

For Immediate Distribution
Thursday, February 21, 2002

NEWS RELEASE

***Critical Choices Necessary for Canada to be Part of
Military and Diplomatic Coalitions***

Montreal - In the "new world disorder," Canada needs an integrated foreign and defence strategy that joins ends and means and focuses on the critical priorities of our national interest, says a study released today by the Institute for Research on Public Policy (IRPP).

In "Canada and Military Coalitions: Where, How and With Whom?" Professor Douglas L. Bland of Queen's University addresses Canada's present and future military capabilities and what the realities of those capabilities imply for a foreign policy based on acting through coalitions.

Critical issues examined in the IRPP study include:

- The erosion of American trust in Canada's actual military capacity;
- The risks of others making decisions in which Canada has no say;
- The determination of the national interest with respect to coalitions;
- The huge gap between Pearson era military capacity and present capabilities;
- The difference between intended military capabilities and reality on the ground;
- Weak mandates and uncertain international command;
- The relationship between "light and lethal" force plans within NDHQ and broad foreign policy goals; and
- The risk to Canada of letting coalition partners down.

The IRPP paper points out that Canada's ability to play an effective and responsible role in international affairs has diminished substantially between the 1956 peacekeeping mission in the Suez and the 1996 mission failure in Zaire. This decline is attributed to several factors including the continuous erosion of the "hard assets" essential to the military capabilities that support Canadian foreign policy.

These issues and questions, though critically important before the terrorist attacks on North America, ought to be the central concern of government. In the United States, the growing apprehension that terrorist attacks will increase in number and ferocity has changed fundamental assumptions about the Canada-United States defence and security relationship. Canada faces no greater foreign and defence policy challenge than finding an appropriate and credible way to reassure the U.S. that Canada can prevent any attack on the United States through Canadian territory. Failure to do so could lead to a blockaded border and even covert operations by the U.S. in Canada to protect American interests.

Before that assurance can be given, however, Canadians must decide whether they are willing to make the sacrifices necessary to rebuild the military and diplomatic capabilities Canada needs to regain its rightful place in international affairs and in the defence of North America, says Bland.

Although Canada could abdicate, leaving international responsibilities to others, it would then risk sliding out of sight in international affairs. On the other hand, if Canada is to regain or even maintain its ability to further Canadian interests by acting through coalitions, then political leaders must address key decisions aimed at this purpose.

Designing a Canadian foreign policy strategy centred on the idea of achieving Canadian goals through armed and diplomatic coalitions must involve Parliament, political leaders, military officers and officials from many departments and agencies of the Canadian government. Bland suggests that the agenda ought to include discussions and decisions related to national interests; where, when and with whom Canada would act; the “machinery of government” designed to plan and control such enterprises; the joining of ends and means; and the building of public support.

Coalitions can be the most productive means for explaining, guarding and realizing Canada’s national interests. “The challenge, therefore, is to collect our national thoughts; construct a national consensus on Canada’s place in the world to guide politicians, military officers, and officials; and then build the machinery of government and the soft and hard assets that will turn policy visions into policy outcomes,” concludes Bland.

“Canada and Military Coalitions: Where, How and With Whom?” is the first paper to be published in the IRPP’s *National Security and Interoperability* series, undertaken in June of 2001. This series follows upon the November 2000 Conference “Challenges to Governance: Military Interventions Abroad and Consensus at Home” held by the IRPP in Montreal. The paper is now available on the IRPP website at <http://www.irpp.org> – To access the document, simply click on the “What’s New” icon on the homepage.

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