



# VOICES OF THE CDA

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A close-up photograph of a soldier in full combat gear. The soldier is wearing a helmet with a camouflage net and is holding a radio to his mouth. He is looking down and to the left. The background is a blurred, outdoor setting.

## Sharpening the Spear: Cultivating Intelligence-Savvy Armed Forces for Future Conflict

Lieutenant-Colonel Andrew L. Brown, PhD and Colonel Howard G. Coombs, PhD

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## On the Cover

Members of the Canadian Mechanized Infantry conduct their main defensive battle during Exercise Crystal Arrow at Camp Adazi, Latvia on March 27, 2023.

Photo: Canadian Armed Forces Photo

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/cafcombatcameradecombatfac>

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Effective Military and Defence Intelligence remains central to the Canadian Armed Forces' ability to design future forces, generate mission-ready capabilities, and deliver operational effectiveness across all domains—land, sea, air, space, and cyber—and at every echelon, from tactical to strategic. Recognizing the importance of putting intelligence into practice is vital to our collective success. It requires our armed forces, from force developers to force generators, to leaders and commanders in operations, to operate with a high degree of understanding of intelligence and the acumen needed to put it to work in a digital age. Leaders at large must understand how intelligence works to support and enable decision-making, from future force development to driving current operations.

Lieutenant-General (Retired) Stuart Beare,  
Colonel Commandant of the Intelligence Branch and  
the Canadian Intelligence Corps

Since the time of the ancient Greeks, militaries have integrated operational capabilities to create the strongest possible forces. The ancients combined phalanx infantry, cavalry, missile throwers, and skirmishers to produce formations that capitalized on each element's strengths while mitigating their vulnerabilities. Similarly, modern combined and joint forces integrate various capabilities to achieve collective potency, respecting over two millennia of experience that few military elements work best in isolation. Military intelligence is one such component. When it operates on its own or with weak connections to the forces it supports, intelligence does not contribute as well as it could. To be as effective as possible, intelligence organizations must be more than passive add-ons. They must interact actively with commanders, staffs, and fighting echelons. They require clear direction from those who use intelligence to assist decision-making, achieve objectives, and reduce risk. At the same time, recognizing the critical role of intelligence fosters a sense of shared responsibility among military leaders and policymakers. Participants in this process must maintain continuous, two-way engagement with the fighting forces they lead or

support. All of this applies across services and at all levels, as intelligence serves equally as a combat multiplier at the tactical level and a decision-making enabler at the operational and strategic levels.

An increasingly chaotic and complex world, the potential for conflict between near-peer states, and rapid technological developments make it more important than ever to attain the full potential of military intelligence. However, the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) may not be adequately prepared for the challenge. The speed and scale of these developments threaten to weaken the CAF's institutional understanding of intelligence fundamentals, such as how the intelligence enterprise provides commanders with decisional advantages and risk-reducing insights. At the same time, revolutionary and rapidly evolving technologies, such as generative artificial intelligence (AI) and mass-data processors, are already eroding institutional understanding of how the intelligence enterprise must function to reduce uncertainty and increase lethality. Therefore, this paper argues that the CAF requires a new approach for cultivating intelligence literacy across the entire force. The current approach does not meet present needs for integrating intelligence into the wider CAF and will certainly not meet the integration requirements of the near future. In the evolving international security environment, commanders, staff, and combatants at all levels across the CAF have crucial roles within the Defence Intelligence Enterprise (DIE).<sup>1</sup> Making the best use of massed information gathering and producing the precision intelligence that commanders and fighting echelons need requires articulating their requirements for insight into adversaries and operating environments, which, in turn, drives intelligence collection, analysis, and production. Commanders and fighting forces must also understand intimately what they can and should expect of their intelligence organizations. Building this shared understanding should foster trust and confidence in the intelligence process, ensuring effective collaboration and decision-making.

This paper briefly describes recent developments in global security and the implications for CAF intelligence. To illustrate these issues, it discusses recent Ukrainian experiences fighting Russian forces. The authors then assess how CAF force modernization and the associated intensification of information-collection capabilities will necessitate a shared understanding across the armed forces of how best to exploit tomorrow's platforms. They deduce that an imperative now exists for deliberate investments in preparing commanders, staffs, and fighting echelons for their crucial intelligence roles. These include tailoring professional military education and

collective training to cultivate greater intelligence literacy and to emphasize a leader-driven approach to intelligence as a command responsibility rather than a specialist function.

### **The Evolving Security Environment and Implications for Intelligence**

The tumultuous global security environment, including shifts in the “rules-based international order” that has served Canadian interests so well since the Second World War, will increase the CAF’s requirements for intelligence support.<sup>2</sup> Powerful, ambitious states will continue to flex their influence, including their military strength, sometimes pursuing policies that clash with Canadian interests. Meanwhile, some worry that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), a cornerstone of Canadian defence policy since 1949, may experience a weakening of cohesion and dilution of its collective power. Canada should therefore expect to become increasingly self-reliant in guarding its sovereignty.<sup>3</sup>

In this vein, the current Colonel Commandant of the Intelligence Branch, Lieutenant-General (Retired) Stuart Beare, has described an urgent need for Canada to refocus its defence and security policies on credible and effective deterrence in an environment of major power competition, which has re-emerged as a global threat to stability.<sup>4</sup> Since the end of the Cold War, Canada has shifted its military focus from deterrence to discretionary missions, such as peacekeeping and international security contributions, neglecting the core purpose of its armed forces: deterrence. This post-Cold War shift led to atrophy of Canada’s military capabilities and readiness for sustained warfighting.

Canada is now set to prioritize deterrence as a strategic necessity, requiring investments across all warfighting domains, to include land, sea, air, space, and cyber. Credible deterrence is essential to prevent war between major powers, as war is far more costly than its prevention. Canada’s government, the CAF, and the overall defence apparatus are adopting a warfighting posture alongside allies to deter threats and effectively safeguard national and international security.<sup>5</sup> Sound and timely intelligence is foundational to credible deterrence in an era of renewed great power competition. Without it, Canada cannot posture credibly, signal effectively, or adapt to the challenges of sustained international turbulence.

Growing deterrence and sovereignty-assertion requirements have profound implications for the CAF. For example, increasing access to the High North and international interest in it suggest that Canada’s armed forces will play a crucial role in safeguarding Canadian Arctic

maritime, air, and ground interests against growing international competitors.<sup>6</sup> Other examples abound, from the persistent need to protect Canadian airspace from both traditional threats (manned aircraft, intercontinental missiles) and newer dangers (hypersonic weapons, drones, long-range cruise missiles), to Canadian contributions to multilateral deterrence efforts and operations abroad.<sup>7</sup> All of this suggests new requirements to reinforce defence relations with like-minded states, including intelligence sharing.<sup>8</sup> It is no secret that Canada has always relied heavily on allies for intelligence. But maintaining strong intelligence-sharing relationships requires bringing good intelligence to the table. Fortunately, CAF modernization brings an opportunity to strengthen Canada's reputation and value as an intelligence ally. In an increasingly volatile world in which Canada seeks to reinforce bonds with allies and galvanize collective defence arrangements, making the most use of that opportunity will necessitate optimizing the CAF's intelligence function.

### **Intelligence Lessons from Ukraine and Implications for Canada**

Canadian military authorities recently considered the implications of the war in Ukraine for Canada's national defence.<sup>9</sup> Two key themes became apparent and reinforce the argument for improving intelligence literacy across the CAF. First, modern conflict is defined not by a lack of information, but by the challenge of turning overwhelming amounts of data into actionable intelligence. Second, contemporary warfare is best understood as a competition between adaptive systems rather than fixed-force structures.

In this environment, intelligence becomes central to both themes. Massed information gathering now occurs at unprecedented levels. Tactical drones, satellite imagery, electronic reconnaissance and digital communications create a highly transparent battlefield.<sup>10</sup> Detection-to-strike timelines have compressed dramatically, meaning that the time between observing a target and attacking it may now be measured in minutes rather than hours. The fighting in Ukraine has led to the integration of reconnaissance Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) with artillery to improve fire correction and precision.<sup>11</sup>

However, simply gathering more information does not automatically produce an advantage. For the conversion of massed information into effective intelligence to work, commanders must clearly articulate their intelligence requirements. These define what information is essential to mission success, such as identifying enemy artillery positions, detecting small assault group movements, or recognizing signs of logistical weakness. Without clearly defined

requirements to drive collection and analysis, intelligence organizations risk collecting vast amounts of data without producing useful answers. Ukrainian lessons repeatedly stress the importance of focused learning loops in which frontline observation informs collection priorities and rapidly shapes analysis and dissemination.<sup>12</sup>

The Russia-Ukraine war has also demonstrated the importance of integration between command, intelligence, and operations. Russian efforts to automate command systems and digitize logistics illustrate attempts to accelerate decision-making through improved data transmission.<sup>13</sup> Yet these systems face challenges such as poor interoperability, unstable communications, and weak coordination between branches. Intelligence effectiveness depends not only on technology but on institutional coherence and disciplined command processes.

Commanders and fighting echelons must also understand what intelligence organizations can and cannot provide. Intelligence can identify patterns, assess likely enemy courses of action, and support precision targeting. It can fuse data from drones, satellites, and electronic systems to provide situational awareness.<sup>14</sup> Fundamentally, it can provide a decisional advantage. However, intelligence is not omnipotent, and it cannot eliminate uncertainty. Electronic warfare, jamming, spoofing, and deception are persistent features of today's battlefield.<sup>15</sup> Adversaries may disrupt communications and attempt to manipulate perceptions. Therefore, intelligence must be understood as probabilistic support to decision-making rather than a guarantee of certainty.

For Canada, the implications are significant. First, commanders at all levels must be trained to formulate clear intelligence requirements that guide collection and analysis. Second, intelligence architecture must be resilient in contested electromagnetic environments. Third, military education and training must reinforce that intelligence is part of a broader adaptive system. The Ukrainian experience shows that rapid learning, feedback loops, and institutional flexibility are key to success in prolonged high-intensity conflict.<sup>16</sup>

### **Growing Demands for Intelligence**

The war in Ukraine shows clearly that modern military operations require sustained, high-quality intelligence to make sense of chaos and enable rapid decision-making. This also grew apparent during the Canadian mission in Afghanistan, where the intelligence function matured alongside commanders' attitudes towards using intelligence for operations.<sup>17</sup> The demand for intelligence has only grown since and is bound to keep growing. Beyond today's intelligence

requirements of the traditional services and commands, the emergence of new domains will increase demand for intelligence support and integration into the DIE.

For instance, the Canadian Armed Forces Cyber Command (CAFCYBERCOM) was established in September 2024, recognizing that modern operations include activities in the cyber domain. CAFCYBERCOM has important defensive and offensive roles in the technologically sophisticated battlespaces of the future.<sup>18</sup> The command also provides intelligence support for military operations by developing innovative technical capabilities. It additionally enables the CAF to operate alongside allied cyber organizations within NATO and North American Aerospace Defence Command (NORAD), as well as Five Eyes partners.<sup>19</sup> The defensive and offensive deployment of cyber activities, often in close cooperation with allies, will increase the draw on the CAF's intelligence resources.

Operating in the space domain will further increase the demand for intelligence. In July 2022, the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) established 3 Canadian Space Division to meet the steadily growing importance of space to CAF operations.<sup>20</sup> The formation supports Canada's commitment to cooperate with allies on military space activities through the Combined Space Operations Initiative. It also plays a crucial role in defending national space capabilities in a domain that "is becoming more congested, contested, and competitive".<sup>21</sup> These capabilities include using space for communicating, navigating, mapping, and surveillance.

The social media domain is yet another developing area with implications for the intelligence function and those who command and oversee it. Social Media Intelligence (SOCMINT) has several potential uses, such as "horizon scanning" to detect emerging threats and obtain real-time situational awareness.<sup>22</sup> Exploiting SOCMINT to its full value requires deliberate and sustained approaches to training and oversight. Furthermore, potential adversaries are likely to weaponize social media against us and our allies, creating security threats that necessitate counter-intelligence responses. Again, Ukraine's experience in its defensive war serves as a useful case study. Russian actors in Ukraine use social media "to disseminate propaganda, impersonate domestic voices, and manipulate local conversations."<sup>23</sup> This suggests that the CAF will require robust counterintelligence to neutralize such hostile acts in future conflicts.

Meanwhile, the Canadian Army's ongoing expansion and modernization will develop a force with substantial intelligence requirements. Ongoing efforts will produce ground forces capable of a full spectrum of operations, up to and including Major Combat Operations (MCO) at

the division level.<sup>24</sup> Modernization plans are well underway to generate new capabilities that will make the army ready to defend Canadian interests in an increasingly chaotic world. These capabilities include digital transformation to enable a rapid “sense/make sense/decide/act” cycle; ground-based air defence; modernization of indirect fires, with a mix of new systems including self-propelled artillery; long-range precision strike for division-level deep fires; and Arctic mobility enhancement. Naturally, force modernization will also include reinforcing the army intelligence enterprise to meet the force’s growing intelligence requirements and those of the wider Defence Intelligence community.<sup>25</sup> To this end, the Commander Canadian Army (CCA), Lieutenant-General Michael (Mike) Wright, asserts that the command function has a central role in the modernized army intelligence enterprise. Wright intends that “C[anadian] A[rmy] commanders at all levels are intelligence-savvy and actively seek support from connected, mobile, and survivable intelligence groupings.”<sup>26</sup>

This emphasis on command reflects the Canadian Army’s recognition that intelligence is not a specialized function isolated within intelligence units, but rather an integral component of operational leadership and decision-making at every echelon. By placing commanders at the centre of the intelligence enterprise, Wright reinforces the expectation that leaders must possess the knowledge and judgment necessary to integrate intelligence into planning, execution, and assessment processes. In an increasingly complex and data-saturated operating environment, intelligence-savvy commanders are better positioned to understand adversary capabilities, anticipate threats, and exploit opportunities across multiple domains.

Concurrently, uncrewed systems are evolving and proliferating rapidly worldwide, and the CAF’s adoption of certain types has implications for the intelligence enterprise as well. Many future CAF uncrewed vehicles will have intelligence and surveillance roles. For instance, the RCAF will soon acquire a fleet of remotely piloted aircraft systems (CQ-9B SkyGuardian).<sup>27</sup> These will play a key role in defending Canada, including the Arctic, with surveillance, reconnaissance, and strike capabilities. The Royal Canadian Navy (RCN), meanwhile, is developing plans for Uncrewed Surface Vehicles (USVs) and Uncrewed Subsurface Vehicles (USSVs) that will, amongst other things, meet intelligence and maritime domain awareness requirements.

Should the CAF find itself conducting major combat operations, yet another draw on intelligence will likely be support to personnel recovery missions. This is another lesson from the

armed forces of Ukraine, which have experienced a high requirement to recover isolated or captured personnel. Getting personnel recovery right has significantly improved morale, with soldiers fighting with greater determination and confidence when they know they will not be abandoned.<sup>28</sup> Consequently, Ukrainian forces have learned that they must both standardize and practice personnel recovery and reintegration. One implication for the CAF is that locating and recovering isolated personnel will require substantial intelligence support.

### **Intensifying Information Gathering**

Aside from increased intelligence requirements, the CAF will experience an intensified volume and sophistication of information collection. Consequently, the command role for prioritizing collection and directing analytical efforts will be more important than ever. Once again, Ukrainian experiences illustrate what the CAF should expect. Ukrainian military authorities have described the coordination of artillery as resulting in an abundance of sensors across multiple echelons. These include small drones for real-time observation, commercial satellite imagery, and electronic reconnaissance, collectively providing omnipresent surveillance. Right now, inexpensive drones in Ukraine give even platoons and sections real-time capabilities to observe, adjust artillery, and conduct battle damage assessment.<sup>29</sup> At higher echelons, this dramatic, exponential expansion of information collection at the lowest tactical levels will generate unprecedented volumes of data, placing increasing demands on commanders and staffs to prioritize collection, rapidly interpret information, and transform it into actionable intelligence for decision-making.

Major CAF platform upgrades and procurements will dramatically increase information gathering. Implementation of the RCAF's Future Fighter Capability Project will deliver a modern fighter jet fleet that provides, amongst other things, impressive surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities, along with electro-optical and infrared sensors.<sup>30</sup> The RCAF's acquisition of the P-8A Poseidon Multi-Mission Aircraft, to replace the CP-140 Aurora fleet, will bring innovative intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities.<sup>31</sup> Canada's modernization plan for NORAD will soon include establishing the Arctic Over-the-Horizon Radar (A-OTHR), which will provide situational awareness, early warning, and threat tracking.<sup>32</sup> The RCN River-Class Destroyers will come with electronic warfare and countermeasures suites, as well as surveillance

and weapons sensors.<sup>33</sup> These shipboard systems will enable intelligence and surveillance tasks, among myriad maritime mission sets.

This wholesale expansion of information collection must be organized, prioritized, and directed carefully if the CAF is to process the vast amount of raw information into usable intelligence. Inefficient or poorly planned information gathering is the intelligence equivalent of firing blindly rather than making well-aimed shots. Institutional leaders across the CAF should consider whether forces are culturally ready for this intensification of information collection and intelligence production.

### **Optimizing the Intelligence Enterprise**

When it comes to understanding the intelligence function well across the armed forces—at all levels and across all domains—the CAF is not starting from a strong position. Few would argue that, outside of the military intelligence community, the CAF is as intelligence-savvy as it should be. Exceptions exist, of course, with some communities making excellent use of intelligence. But the CAF collectively lacks institutional understanding of certain fundamentals, such as how intelligence can and should give commanders a decisional advantage, increase lethality, reduce risk to combat forces, and contribute to mission success. Relatedly, some CAF communities likely lack a shared understanding of existing collection capabilities and weaknesses, as well as the crucial roles of commanders in directing the intelligence cycle, let alone the potential implications of transformative technologies like “big data” processing tools or generative artificial intelligence (AI).

Commanders, staff officers, and fighting echelons—at all levels—ought to understand intelligence thoroughly. This includes how the intelligence enterprise works – exactly who directs collection, who controls collection assets, who prioritizes intelligence production tasks, and how finished intelligence informs planning. It also necessitates a thorough appreciation of information collection capabilities and limitations, including the time required from when collection is directed to when information is received. And it entails understanding precisely how intelligence can best support operations, at all levels of planning and execution. Such an intimate understanding is necessary for commanders to direct their intelligence staffs, and for combatants to understand exactly what they should demand from the intelligence enterprise.

To be sure, cultivating the necessary awareness across the CAF of how the intelligence function operates poses a significant challenge. In fact, history suggests that building widespread awareness of how intelligence supports operations can be difficult, as forces preparing for high-intensity operations have enormous challenges mastering the art of coordinating the elements of combat power, sometimes leaving intelligence as an afterthought.<sup>34</sup> Nevertheless, if the level of intelligence familiarity today is not where it should be for current intelligence capabilities and processes, the challenge will only grow more difficult as the CAF modernizes and increases capacity for major combat operations. Preparing service members for high-intensity conflict in rapid-tempo, sensor-soaked spaces requires educating personnel about what they should expect from intelligence and their role in shaping intelligence production.

The good news, however, is that the CAF is not starting from scratch. In addition to communities that already direct and employ intelligence effectively, certain professional military education (PME) programs, such as the Army Operations Course (AOC) and the Joint Command and Staff Program (JCSP), provide some instruction and practice in how intelligence supports operational planning. While this is a good start, there is room for improvement. Part of the problem is that some service members, aside from receiving a bit of PME-related intelligence training, have little or no exposure to how intelligence functions and supports commanders and staffs. Furthermore, even in programs that include intelligence content, course staff may lack adequate experience using or directing intelligence. Finally, the existing training and PME systems probably do not adequately address the surveillance-intensive, data-rich environments of the near future. Inculcating the necessary intelligence savviness across the CAF almost certainly requires more course time for instruction and for directing intelligence production, as well as the realistic inclusion of intelligence in operational planning. Admittedly, this requirement for more training presents a significant problem. Training and PME curricula are already packed with other essential content. Moreover, beyond intelligence, courses may need to include more material on other evolving domains, such as cyber, space, and artificial intelligence (AI), to prepare members for near-future conflicts. There are no easy solutions. Major changes are necessary, and these will occur only with high-level direction.

### **Eliminating Blindness: Cultivating Intelligence “Savviness” Across the CAF**

The CAF’s current approach to developing intelligence-savvy forces no longer meets present requirements, let alone those of the near future. While expanded information-collection capabilities promise significant gains in both the quantity and quality of intelligence—potentially offering commanders the decisional advantage and lethality required for high-intensity operations against near-peer adversaries—this potential may not be realized. Obtaining the best possible benefit requires deliberate investment in the training and development of commanders, staff, and fighting echelons. Hence, they understand and perform their roles effectively within the intelligence cycle.

Simply increasing collection is insufficient. If clearly defined intelligence requirements do not drive collection efforts, and if raw information is not transformed through an efficient analytical process into usable intelligence, the CAF risks wasting scarce resources. Worse, it may generate overwhelming “white noise” rather than actionable insight, forfeiting tactical and operational advantages while exposing personnel to unnecessary risk. Information superiority is not achieved through technological abundance alone. It depends on disciplined processes, professional judgment, and institutional habits that connect collection, analysis, and decision-making in a coherent system.

The key lesson from Ukraine, as well as from Canadian historical and contemporary experience, is not merely the expansion of surveillance technologies but the necessity of disciplined, requirement-driven intelligence. Modern battlefields are saturated with layered sensors, drones, electronic emissions, and open-source data. Yet saturation without direction produces confusion rather than clarity. Massed information gathering only becomes advantageous when commanders clearly articulate what they need to know, intelligence organizations align their collection accordingly, and both sides understand the limits of intelligence. This requires shared understanding, constant dialogue between operators and intelligence personnel, and realistic expectations about uncertainty and risk.

Developing intelligence proficiency across the CAF requires more than rhetorical emphasis; it demands deliberate institutional reform. The Canadian Defence Academy should establish a tiered intelligence literacy framework that defines what every member, from junior NCO to operational commander, must understand about the intelligence cycle, collection capabilities, and analytical limitations. Command courses at all levels should require officers and

senior NCOs to draft, prioritize, and defend intelligence requirements as a core leadership competency. Intelligence must also be embedded realistically in collective training. Major exercises should simulate contested electromagnetic environments, degraded ISR feeds, deception, and information overload to ensure commanders practice disciplined decision-making under uncertainty. Formation-level collection governance mechanisms should be strengthened to prevent proliferating platforms, from F-35s and P-8s to uncrewed systems and cyber tools, from driving undisciplined, sensor-led intelligence activity. Intelligence must remain demand-driven and requirement-focused.

Equally important, doctrine and senior leadership messaging should clearly emphasize intelligence as a command responsibility, not a specialist function delegated to intelligence staffs, including the Navy, Army, Air Force, or Joint. Commanders must be accountable for how intelligence is directed, integrated, and exploited in operations. Multi-domain intelligence integration across land, maritime, air, cyber, space, and social media should be routinely exercised, including in coalition contexts beyond traditional frameworks, to reinforce interoperability and shared situational awareness. Without such measures, the CAF risks generating unprecedented volumes of information without achieving corresponding decisional advantage. With them, however, the CAF can transform expanding collection capabilities into disciplined, adaptive, and resilient intelligence power, ensuring that future Canadian forces do not advance into contact with avoidable blindness.

For modern militaries, including Canada's, cultivating a culture of clarity, integration, and resilience in intelligence practices is essential for success in future conflict. Building such a culture will require sustained professional military education, realistic collective training that stresses intelligence systems under combat-like conditions, and leadership emphasis on intelligence as a command responsibility rather than a specialist function. Without these investments, the CAF risks entering future conflicts technologically equipped but intellectually unprepared.

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<sup>1</sup> The DIE comprises the network of personnel and organizations throughout the CAF and the Department of National Defence dedicated to providing military and defence intelligence.

<sup>2</sup> Prime Minister Mark Carney articulated developing challenges, including “a rupture in the world order”, in a 20 January 2026 speech to the World Economic Forum’s annual meeting in Davos, Switzerland. “Principled and Pragmatic: Canada’s Path”, Prime Minister of Canada website, <https://www.pm.gc.ca/en/news/speeches/2026/01/20/principled-and-pragmatic-canadas-path-prime-minister-carney-addresses> Accessed 27 January 2026. One can argue that this speech has significant implications for Canadian military intelligence. It implies that intelligence must evolve from a primarily operational-support function into a central component of national resilience and deterrence. It must integrate economic, informational, and military domains, strengthen independent assessment capacity, and cultivate a culture of disciplined, requirement-driven intelligence suited to sustained great-power competition.

<sup>3</sup> For examples of scholarly assessments, see: Philippe Lagassé and Justin Masse, “Canada Must Defend Itself Against U.S. Aid by Developing Sovereign Capabilities,” *Policy Report* 33, Network for Strategic Analysis (26 May 2025). <https://ras-nsa.ca/canada-must-defend-itself-against-us-aid-by-developing-sovereign-capabilities/> Accessed on 13 February 2026; “Sovereignty in Retreat? Rebuilding the Canadian Armed Forces in the Arctic,” *Policy Brief – Queen’s University Centre For International and Defence Policy* Vol 10, no. 7 (17 December 2025); John Keess, “Canada’s Long-Term Strategic Situation,” *Research Report – Queen’s University Centre For International and Defence Policy* (July 2025).

<sup>4</sup> Stuart Beare, “Defence and Security in the World – as it has become and is becoming... reflections for Canada – Deterrence – the need to Deter is Back,” speech delivered at the Royal Kingston United Services Institute (RKUSI), Kingston, Ontario, September 25, 2025.

<sup>5</sup> Stuart Beare, “Defence and Security in the World – as it has become and is becoming... reflections for Canada – Deterrence – the need to Deter is Back,” speech delivered at the Royal Kingston United Services Institute (RKUSI), Kingston, Ontario, September 25, 2025.

<sup>6</sup> In early March 2026, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Canada, Anita Anand, emphasized the importance of establishing a greater and permanent NATO presence in the Arctic. CBC News online, “Foreign Affairs Minister Anand Says NATO Must Turn its Focus to the North,” 5 March 2025, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/foreign-affairs-minister-anand-says-nato-must-turn-its-focus-to-the-north-9.7115630> Accessed 6 March 2026.

<sup>7</sup> For challenges to defending Canadian aerospace, see chapter 6 of Andrea Charron and James Fergusson, *NORAD: In Perpetuity and Beyond* (McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2022), 253-287.

<sup>8</sup> Prime Minister Carney suggested that middle powers such as Canada should cooperate to wield strength in a world faced with great power rivalry. “Principled and Pragmatic: Canada’s Path”, Prime Minister of Canada website, <https://www.pm.gc.ca/en/news/speeches/2026/01/20/principled-and-pragmatic-canadas-path-prime-minister-carney-addresses> Accessed 27 January 2026.

<sup>9</sup> From 8 to 12 December 2025, the Ukrainian National Defence University sent a Lessons Learned team to Canada. It delivered briefings in Toronto, Kingston, and Ottawa to highlight for Canadians lessons learned during the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war. See Howard G. Coombs and Björn Lagerlöf, “Executive Summary: Lessons from the Russia-Ukraine War (briefings Ukrainian National Defence University, Toronto, Kingston, and Ottawa, 08–12 December 2025), 4 pp.

<sup>10</sup> Howard G. Coombs, “‘Building an Airplane in Flight’: Lessons from the Russia-Ukraine War,” draft *Briefing Note* submitted to the Canadian Global Affairs Institute, January 2026, 10pp.

<sup>11</sup> “The Changing Character of War (From a Russian Perspective),” PowerPoint presentation, from the Ukrainian National Defence University Lessons Learned team during briefings in Canada, December 8–12, 2025.

<sup>12</sup> Howard G. Coombs, “Lessons from the Russia-Ukraine War: Adaptation, Resilience, and Implications for Modern Militaries,” draft chapter prepared for Canadian Defence Associations Institute *Strategic Outlook 2026*, February 2026, 8 pp.

<sup>13</sup> “The Changing Character of War (From a Russian Perspective),” PowerPoint presentation, from the Ukrainian National Defence University Lessons Learned team during briefings in Canada, December 8–12, 2025.

<sup>14</sup> Howard G. Coombs, “‘Building an Airplane in Flight’: Lessons from the Russia-Ukraine War,” draft *Briefing Note* submitted to the Canadian Global Affairs Institute, January 2026, 10pp.

<sup>15</sup> Howard G. Coombs and Björn Lagerlöf, “Executive Summary: Lessons from the Russia-Ukraine War (briefings Ukrainian National Defence University, Toronto, Kingston, and Ottawa, 8–12 December 2025), 4 pp.

<sup>16</sup> Howard G. Coombs, “Lessons from the Russia-Ukraine War: Adaptation, Resilience, and Implications for Modern Militaries,” draft chapter prepared for Canadian Defence Associations Institute *Strategic Outlook 2026*, February 2026, 8pp.

<sup>17</sup> See David A. Charters, *Canadian Military Intelligence: Operations and Evolution from the October Crisis to the War in Afghanistan* (Georgetown University Press, 2022), especially his overarching assessment on pages 289-295. For Canadian Special Operations Forces (SOF) reliance on precision intelligence in Afghanistan, see Bernd Horn, *No Ordinary Men: Special Operations Forces Missions in Afghanistan* (Dundurn, 2016), *passim*.

<sup>18</sup> Department of National Defence (DND) News Release, “Canadian Armed Forces establishes a new Cyber Command,” 26 September 2024. <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/news/2024/09/canadian-armed-forces-establishes-a-new-cyber-command.html> Accessed on 27 January 2026.

<sup>19</sup> The Five Eyes (FVEY) is an intelligence-sharing alliance among five English-speaking countries: Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States, which originated during the Second World War.

<sup>20</sup> Department of National Defence (DND) News Release, “Establishment of 3 Canadian Space Division,” 22 July 2022. <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/news/2022/07/establishment-of-3-canadian-space-division.html> Accessed on 27 January 2026.

<sup>21</sup> RCAF, Roles and responsibilities of the Space Program. <https://www.canada.ca/en/air-force/corporate/space/roles-responsibilities.html> Accessed 27 January 2026.

<sup>22</sup> For good primers on the potential uses and challenges of SOCMINT, see Robert Dover, “SOCMINT: A Shifting Balance of Opportunity,” *Intelligence and National Security* 35, no. 2 (2020): 216-232; and, Sir David Omand, Jamie Bartlett, and Carl Miller, “Introducing Social Media Intelligence (SOCMINT),” *Intelligence and National Security* 27, no. 6 (2012): 801-823.

<sup>23</sup> Howard G. Coombs and Björn Lagerlöf, “Executive Summary: Lessons from the Russia-Ukraine War (briefings Ukrainian National Defence University, Toronto, Kingston, and Ottawa, 8–12 December 2025), 4 pp.

<sup>24</sup> Canadian Army Modernization Team, *Inflection Point 2025: Canadian Army Modernization – Defending Canada at Home and Around the World* (Department of National Defence, 2025).

<sup>25</sup> On 24 November 2025, the Commander of the Canadian Army issued orders directing how the army would achieve the vision articulated in *Inflection Point 2025*. Lieutenant-General Michael C. Wright, Canadian Army Modernization Order, 24 November 2025.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, Annex B, p. 20.

<sup>27</sup> James Careless, “Canada’s Uncrewed Systems Report,” *Canadian Defence Review* online (15 December 2025). <https://canadiandefencereview.com/canadas-uncrewed-systems-report/> Accessed 30 January 2026. For the CQ-9B, see also Gabriel Oakley, “Introducing the CQ-9B – Team SkyGuardian,” *Canadian Defence Review* online (11 December 2025). <https://canadiandefencereview.com/introducing-the-cq-9b-team-skyguardian/> Accessed 30 January 2026.

<sup>28</sup> Howard G. Coombs and Björn Lagerlöf, “Executive Summary: Lessons from the Russia-Ukraine War (briefings Ukrainian National Defence University, Toronto, Kingston, and Ottawa, 8–12 December 2025), 4 pp.

<sup>29</sup> Howard G. Coombs, “‘Building an Airplane in Flight’: Lessons from the Russia-Ukraine War,” draft *Briefing Note* submitted to the Canadian Global Affairs Institute, January 2026, 10pp.

<sup>30</sup> Department of National Defence, “Future Fighter Capability Project”, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/procurement/fighter-jets/future-fighter-capability-project.html> Accessed 1 February 2026. See also the DBD F35A Canada’s Future Fighter – Infographic at <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/procurement/fighter-jets/future-fighter-capability-project/f-35a-canadas-future-fighter-infographic.html> Accessed 1 February 2026.

<sup>31</sup> Department of National Defence, “Canadian Multi-Mission Aircraft Project,” last updated 9 January 2026, <https://www.canada.ca/en/services/defence/defence-equipment-purchases-upgrades/air-equipment-procurement/canadian-multi-mission-aircraft-project.html> Accessed 1 February 2026.

<sup>32</sup> Department of National Defence, “National Defence announces progress on the Arctic Over-the-Horizon Radar project,” last updated 17 July 2025, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/news/2025/07/national-defence-announces-progress-on-the-arctic-over-the-horizon-radar-project.html> Accessed 3 February 2026.

<sup>33</sup> Department of National Defence, “River-Class Destroyer Fact Sheet,” last updated 27 January 2026, <https://www.canada.ca/en/navy/corporate/fleet-units/surface/river-class-destroyer/fact-sheet.html> Accessed 3 February 2026. See also Department of National Defence, “River-Class Destroyer,”

<https://www.canada.ca/en/navy/corporate/fleet-units/surface/river-class-destroyer.html> Accessed 3 February 2026.

<sup>34</sup> For example, early in the Second World War, Lieutenant-General (later Field Marshal) Bernard Montgomery, in command of 12 Corps (the primary home defence formation in Britain), knew that his forces were not using their intelligence resources to their fullest. In August 1941, when his defensive-minded formations focused on repelling a

possible German invasion of England, Montgomery foresaw the day when Britain would project forces across the Channel and into occupied France. And he knew that soldiers across his command, right down to the sub-unit level, were so focused on developing their combat skills that they neglected to use their integral intelligence capabilities. He therefore ordered leaders at every level to make the proactive and best possible use of the intelligence machinery under his command. Montgomery knew that wasting intelligence resources would condemn his forces to advancing into contact with a blindness that could have been avoided. Lieutenant-General B.L. Montgomery, Corps Commander's Personal Memoranda to Commanders, 9 August 1941. Library and Archives Canada, MG30-E157, Crerar Papers, volume 23, file no. D233.