



Alliances, Coalitions, and the RCN

Canadian defence policy and its global posture has long centred on cooperation with like-minded states. Since the end of the Second World War, its commitment to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has been at the heart of this policy. In North America, Canada's defence partnership with the US has also led to its participation in the North American Air (later Aerospace) Defence Command (NORAD), a binational command focusing on the defence of North America. Both of these organizations call upon the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) to work in close collaboration with allied navies and practice interoperability.

NATO was born in 1949 as the Cold War developed between the West and the Soviet bloc. Canada was one of the original 12 signatories of the North Atlantic Treaty, also known as the Washington Treaty. Now, 32 countries are members of NATO, and the alliance remains a central component of Canada's global defence policy. At the core of the alliance is Article 5 of the NATO Treaty, which summarizes the concept of collective defence that is the basis of the alliance:

Article 5

The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them, in exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defence recognised by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area.

As a result of this provision for collective defence, members of NATO are required to maintain a capability to both defend themselves and contribute to the defence of fellow member states. As Article 3 outlines, "In order more effectively to achieve the objectives of this Treaty, the Parties, separately and jointly, by means of continuous and effective self-help and mutual aid, will maintain and develop their individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack."

The RCN has long assumed a role in NATO's maritime forces. Northwood, Britain, holds the headquarters of Allied Maritime Command (HQ MARCOM), and there are numerous maritime components in the alliance. Indeed, in addition to the NATO Shipping Centre, there are two MARCOM Subordinate Commands (NATO Maritime Air Command (COMMARAIR) and NATO Submarine Command (COMSUBNATO)), as well as four Standing NATO Maritime Groups (Standing NATO Maritime Group 1 (SNMG1), Standing NATO Maritime Group 2 (SNMG2), Standing NATO Mine Countermeasures Group 1 (SNMCMG1), and Standing NATO Mine Countermeasures Group 2 (SNMCMG2)). These four Standing NATO Maritime Groups or Standing Naval Forces (SNF) ensure that NATO maintains a constant naval presence and capability, and together they constitute the central component of the alliance's Very High

Readiness Joint Task Force (Maritime). In addition to deterring hostile activities or attacks in the North Atlantic, they are also intended to maintain freedom of navigation and freedom of the seas in international waters.

Initially called Standing Naval Force Atlantic (STANAVFORLANT) until 2005, SNMG1 is a multinational force aimed to deter hostilities in the North Atlantic. Usually comprising between four and six frigates and destroyers, it offers an instantaneous response capability, which it hones through training exercises, interactions with member navies, and operational deployments that seek to retain high interoperability, readiness, and war-fighting abilities. Vessels of the RCN are recurring participants in this force. Indeed, its frigates participate on a rotational basis, engaging in operational taskings and exercises in the NATO Maritime Command's areas of responsibility. For instance, RCN frigates are regularly deployed as part of Operation *Reassurance*, NATO's regional deterrence and assurance operation, and have served as the flagship for the SNMG1's command team.

Meanwhile, SNMG2, initially called Standing Naval Force Mediterranean (STANAVFORMED) until 2005, focuses on operations in the Mediterranean (although it also deploys farther south). It, too, is typically composed of between four and six destroyers and frigates. In that theatre of operations, SNMG2 has supported NATO's efforts to halt the movement of terrorists as well as their narcotics and weapons. Other notable deployments include Operation *Allied Protecteur* in 2009, which sought to defend vessels of the World Food Program against pirates off Somalia, as well as Operation *Ocean Shield* starting in 2009, which was an anti-piracy operation in the Gulf of Aden. NATO's remaining two standing naval forces (SNMCMG1 and SNMCMG2) are immediate reaction groups focusing on mine countermeasures. While SNMCMG1 operates in the Atlantic, SNMCMG2 operates in the Mediterranean. NATO moreover has COMSUBNATO, a dedicated submarine command that is responsible for all submarines assigned in support of NATO exercises and operations, including those from NATO member states and non-NATO partner states.

The second formal defence arrangement in which Canada is a member is NORAD. Formed in 1958 in the midst of the Cold War in response to concerns that Soviet bombers and missiles could strike the North American continent, the Canada-US binational command predominantly focuses on the space and air arenas. While it did not historically include the maritime approaches to the continent, changes to the agreement in 2006 expanded NORAD's mission to include maritime warning. Since its mission in the maritime arena is warning, not control, control and surveillance remain the responsibility of the individual national commands and are only bilaterally coordinated if absolutely necessary. As such, NORAD's current maritime mission entails gathering, processing, evaluating, and disseminating information regarding the maritime areas of the US and Canada, to enable the national agencies tasked with maritime defence to identify threats and the appropriate responses to them.

NATO and NORAD comprise the only two formal defence alliances (or arrangements) in which Canada is a member. However, Canada has been internationally active in other defence or security operations unrelated to formal alliances. For instance, the United Nations (UN) has, since its post-Second World War formation, been central to Canada's foreign policy. While the UN is premised on the concept of collective security, and is not a formal defence alliance, the UN Security Council (SC) has frequently passed decisions that have resulted in Canadian Armed Forces participation

and missions. Some of these missions have involved maritime forces. For instance, Canada participated in the UN-authorized force tasked with removing Iraqi forces following their 1990 invasion of Kuwait. HMCS *Terra Nova* and HMCS *Athabaskan* similarly participated in Operation *Friction* during the Gulf War to aid in the enforcement of the UN's trade blockade against Iraq, during which the HMCS *Protecteur* supply vessel provided at-sea medical services, command/control, and underway replenishment. There have also been several instances of NATO forces undertaking UN-authorized missions. For example, STANAVFORMED (now SNMG2) engaged in patrols off the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s in support of a UN SC resolution to prevent the transportation of weapons to the conflict in Bosnia, with Canada contributing three vessels to the so-called Operation *Maritime Guard*. Following 9/11, the UN's authorization of naval, air, and land operations against Afghanistan led Canada to contribute five vessels (as well as ground and air forces) to Operation *Apollo* to counter terrorism in the Persian Gulf. Then, in 2011, vessels from NATO SNMG2 and SNMCMG2, accompanied by other maritime air and naval assets from NATO members, participated in Operation *Unified Protector*. That deployment was part of a UN SC-authorized operation to support the Libyan population during the Libyan Civil War by curbing the transport of weapons into the country. The RCN's participation in UN-authorized naval missions has endured, as Canadian frigates and maritime patrol aircraft, as well as a submarine and the MV *Asterix* supply vessel, have engaged in Operation *Neon*, enforcing the UN's sanctions against North Korea.

The RCN has also undertaken international naval operations as part of "coalitions of the willing." Specifically, the RCN has regularly participated in Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) operations. Headquartered in Bahrain, CMF is a voluntary partnership founded by the US following 9/11 that is aimed to conduct maritime counter-terrorism operations as part of Operation *Enduring Freedom*. Composed of three multinational task forces with distinct focuses and mandates (namely, CTF 150, focused on counter-smuggling and counter-terrorism operations; CTF 151, with a counter-piracy mandate; and CTF 152, concentrating on maritime security), the CMF has progressively grown to also include broader threats to maritime security. CTF 150 specifically has welcomed the involvement of numerous nations, including Canada, Australia, Denmark, Germany, France, Italy, New Zealand, the Netherlands, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Spain, the US, and the UK. Covering the Gulf of Aden, Gulf of Oman, Indian Ocean, and Red Sea (excluding the Arabian Gulf, which is the jurisdiction of CTF 152), CTF 150 is thus responsible for a vast area of over two million square miles. Included in this vast territory are integral shipping lanes and three choke points in which vessels are particularly vulnerable, namely Bab El Mandeb, the Strait of Hormuz, and the Suez Canal. Since 2012, Operation *Artemis* has been Canada's contribution to CTF 150, with Canada frequently assuming command under the task force's rotating system of command.

Though not in itself a defence alliance, Canada's participation in the Five Eyes is a further involvement utilizing military capabilities and assets. An intelligence alliance composed of the US, UK, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada, the Five Eyes seeks to gather intelligence from the five states and disseminate that intelligence within the group in order to develop mutual understanding of the threats stemming from non-state and state actors. This intelligence can include geospatial intelligence (analyzing data and images respecting a particular location), human intelligence (interpersonal contacts), defence intelligence (regarding the assets and capabilities of foreign militaries or hostile entities), and signals intelligence (such as the electronic systems and signals utilized by foreign targets, like their radars, weapons systems, and communication suites).

Given that most of the world's population is concentrated around its oceans and maritime spaces, it is inevitable that navies will continue to assume a critical role in addressing conflicts and crises in the future. Recent geostrategic tensions and international conflicts make it exceedingly likely that the RCN will continue to deploy internationally in response to maritime crises and threats. It will thus continue to dispatch its vessels and personnel on behalf of the UN, NATO, and the Government of Canada, in addition to as a component of broader, multinational coalitions.

