

Current tasks of MARCOM

(a) The description of tasks.

Defence in the 70s did not discuss Canada's maritime activities or requirements in terms of military tasks. An exact list of tasks could be elaborated only once the main lines of defence policy had been decided and laid down. After 1971, the Canadian government identified fifty-five major tasks for the armed forces, some of which required contributions from all elements — land, sea, air, communications and others — whereas the remainder tended to be the responsibility of one particular service. A very recent revision in fact lists fifty-six operational and eleven miscellaneous tasks. The new document appears as appendix A. The addition is "to prevent the outbreak or spread of hostilities in areas of tension" (task 14.01). Otherwise, the wording of the tasks has remained essentially unchanged from the earlier version which the sub-committee received.

The relationships between the 1971 defence commitments and the later military tasks are evident and provide a useful framework for judging present performance against the government's earlier statements and intentions. Appendix B describes the relationships between commitments and tasks in chart form.

(b) Problems of form.

It is disturbing to the sub-committee that the list of tasks has remained classified until recently. This is the first parliamentary report on defence to benefit from knowing what the tasks are. Large sums have been voted by Parliament for defence in recent years, yet until now Parliament has never had a precise idea what those dollars were intended to accomplish. Now that the catalogue of tasks has been released it is perhaps even more disturbing to discover an undifferentiated list which sets no order of importance or priority among the various duties. Equal emphasis is given, for example, to providing "a Canadian presence abroad by operational, informal and formal visits in foreign countries" (4:09), locating and neutralizing "mines laid in Canadian waters" (9:01) and supporting "community activities such as St. John's Ambulance, Red Cross and recreational programs" (6:02). Moreover, the mere identification of tasks is no guarantee that they will be translated into action. As the document received by the sub-committee states, "The existence of a task does not necessarily mean that the department has been able to assign resources to the task."

To be useful, the document should be more than a list that provides no performance criteria; no description of the equipment and other resources allocated to, or available for, the performance of tasks; and little indication of divisions of responsibility among government departments. It should, for example, specify the lead department in cases such as responding to fishing violations, which involve other government agencies besides the Department of National Defence. It should describe available military resources, as well as the military support capabilities of other government departments. The absence of such information makes it difficult to judge whether or not the department can, in fact, carry out its assigned tasks.

As a final comment on form, it should be noted that the tasks are not organized in a way which easily permits MARCOM to take into account, when estab-