

Take over the North Atlantic

crisis, a Marine Amphibious Brigade from the eastern US is assigned to be deployed to defend the island. Clearly, there is considerable potential for Canada to take over much of the US defence function in Iceland.

The Icelanders, and the Scandinavian states, have been expressing increasing concern over the prospect of super-power rivalry spreading into the Nordic area. Therefore, it could also be suggested that a Canadian defence force might seem less intimidating than a US one to the people of Iceland. Not only is Canada "non-threatening," but as a country we share the Icelandic appreciation of the importance of national identity and have also experienced the fear of cultural assimilation in our relationship with the Americans.

Canadian surveillance

In specific defence roles, a Canadian squadron of CF-18s could replace the American Eagles, and Canadian Aurora aircraft could take over the submarine surveillance mission of the US Orions. It would be a logical next step to have Canadian-operated AWACs rotating among Iceland, Greenland and the Canadian Arctic. This would have the additional advantage of contributing to the defence and sovereignty protection of our northern regions. In terms of the land defence of Iceland, a compensatory commitment of Canadian troops would effectively release the Marines for duties in areas where the US is experiencing critical shortfalls in capability. Rapidly deployable forces, based in Canada and trained under northern conditions, could go far to ensure that Iceland would not be denied to the allied cause in time of war. Additional Canadian troops should also be assigned to the defence of key points in Greenland under similar circumstances. Such commitments would be within Canadian stra-

tegic reach, logistically, economically, and in terms of manpower. Moreover, our forces would be charged with the northern and maritime roles at which they excel and would be serving a vital NATO function.

No more tokenism

However, as credible as the strategic defence of the sea lanes to Europe and the defence of Iceland may be, these roles lack the essence of commitment that Canadian troops on the central front represent to the Europeans. Nevertheless, when Canadian lives are being put on the line we are justified in questioning whether Canada really has to maintain what are essentially token forces in continental Europe in order to be recognized as a credible power by our NATO allies. In strict political terms, Europe lies within sight of Canada across the Davis Strait in Greenland. Beyond Greenland, Iceland holds the pivotal position at the juncture of Arctic and mid-Atlantic ocean strategy. From Iceland it is the same distance again to the Europe most Canadians identify with when considering Canada's role in NATO. However, within the overall context of Canada's military capabilities, strategic interests, and foreign policy objectives, this focus on the European mainland is a mistaken one. It is time to redefine Canada's NATO role in order better to reflect the geostrategic significance of the European Atlantic islands and the seas that lie between them. Within this vast area there are many significant military roles that Canada would be particularly well suited to perform. In short, such an undertaking would be a credible NATO role for Canada, a legitimate European assignment for our forces, and a distinctive demonstration of our foreign and security policy interests as a northern power. □



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