

# Military Integration Undermines Canada's Anti-War Position

By Steven Staples

Millions of Canadians applauded when the Prime Minister told Parliament that Canada would not participate in the war. It was an important political victory for peace supporters who had been working for months to deny the Bush Administration Canada's political support for the invasion of Iraq. But it did not take long for people to start asking questions after reading the fine print on the Prime Minister's decision. Why have Canada's considerable military forces in the Persian Gulf not been withdrawn? The government's response that the military is supporting the war on terrorism, not the war on Iraq, is less than satisfactory.

The contradiction between Canada's foreign policy and the facts on the ground, sea and in the air highlight a growing problem with our military. The Canadian Forces place a premium on being easily integrated with U.S. forces, and have been edging Canada into the arms of the Pentagon. Military integration is undermining the ability of the government to set independent foreign policies.

Military integration is the most advanced in the navy. For example, in 2001 the HMCS Vancouver, one of Canada's frigates, joined a U.S. Carrier Battle group led by the aircraft carrier USS John C. Stennis. The HMCS Vancouver assisted in defending the armada of ships and submarines in the Arabian Sea where the aircraft carrier proceeded to launch more than 10,000 bombing runs against Afghanistan. This level of deep military integration goes largely unnoticed while Canadian and American foreign policies are in agreement. But when those policies disagree as they have over the war on Iraq, the problem of integrated militaries becomes evident immediately. Today, Canadian ships and aircraft in the region are clearly playing a war role despite Canada's policy. Our three frigates have been permitted to escort U.S. warships up the Persian Gulf to Kuwait, our two Aurora surveillance planes are relaying information to the U.S. Fifth Fleet,

Credit: Cpl Shawn M. Kent



[www.navy.forces.gc.ca/mspa\\_gallery/gallery\\_e.asp](http://www.navy.forces.gc.ca/mspa_gallery/gallery_e.asp)

An "Amphibious Readiness Group" composed of U.S. and Canadian warships (Arabian Sea, Jan. 14, 2002). From top left: *Charlottetown* (Cdn. patrol frigate), *Iroquois* (Cdn. destroyer), *Bataan* (U.S. amphibious assault ship), *Decatur* (U.S. guided missile destroyer) and *Halifax* (Cdn. patrol frigate).

Despite Canada's so-called "anti-war position," the Canadian warships *Iroquois*, *Fredericton*, *Regina*, *Winnipeg* and *Montreal* protected U.S. warships in the Persian Gulf during the war. The first three are there right now, participating in the war.

and a handful of exchange soldiers are serving in U.S. and U.K. military units, including a unit laying siege to the Iraqi city of Basra and another aboard an AWACS air control plane directing the air war. Only Canada's three Hercules transport aircraft have been ordered to not transport war materiel. Policy incoherence would be an understatement. While the government's decision to not join the war is very significant politically, it makes little difference militarily. Had the government decided to support the war, Canada would have practically the same number of ship and planes conducting virtually the same missions as they are right now. The only possible addition would have been commandos and CF-18s, but certainly not troops.

In March, U.S. Ambassador to Canada Paul Cellucci said that Canadian forces are making a greater contribution to the war than most of the 45 countries of the so-called Coalition of the Willing. Spain, an ardent supporter of the war, has committed only a medical ship and no combat troops. Denmark sent a single submarine.

Even more, Canadian soldiers' involvement with U.S. military forces could break our international treaty commitments. The list of agreements signed by Canada and rejected by the United States grows longer all the time. For example, Michael Byers of Duke

University has pointed out that the U.S. was violating Article 5 of the Geneva Conventions when Taliban prisoners were handed over to U.S. forces by Canadian commandos from Canada's Joint Task Force 2 in Afghanistan.

What will happen if a Canadian soldier serving with U.S. combat units in Iraq is ordered to lay land mines? Should he refuse? And if he doesn't, would this not be a violation of our commitments under the Land Mines treaty – a treaty that was championed by Canada but rejected by the U.S.?

The situation is untenable. Both the New Democratic Party and the Bloc Quebecois have called on the government to withdraw Canada's military force from the Persian Gulf region. This week peace groups have joined that call, heralding what could become a much greater outcry about the role of the Canadian Forces in the war.

The Canadian government has gone a long way to set an independent course for Canada under what was likely tremendous pressure to join the war. But these issues will persist as long as the Canadian military continues to pursue greater interoperability and integration with U.S. forces. The distinction between the Canadian military and the U.S. military could soon become as difficult to see as desert camouflage.

Source: *Toronto Star*, March 31, 2003.

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# Who Says Canada's Not at War?

*Forget what we say. Look at what we do to aid and abet the U.S. war effort*

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By Richard Sanders, Editor, *Press for Conversion!*

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**I**sn't it amazing how Canada can contribute so much to a war without being involved?

On March 25, in the midst of his rebuke for our "non-involvement," U.S. Ambassador Paul Cellucci admitted: "Ironically, the Canadians indirectly provide more support for us in Iraq than most of those 46 countries that are fully supporting us." In fact, Canada's military contribution puts us right after Britain and Australia in the "coalition of the willing." In some important ways we contribute more than Australia.

Yet the lie that Canada isn't involved has spread like wildfire through Canada and the United States (at least, as much as any information about Canada can permeate American consciousness). It is yet another example of a successful campaign conducted by the Canadian government to promote the myth of Canada as a world-class peacemaker. Behind the scenes, Ottawa is doing all it can to aid and abet the war.

## Providing war planners:

For months, Canadian military planners have been working with U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM), which is masterminding the Iraq war. USCENTCOM used to be located at MacDill Air Force Base in Florida. On Feb. 11, Canada disclosed that it had transferred 25 military planners from MacDill to the U.S. military's forward command post in Qatar in the Persian Gulf – the new command-and-control headquarters. The role they play is far more significant than having a few soldiers fighting on the ground; Canadians have helped to determine the war's strategy and are now helping to run it, from the inside – unlike many members of the "coalition of the willing."

## Naval Protection:

Canada is leading a multinational naval task force in the Persian Gulf with about 1,300 Canadian personnel on

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three frigates. Our ships, as well as a multinational fleet of about a dozen other warships, are under the command of Canada's Commodore Roger Girouard, who reports to U.S. Vice-Admiral Timothy Keating. The fleet protects U.S. aircraft carriers, which serve as "platforms" for the air war against Iraq. We're there as part of Operation Apollo, in terms of our contribution to the war in Afghanistan, but Vice-Admiral Keating is the top naval officer in the war on terrorism, dubbed Operation Enduring Freedom, and the head of the U.S. Fifth Fleet, which is very much at war with Iraq.

## Exchange troops:

There are at least 31 "exchange troops" – Canadians on loan to British and U.S. forces. Prime Minister Jean Chrétien has denied that any are engaged in fighting on the ground in Iraq. But newspaper reporters, including *The Globe and Mail's* Daniel Leblanc, say that at least six Canadians are in battle zones. And one Canadian is with the British 7th Armoured Brigade, which has engaged in heavy fighting near Basra.

## AWACS:

Canadian Forces members are also part of crews on Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) aircraft. These state-of-the-art aircraft are the nerve centres that guide fighter jets and bombers so that they can deliver their payloads. Chrétien explains this away with a statement that the Canadians on AWACS oversee flights bound for various destinations: "They are covering many countries in their surveillance, not only one," the PM says.

## Troops in Afghanistan:

By contributing between 1,000 and 2,000 troops to Afghanistan, Canada has freed up key U.S. logistical and

military assets, which can be redeployed to Iraq.

## Equipment:

The United States is Canada's biggest military customer; Canadian military production is thoroughly integrated into the U.S. military machine, and last year we sold them an estimated \$1.75 billion worth of military goods. Many major components, such as aircraft engines for warplanes, are made in Canada. Although Canada claims to have one of the world's strictest sets of guidelines to stop the export of our military goods, none are set on military exports to the United States and no Canadian government permits are required.

## Air space:

The use of Canadian air space by U.S. warplanes may not seem significant – but it is one form of support that Washington has specifically requested from other countries if they wish to be counted among the "coalition of the willing." U.S. aircraft carrying troops bound for Iraq regularly stop to refuel and change crews in Newfoundland. "We've been getting two or three flights a day, with probably 1,000 troops coming through each day," Gary Vey, chief executive officer of the Gander Airport Authority, told the *Ottawa Citizen*.

So how long can Ottawa get away with saying that Canada is *not* involved in this war?

The misrepresentation has been easy to perpetuate, because it feeds into the long-standing, widely held image the world has of Canada as peacemaker. This image is rooted deeply in our own self-image, too – so much so that although we take a leading role in the international weapons trade, and in supporting the Americans, we even seem to be fooling ourselves.

**Source:** *Globe and Mail*, March 31, 2003. <[www.globeandmail.com/servlet/ArticleNews/TPStory/lac/20030331/cosanders/TPComment/TopStories](http://www.globeandmail.com/servlet/ArticleNews/TPStory/lac/20030331/cosanders/TPComment/TopStories)>