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NEWS RELEASE

Effective Peacekeeping by Canadian Forces Can Be Diminished by Uncertainty about Support from Home

New IRPP Study Advocates more Multinational Training, Interagency Coordination, Joint Doctrine Development and Enhanced Clarity Between Canada's Government and Soldiers in the Field

Montreal – Divergent national approaches observed in recent multinational peace operations have had a negative effect on how international forces, including Canadians, are perceived. And this risks local groups losing confidence in the international effort, which could make them vulnerable once again to the forces that ignited the conflict. "Once this happens, the prospect of a sustainable peace becomes more uncertain and the task of the interventionists becomes increasingly difficult," says Professor Ann M. Fitz-Gerald in a study released today by the Institute for Research on Public Policy (IRPP).

The study, entitled "Multinational Land Force Interoperability: Meeting the Challenge of Different Cultural Backgrounds in Chapter VI Peace Support Operations," examines the realities and uncertainties of current conflict landscapes and the challenges posed to military interventionist forces deployed to these areas.

The author, a Canadian Associate Professor at the Department of Defence Management and Security Analysis of Cranfield University (United Kingdom), focuses on the need to gain the trust and co-operation of local populations, something that can only be done by providing credible security. However, Fitz-Gerald's research indicates that "disparate national approaches observed in recent multinational peace support operations have had an adverse effect on the way in which the international military forces are perceived, due to a failure to build sufficient confidence measures at the grass roots level of society."

Fitz-Gerald says that "the continuous need for the Canadian Forces to be seen as militarily 'clean' and 'politically correct' due to past events [Rwanda, Somalia and some past internal controversies within the National Defence Headquarters] has caused the average soldier to feel more limited in using traditional robust approaches. Thus, for the sake of satisfying a public and government back home that seem ill-informed about current operational requirements, the reputation of the Canadian land forces as credible security providers has been compromised."

When talking about the local response to Canadian troops during the UN-led operation in Haiti, Fitz-Gerald says: "The restrictions on the Canadians were obvious even to the local inhabitants. When people described the Canadian's approach to patrolling and escorting, they remarked that they did not appear to be in control as much as the Pakistani troops."

Similar observations came from Bosnians, where Spanish, Dutch and Canadian troops “were known to practice softer and less robust soldiering, which, to the locals, would not be effective during periods of heavy violence. In addition, the local perception was that these troops lacked the operational freedom necessary to offer adequate protection if tensions between the ethnic factions resurfaced.”

“It is essential that future policies on multinational and bilateral interoperability consider the more operational and tactical requirements that are essential for improving cohesion and unity of effort on the ground,” the author concludes. These requirements can only be met through more multinational training, interagency coordination and joint doctrine development, as well as enhanced clarity between Canada’s political masters and the soldiers on the ground.

“Multinational Land Force Interoperability: Meeting the Challenge of Different Cultural Backgrounds in Chapter VI Peace Support Operations,” is the latest *Choices* study to be published in the IRPP’s *National Security and Interoperability* series. It is now available in Adobe (.pdf) format on the IRPP website at <http://www.irpp.org> – to access the document, simply click on the “What’s New” icon on the homepage.

Other studies in this research program include “The Canadian Forces and the Doctrine of Interoperability: The Issues,” “Canada and Military Coalitions: Where, How and With Whom?” and “Sailing in Concert: The Politics and Strategy of Canada-US Naval Interoperability.” The studies can be found free of charge on the IRPP website.

For more information, or to schedule an interview with the author, please contact the IRPP. To receive IRPP media advisories and news releases via e-mail, please subscribe to the IRPP e-distribution service by visiting the newsroom on the IRPP website.

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