

Canada-United States Defence Relations

Defence relations between Canada and the United States did not generally parallel the close and intimate links which two centuries of co-inhabiting the continent achieved in other areas. The comrades in arms ties which evolved from World War I began the process but it was really only when events during the 1930's in Europe and the Far East imposed once again the threat of war that we began to consider closer defence co-operation. As a result Prime Minister Mackenzie King and President Franklin Roosevelt met in 1940 in Ogdensburg, New York, and subsequently issued the Ogdensburg Declaration which established the Permanent Joint Board on Defence (PJBD) as an advisory group responsible for coordinating defence of the northern part of the continent between our two countries. A further meeting in 1941 between the two heads of government produced the Hyde Park Declaration on co-operation in war production.

The PJBD still exists today and continues to serve as a senior advisory group. It has been involved in one way or another with every major element in the joint North America defence infrastructure since the late 1940's. In 1946 it was supplemented through the formation of the Canada-United States Military Cooperation Committee (MCC) which serves as the principal agency for joint defence planning.

Paralleling the coordination of activity achieved through the PJBD and the MCC have been a series of agreements and arrangements known collectively as the Defence Development and Defence Production Sharing Agreements which have had the effect of integrating Canada into the broader North American defence industrial base. In its simplest terms, this means that Canadian and U.S. defence industries are able to compete for defence contracts more or less on equal terms within the North America-wide market. This has enabled Canada, despite her much smaller population, to maintain defence expertise within Canadian industry which might otherwise have been lost.

To set the stage for a brief elaboration of Canada's present and future defence interests, it is worth recalling that Canada has two contractual defence obligations — the North American Aerospace Defence Command (NORAD) and the North Atlantic Alliance Organization (NATO).

NATO

With regard to NATO, the principal task facing us is to improve the capability and availability of Canadian forces committed to Europe. The principal obligations we have accepted are to provide a Canadian Air-Sea Transportable Brigade Group (CAST) committed to the defence of Norway in time of crisis, a mechanized brigade based in Lahr and combat forces capable of rapid deployment to Europe in response to a crisis. Canada also bases three fighter squadrons at Baden-Soellingen and two rapid reaction fighter squadrons have been designated for deployment to Canadian Forces Europe in an emergency.

The challenge facing Canada over the next few years will be to move forward with the increases in personnel and modernization of equipment required to bring our forces in Europe up to full readiness while at the same time ensuring that defence expenditures are consistent with the government's plans to reduce the deficit. Because of the strain that contributions to NATO imposed on U.S. defence resources, Canada's contribution to NATO is as important to the United States as our defence cooperation in North America.