability Gaps

At the conclusion of the 18 October session, the Committee Chair asked the NAC to provide its assessment of extant maritime capability gaps. While a seemingly simple request, a response is not at all simple.

There are numerous factors to consider. Only four will be mentioned here. Firstly, there is a doctrinal distinction in the military between capability (or the ability to perform a particular task) and capacity (the number of capabilities in question). In the case of navies and air forces, insufficient numbers of platforms can constitute a capability gap. Secondly, the concept of balance has many aspects. Balance is required on one hand between capability i.e. quality and capacity i.e. numbers. In the case of naval forces, balance is on another hand required on, below and above the seas. In the case of defence of Canada and North America, balance is also required between surveillance and response. Balance does not mean equal, and is as much about professional judgement as it is about science. Thirdly, the likelihood and the impact or consequence of a potential threat and the amount of funding likely to be available to insure against such threats colour the identification, categorization, prioritization and weighting of capability gaps and their possible solutions. Fourthly, it is important to distinguish between needs and desires, especially in regards to distinct defence, security and safety tasks and associated gaps, and their relative importance in a resource-limited world.

As set out in Admiral Robertson's opening statement, the NAC assesses that the maritime capability gaps that exist today will only be compounded by the significant capabilities that are likely to be gapped or lost in the decade to come at current Defence funding. The inadequate state of the expected future maritime force, as described in the next section, must be combined with the gaps of the current force in order to provide a complete view of the challenge facing Defence today.

The present capability gaps, the bulk of which relate, directly or indirectly, to the defence of Canada, include, but are not limited to (list is not prioritized):

- no ability to generate remote, wide-area, persistent, real-time undersea surveillance of Canadian waters and approaches;
- waning ability to generate focussed, local-area, 24/7, real-time undersea surveillance, at home and abroad;
- no ability to exercise sea control under the ice;
- waning ability of surface combatants to conduct effective undersea control;
- lost ability to independently provide adequate local air defence of naval ships deployed near or into harm's way, owing to the forced de-commissioning of old air defence destroyers;
- waning ability to be a meaningful NATO and US partner in a tense or crisis situation at sea;
- waning ability to provide meaningful leadership of allied naval operations in a tense or crisis situation;
- lost ability to independently support naval combatants deployed far from home base, be it in Canadian, international or far-way waters, owing to the forced de-commissioning of old underway replenishment ships;
- no ability to defend against ballistic missiles which could target North America, especially those which might be fired from submarines;
- lack of capacity to survey and/ or clear port approaches if threatened by mines;
- lost ability to conduct deep sea-bed diving and recovery operations (HMCS CORMORANT was retired in 1997);
- lost ability to conduct forward-looking, at-sea, defence-related research and experimentation (defence research vessel ENDEAVOUR was retired in 1999 and the last research vessel, QUEST, has just recently been retired);
- inadequate ability to operate in the littorals, especially in a threat environment abroad; and
- little ability to support operations ashore from the sea.

Strategic Assessment in Support of the Defence Policy Review

It is clear from Admiral Robertson's opening statement that there are significant capability gaps **still** to come, since the Naval Association of Canada assesses that at current budget levels, and without significant restructuring overall, the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) are unsustainable and that the maritime fighting fleets of surface combatants, submarines and maritime patrol aircraft will continue to decline over the coming 15 years to leave the country without submarines or patrol aircraft and fewer surface combatants than we have today. Any force that sees the termination of submarines or patrol aircraft, both of which provide crucial capabilities, capabilities that are more important than those on the list of gaps above, while also reducing overall capacity would be smaller and unbalanced to a

degree that it would not be able to defend Canada at home or defend our interests abroad.

The NAC argues that the evolving strategic environment requires increased investment in defence to secure governments' enduring expectations of defence outcomes, rather than less. In addition to securing Canada's defence, the NAC believes there is no better insurance against strategic risk and unforeseeable global shocks than modern, balanced, multi-purpose, flexible and combat-capable maritime forces.

The NAC assesses that the priority for any Defence policy must be to maintain the confidence of Canadians in the protection of the country, and the confidence of our American allies in our contribution to continental defence. Consequently, maintaining the naval and air forces that safeguard our continental approaches above, on and under our three surrounding oceans is crucial.

The NAC consequently recommends that, while there needs to be an increase in defence spending, if the defence budget does not increase there must be a transfer of resources within Defence to fund the capital acquisitions necessary to recapitalize the naval and air force fighting fleets that defend Canada and contribute to North American defence, especially the surface combatants, submarines and patrol aircraft. The Naval Association further notes that what must be spent to defend Canada and contribute to the defence of North America will also serve the country well abroad, since for maritime forces there is little difference - strategically, operationally or tactically- between operating at home or on the far side of the world.

Fleet Renewal

Fleet renewal will not be possible without the measures set out above. Those measures, coupled with pursuance of the National Shipbuilding Strategy (NSS) as the most assured 21st century approach for recapitalizing the fleet on a sustainable ongoing basis, would enable the Government to:

- Continue to maintain the combat capabilities of the modernized *Halifax*-class frigates, especially, but not exclusively, in undersea warfare;
- Continue the procurement of the *Queenston*-class Joint Support Ships, the *Harry DeWolf*-class Arctic and Offshore Patrol Ships and the Canadian Surface Combatants;
- Extend the life of the *Victoria*-class submarines into the mid-2030s as a bridge towards an eventual submarine replacement;
- Extend the life of the *Kingston*-class Coastal Defence ships so as to retain much needed fleet capacity for domestic and continental security missions, especially when the RCN undergoes the transition from the modernized *Halifax*-class frigates to the Canadian Surface Combatants from the mid-2020s through the mid-2030s; and
- Fund the recapitalization of the *Aurora* Maritime Patrol aircraft, the *Kingston*-class coastal defence vessels and the *Victoria*-class submarines.

With work ongoing to procure the Canadian Surface Combatants, the most important next step, necessary for the ongoing maintenance of a balanced, combat-capable fleet over the coming decades is the life extension of the *Victoria*-class submarines.

As always, the Government should continue to investigate innovative means to deliver essential and emerging naval defence and security capabilities in a timely and cost efficient manner.

Maritime Force Structure

Governments have repeatedly responded to international events by ordering a naval task group to deploy and contribute to international peace and security missions, while the fleet at home secured our sovereignty. Looking forward, a naval task group should consist of up to five combatants (surface and sub-surface) and one combat support ship, and requisite maritime aircraft.

So that future Governments will continue to be able to make the meaningful contributions expected of Canada in times of tension, crisis or war, the Naval Association of Canada believes it is in the national interest to acquire and maintain a modern, balanced, multi-purpose, flexible, combat-capable, maritime fleet consisting of, as a minimum:

- 16 surface combatants;
- 4 sub-surface combatants (i.e. submarines);
- 4 combat support ships (i.e. underway replenishment ships);
- 28 maritime helicopters;
- 16 maritime patrol aircraft;
- 12 coastal patrol ships, with mine countermeasure capabilities; and
- 6 Arctic and offshore patrol ships.

Such a force structure is predicated on numerous factors, including, but not limited to, the nature of the future security environment, which remains difficult to predict.

The NAC appreciates once again the opportunity it was afforded by the Committee to contribute to this most important review of defence policy.

Yours Aye,



Jim Carruthers
President
Naval Association of Canada