

Canadian forces in Germany. Moreover, the present deployment of our forces, as an appendage to the greater US presence in southern Germany, does not even give Canada the satisfaction of having an explicit role to play in NATO defence policy — something which, if nothing else, the commitment to Norway did achieve. What is required, therefore, is some form of Canadian participation in NATO which will give Canada a clearly recognizable and “meaningful” role in the alliance. Fortunately, both papers present a way to build towards a sound Canadian defence posture. Such a program would recognize the essential requirement of a Canadian presence in NATO, and yet would enable Canada to withdraw its land forces from continental Europe. Within the bounds of the needs/resources paradigm, Canada’s defence role should reflect the nation’s particular strengths and, at the same time, satisfy our NATO partners that we are committed to the principle of collective defence.

### Defend the sea lanes

In recognition of the importance of the sea lanes to Canadian trade and security, both the Conservatives and the NDP propose to build up Canada’s maritime forces. Mr. Beatty states, “It is essential . . . that the vital sea lanes be maintained in order to resupply and reinforce Western Europe.” In turn, Mr. Blackburn acknowledges that, “an updated Canadian navy in our home waters could help protect the sea lanes to Europe.” Clearly, somewhere within this correlation lies the basis for a defence posture which will find support across a broad spectrum of political opinion in Canada. It also holds the key to assuaging the concerns of a Europe wary of any hint of a progressive reduction in the North American commitment to collective security.

Many defence commentators have presented a case for a greater maritime role for Canada within the NATO alliance. However, these arguments tend to be deficient in that they either propose to leave Canada’s ground commitments in Europe intact, or they consider the maritime role to be a sufficient NATO contribution in itself. Nowhere is it clear, however, that Canada’s best interests would be served by either scenario. In the first case, commitments would continue to strain capabilities; the second option offers nothing to persuade the European allies that Canada was not withdrawing to a sort of isolationist position, with all the implications that might have for US policy. Instead, the Canadian goal should be to define its defence commitments and capabilities in terms of the credibility of its contribution to the Western security system. An assessment of the geostrategic circumstances, which must override all our policy considerations, suggests that an enhanced naval capability, together with the development of strategically mobile forces, based in Canada, would be the most satisfactory vehicles to bolster Canada’s commitment to NATO in the eyes of our allies. At the same time, such an approach would satisfy the broadest range of Canadian interests.

### Canada can count

It is axiomatic that control of the Atlantic sea lanes is vital to the security of Western Europe and the entire NATO alliance. Undoubtedly, the protection of high-value shipping, replenishing allied forces, would be the most critical of all military operations within the NATO alliance in the first few weeks of a conventional war in Europe. It would be hard to

find a more useful role for Canada. Canada’s recognized expertise in anti-submarine warfare and convoy escort duties should be the basis for a greater role for Canada in the defence of this crucial supply route. As a first step, Canada should acquire the capacity to deny control of the northwest quadrant of the Atlantic to enemy forces. In essence, in time of war, the Atlantic between North America and Iceland should become a “Canadian Lake.” This would require an augmented anti-submarine warfare capacity, on the surface, beneath the sea and in the air. In conjunction with these measures, an advanced minesweeping capability should also be developed. These are traditional maritime defence roles for Canada and are in keeping with a general direction outlined in both policy papers to modernize the navy.

### Iceland crucial

The key to any successful strategy of sea-denial or sea-control in the Atlantic is Iceland. Its strategic location is as important to NATO resupply lines as it would be to Soviet attempts to interdict them. In a broader conventional war scenario, control of Icelandic airspace would also be vital to the protection of North America from enemy attack. It is not surprising, therefore, that Iceland figures prominently in the currently popular novel by Tom Clancy, *Red Storm Rising*. In the book, the Soviet Union occupies Iceland in the opening days of World War III. The superficiality of Clancy’s plot is less important than the implications of such a move in the event of a real conventional war in Europe. Historically, the strategic significance of Iceland has been recognized. The Germans had a plan to occupy Iceland in World War II; the British, with Canadian participation, secured it instead for the allies. The Americans subsequently took over from the British and under the terms of a bilateral agreement entered into in 1951, and renewed in 1974, remain Iceland’s protector today.

A full-blown Soviet invasion of Iceland is admittedly an unlikely eventuality. Nevertheless, the Soviets have many options open to them to severely compromise NATO’s position there. For example, Iceland is extremely vulnerable to the kind of sabotage that Soviet SPETZNAZ forces could deliver. Any interruption of the surveillance-gathering functions centered on Iceland would have profound implications in a general war. It would be an understatement to say that a Soviet occupation of the island would be a strategic disaster for the Western alliance.

### US presence

The current US presence in Iceland consists almost entirely of service personnel involved with managing the surveillance functions associated with the NATO infrastructure on the island. These include P-3 Orion anti-submarine reconnaissance aircraft operating out of the NATO base at Keflavik, as well as the land terminals for the submarine detection systems (SOSUS) the US uses to track Soviet submarines in the North Atlantic. In addition, local air defence and long-range interception functions are carried out by a squadron of eighteen F-15 Eagle fighter-interceptors. Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) aircraft deploy on a rotational basis to provide advance notice of Soviet aircraft approaching Iceland’s Military Air Defence Identification Zone (MADIZ). There is no permanent land defence force stationed in Iceland which would be capable of repelling an invasion by conventional forces. In the event of a