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Tri-Command Study Report

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Canada Command
Commandement Canada

Introduction

This report summarizes the findings and recommendations of a study to investigate future roles, missions, and relationships among North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD), United States Northern Command (USNORTHCOM), and Canada Command (Canada COM), referred to as the Tri-Command Study.¹ It documents the rationale for and purpose of the study, findings, major study products, and way ahead.

Background

The *Canada-United States (CANUS) Basic Defense Document (BDD)*, signed by Canada's Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS) and the US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), requires the Commanders of NORAD, USNORTHCOM, and Canada COM to establish closer relationships with each other and with supporting agencies to ensure a timely and coordinated response to defense and security challenges to Canada and the United States. During one of their meetings, the CDS and CJCS requested the Commanders of NORAD, USNORTHCOM, and Canada Command to develop options for making their Commands' relationships even better.

¹ A PDF copy of the official Tri-Command Report, also known as the *Framework for Enhanced Military Cooperation among North American Aerospace Defense Command, United States Northern Command, and Canada Command*, is available at: <http://www.canadacom.forces.gc.ca/par-par/canus-caneu/frm-frm-eng.asp>

Commander NORAD and USNORTHCOM then formally proposed the study to the CDS, CJCS, and Commander Canada COM, along with the recommendation to form a general/flag officer Senior Steering Group (SSG) to provide oversight of the study effort. The first meeting of the Tri-Command Study Working Group took place in November 2007. The study's intent was to examine opportunities to accomplish the command missions in a more seamless fashion, and the desired *end state* was to increase North American defense and security while enhancing the valued relationship between Canada and the United States.

In December 2007, the SSG directed a phased approach to the study with the first phase focusing on the operational level military-to-military relationships. Phase 2 proposed examining longer term issues and concepts beyond the Commanders' authorities and which might require the agreement of and direction from the two governments. The SSG also directed the development of a document that defined tri-command operational procedures and concepts illustrative of current operations and opportunities for improvement.

Findings

USNORTHCOM and Canada COM are national commands reporting to their respective governments while NORAD is a bi-national command reporting to both governments. The Commands have complementary missions and must work closely together to meet their individual and collective responsibilities for the defense and security of North America. NORAD has mission responsibilities in the aerospace and maritime domains while the national commands have responsibilities in the air, land, and maritime domains, plus extensive responsibilities to support civil authorities when directed. Unity of effort, situational awareness, and coordination with a variety of mission partners are important to all commands. Because both the U.S. and Canada desire to retain unilateral response options to air threats, there is an inherent overlap of responsibilities, authorities, and capabilities between the national commands and NORAD. This overlap requires careful coordination of efforts during planning and execution.

The study examined a number of potential operational issues, including information sharing, intelligence issues, situational awareness, command relationships, planning, coordination with mission partners, cross border operations, training and education, and information/cyber operations. The study identified information sharing and command relationships as the two most critical operational issues.

Sharing information is a critical enabler for effective operations between and among NORAD, USNORTHCOM, and Canada COM. The ability to effectively share information results in enhanced situational awareness and improved operational coordination. It also has the potential to enhance planning and the ability to respond to crises.. Individually, the Commands share information effectively with subordinate organizations and their respective domestic mission partners. However, information flow between and among the Commands has been inhibited by technical, policy, and legal challenges. The commands focused on several initiatives to mitigate these impediments including the development of a tri-command information-sharing directive that contains the basics of information sharing processes and procedures among the Commands.

The command relationships issue addresses potential seams between NORAD and the two national commands for security operations. For example, a number of recent Canadian security events, such as the 2010 Vancouver Olympic and Paralympic Games have had two supported military commands

– Canada Command and NORAD. These arrangements could have had the potential for confusion about specific responsibilities, particularly with non-military mission partners without the ability for the three commands to refine their relationship. The Commands are continuing to clarify command and control issues to ensure that military support is provided in the most effective and efficient manner.

The study also identified a number of other concepts, beyond the scope of this paper, to contribute to the desired end state. These concepts dealing with cooperation, coordination, and organizational responsibilities have a significant national political-military component extending beyond the Commands, and range the spectrum of bi-national and bilateral cooperation. Although presented as discrete concepts, individual elements of each could be included in some or all of the others. Each concept could also include a bi-national interagency component that could be scalable to the particular concept. The concepts, which have yet to be examined in depth, will be examined as part of a follow-on initiative aimed at further improving North American Defence and Security.

Products

The Tri-Command Study developed several products which will help improve command relationships.

Framework for Enhanced Military Cooperation among NORAD, USNORTHCOM, and Canada COM—the *Framework* describes how the three Commands operate and interact to achieve mission goals. It describes fundamental relationships and delineates existing command responsibilities concerning mutual support, interface, and cooperation. It supports the integration and synchronization of activities and operations when and where appropriate. This document will evolve as the roles, missions, and relationships of the Commands adjust to a dynamic and uncertain security environment. While the *Framework* deals primarily with current operational level military-to-military operations and issues, it also identifies future challenges and emerging issues that may require resolution at a more strategic level. It identifies seams, gaps, and overlaps; points out areas where ambiguity exists; and identifies other areas where the Commands may require additional clarification.

Tri-Command Study Action Plan—the *Action Plan* served as a guide to implement the Commanders' decisions and guidance concerning tri-command initiatives. The *Plan* broke each of the recommendations into individual action items for completion in the near, mid, and longer term. Where resolution of the action items exceeds the Commanders' authority, preliminary work will commence within the Commands and end as part of Phase 2 under a different governance structure.

Tri-Command Communications Strategy—the communications strategy provides overarching guidance to NORAD, USNORTHCOM, and Canada COM to collaborate, coordinate and synchronize all communications regarding tri-command activities. The strategy helps inform a wide audience on tri-command relationships and the ongoing work to strengthen the defense and security of North America.

Tri Command Vision—the *Vision* outlines the Commanders' views of future cooperation among the Commands. It includes an overall vision statement and sets strategic goals which identify where NORAD, USNORTHCOM, and Canada COM will work together to take advantage of the

opportunities ahead. Achieving the strategic goals will strengthen our armed forces' ability to act in a timely and coordinated fashion, consistent with each nation's interests and sovereignty.

Tri-Command Strategy—the Strategy will link the present to the future by describing how the commands intend to achieve the strategic goals developed in the Vision.

Way Ahead

The initial phase of the Study is complete: the CDS and CJCS have approved moving to Phase 2 and the Office of the Secretary of Defense and Assistant Deputy Minister (Policy) will lead the effort. While the Commands continue to close out items (within the Commanders' purview) listed on the action plans, newly identified initiatives will address whole of government topics such as interagency relationships, cyber, and Arctic issues. The world's closest international military alliance, supporting the strongest economic, political, and cultural alliance, continually strives to improve each day.