

**IF IT AIN'T BROKE, DON'T BREAK IT:
EXPANDING AND ENHANCING THE CANADIAN
RANGERS**

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This series seeks to stimulate deeper academic dialogue on Arctic security issues in Canada. Papers fall into three categories. The first includes theoretically—and empirically—driven academic papers on subjects related to Arctic security broadly conceptualized. The second focuses on the impacts of defence and security practices on Arctic peoples, with a particular emphasis on the Canadian North during and after the Cold War. The third category of papers summarizes key Canadian and international policy documents related to Arctic security and sovereignty issues.

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If It Ain't Broke, Don't Break It: Expanding and Enhancing the Canadian Rangers¹

P. Whitney Lackenbauer, Ph.D.

Sovereignty. Security. Stewardship. These terms lie at the heart of debates about Canada's contemporary Arctic policies.² They are also essential to understanding the Canadian Rangers and their contributions to their communities, the Canadian Forces, and their country – past and present.

Canada's extensive coastlines and vast northern expanses have presented security and sovereignty problems since the Second World War. These regions have some of the lowest population densities in the world combined with some of the most difficult climatic and physical environments in which to operate. Maintaining a conventional military presence is prohibitively expensive. As a result, the Canadian Rangers have played an important but unorthodox role in domestic defence for more than six decades. Often described as the military's "eyes and ears" in remote regions, the Rangers have come to represent an important success story for the Canadian Forces. They are a flexible, inexpensive, and culturally inclusive means of having "boots on the ground" to demonstrate sovereignty and to conduct or support domestic operations. As a bridge between cultures and between the civilian and military realms, the Rangers represent a successful integration of national security and sovereignty agendas with community-based activities and local stewardship. This practical partnership, rooted in traditional knowledge and skills, promotes cooperation, communal and individual empowerment, and cross-cultural understanding.

Since 1947, the Rangers' official mission has been "to provide a military presence in sparsely settled northern, coastal and isolated areas of Canada that cannot conveniently or economically be provided for by other components of the Canadian Forces." Over the last six decades, the tasks that they perform in support of this mission have become more complex. Their initial focus was national *security* – protecting their communities from enemy attack in the early Cold War. By the 1970s, their responsibilities became directly linked to the armed forces' role in support of Canada's *sovereignty* in the Arctic. Since the 1990s, the Rangers have also played a more visible nation-building and *stewardship* role in remote regions across Canada. They represent an important success story for the Canadian Forces as a flexible, inexpensive, and culturally inclusive means of having "boots on the ground" exercising Canadian sovereignty and conducting or supporting domestic operations.

¹ This working paper is largely excerpted from P. Whitney Lackenbauer, *The Canadian Rangers: A Living History* (Vancouver: UBC Press, forthcoming April 2013), with permission of the University of British Columbia Press. Given the nature of the Arctic Security series, most of the examples in this working paper are drawn from 1 Canadian Ranger Patrol Group and the Territorial North. For a discussion of developments in the other Ranger patrol groups across Canada, please consult the book.

² See, for example, Franklyn Griffiths, Rob Huebert, and P. Whitney Lackenbauer, *Canada and the Changing Arctic: Sovereignty, Security, and Stewardship* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2011).

*Background*³

When the Ranger concept was introduced in the dark days of the Second World War, the winds of war were very real. By early 1942, Canadians realized that they no longer lived in a “fireproof house” (as Senator Raoul Dandurand described Canada in the interwar years). Terrified British Columbians, facing the Japanese threat in the Pacific, pushed the federal government to improve its west coast defences. The army responded by forming the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers (PCMR), a Reserve corps modelled after the British Home Guard, in 1942. This unconventional military force allowed British Columbian men who were too old or too young for overseas service, or engaged in essential industries such as fishing and mining, to contribute to home defence. Rangers were not given any vehicles or regimental equipment - they were expected to use their own. Apart from a sporting rifle, some ammunition, an armband, and eventually a canvas “Dry-bak” uniform suited to the coastal climate, the army expected the Rangers to be self-sufficient. Basically, they would use their local knowledge and act as the military’s “eyes and ears,” report any suspicious vessels or activities, and do what they could to help professional forces repel an enemy invasion. By 1943 there were 15,000 Rangers representing all walks of B.C. life, from fish packers to cowboys. They trained with other military units, conducted search and rescue, and reported Japanese balloon bombs that landed along the west coast. When the war ended, however, so did the PCMR. The organization was stood down in the fall of 1945.

As the wartime alliance between the democratic West and the communist East unravelled and the Cold War set in, simple geography made Canada a potential battlefield in any future superpower conflict. Canada did not have the military resources to station large numbers of regular soldiers in northern and remote regions of the country, but it still needed “eyes and ears” in those areas. Consequently, officials resurrected the Ranger concept in 1947. This time they created a nation-wide Canadian Ranger force that contributed to a low-cost Cold War security strategy. By design, the Rangers would remain in their home communities in both war and peace. Largely untrained, their existing local knowledge would allow them to serve as guides and scouts, report suspicious activities, and (if the unthinkable came to pass) delay an enemy advance using guerrilla tactics – at least until professional forces arrived. The army only equipped Rangers with an obsolescent .303 Lee Enfield rifle, 200 rounds of ammunition each year, and an armband. To keep up their marksmanship skills, they were expected to hit the rifle range – or, better yet, hunt seal or caribou and feed their families.

The strength of the early organization peaked in December 1956, when 2725 Rangers served in forty-two companies from coast to coast to coast. Rangers provided intelligence reports on strange ships and aircraft, participated in training exercises with Canada’s Mobile Striking Force and other army units, and conducted search and rescue. In one case, Rangers even helped the RCMP intercept bandits trying to flee the Yukon along the Alaska Highway. “Some of [the Rangers] can’t read their own names but they are the real scholars of this country when it comes to reading signs on the trails of the north,” reporter Robert Taylor observed that year. This diverse mix of Inuit, First Nations, Metis, and Whites united in one task: “guarding a country that doesn’t even know of their existence.”

During this era, annual re-supply and training visits by Regular Force Ranger Liaison Officers (RLOs) brought cross-cultural contact. Captain Ambrose Shea’s experiences on Baffin Island were representative. After overcoming his initial culture shock, Shea clearly enjoyed visiting Inuit Rangers in their remote camps, ate and fished with them, and developed a strong respect for their knowledge and skills. He also respected their modest but important military contribution. “The idea of arming a local population and asking them to take a hand in defending their own locality is an ancient one and eminently sensible,” he wrote. “It does not become out-dated, even in this atomic age.” Rangers

³ For a detailed history of the Canadian Rangers, including full citations, see Lackenbauer, *The Canadian Rangers: A Living History*.

reported submarine and ship sightings, suspicious individuals, even unexplained bombing activity on Northern Baffin Island (producing bits of bombs as evidence). In one case, a Baffin Island Ranger had even tried single-handedly to capture the US Coast Guard cutter *Staten Island*, mistakenly concluding that it was a Russian ship and “it was his duty as a soldier to take some action.” The Inuit were earnest, Shea noted, and their value as “friends on the ground” was priceless – despite their negligible cost to the army.

By the 1960s, however, the Rangers factored little in Ottawa’s defence plans. Northern residents with armbands and rifles could hardly fend off hostile Soviet bombers carrying nuclear weapons. Defence officials turned to technological marvels like the Distant Early Warning (DEW) Line to protect the continent. Because the Rangers cost next to nothing, the organization survived – thanks only to local initiative. “We just knew that if an aircraft went down we should look for it,” recalled the late Reverend John R. Sperry, the Anglican missionary at Coppermine (Kugluktuk) and Ranger lieutenant from 1950 to 1969. If someone was lost, the RCMP also passed along the information and Rangers went out to look for them. “All the men were going out anyway,” Sperry explained. The “Shadow Army of the North” received little to no direction from military officials, and for many their annual ammunition supplies stopped arriving by the late 1960s. Apart from Newfoundland and Labrador and a sprinkling of northern communities, the Ranger organization was largely inactive by 1970.

The federal government’s renewed interest in Arctic sovereignty in the wake of the American icebreaker *Manhattan’s* voyages in 1969-70, which Canadians believed threatened to undermine their sovereignty over the waters of the Northwest Passage. Although this new “crisis” had nothing to do with the Soviet military threat, Pierre Trudeau turned to the Canadian Forces to assert symbolic control. His government promised increased surveillance and more Arctic training for southern troops. Only people who actually lived in remote regions had the expertise to guide them and teach survival skills. Because the Rangers still existed (on paper at least) and cost next to nothing, they fit the government’s bill. Staff from the new northern headquarters in Yellowknife provided basic training to Inuit and Dene Rangers in the 1970s, and these activities proved highly popular in communities. By the early 1980s, the Rangers were again active in the territorial north, northern Quebec, and along the eastern seaboard.

When the US Coast Guard icebreaker *Polar Sea* pushed through the Northwest Passage in 1985, Canadians once again worried about sovereignty and demanded a bolder military presence in the Arctic. Brian Mulroney’s Conservative government promised a host of big-ticket investments to improve Canada’s control over the Arctic, from acquiring nuclear-powered submarines to building a Polar Class icebreaker. At the same time, and on a much lower key, the Canadian Rangers drew attention as an important grassroots way to keep Canada’s “True North strong and free.”

Until that time, defence assessments had focused on the Rangers’ military utility. In a changing political climate, however, other aspects of the organization made it even more attractive. Although Aboriginal leaders called for the demilitarization of the arctic on social and environmental grounds, they always applauded the Rangers as a positive example of Northerners contributing directly to sovereignty and security. Media coverage began to emphasize the social and political benefits of the Rangers in Aboriginal (particularly Inuit) communities. Now the Rangers enjoyed tremendous appeal as an inexpensive, culturally-inclusive, and visible means of demonstrating Canada’s sovereignty. Most of the government’s promised investments in Arctic defence evaporated with the end of the Cold War. Conservative and Liberal politicians, however, did follow through and increase the number and geographical scope of the Canadian Rangers in the 1990s – despite downsizing in the Canadian Forces more generally. The Rangers’ footprint expanded “north of 60” and across the provincial norths, with most new growth directed to Aboriginal communities. This reflected the importance of building and reinforcing Aboriginal-military partnerships. Furthermore, journalists applauded the Rangers’ role in teaching the military and in encouraging elders to share their traditional knowledge to younger people *within* Aboriginal communities. This was clear in the creation of a formal youth program, the Junior Canadian Rangers, in 1998.

By the turn of the twenty-first century, Canadian Ranger patrols were found in nearly every community in the territorial north. Their national task list had evolved to encompass the three broad aspects of their service: conducting and supporting sovereignty operations; conducting and assisting with domestic military operations; and maintaining a Canadian Forces presence in local communities.

When Stephen Harper's Conservatives swept into office in 2006, they resolved to make the defence of Arctic sovereignty a priority. The prime minister's "use it or lose it" refrain tapped into primordial national anxieties about sovereignty and resonated with southern Canadians who believed that increased military capabilities could shield their country from the so-called "perfect storm" brewing in the circumpolar North.⁴ "We believe that Canadians are excited about the government asserting Canada's control and sovereignty in the Arctic," Harper told a *Toronto Sun* reporter on 23 February 2007. His plan strategically aligned with his broader agenda to rebuild the Canadian Forces, and he hoped that strengthening Canada's sovereignty over the Arctic would be a major legacy of his government.⁵ Many of the Conservatives' military commitments, announced as sovereignty initiatives, bore striking resemblance to unfulfilled promises made by the Mulroney government in the 1980s: a High Arctic base, an icebreaker, surveillance systems, and a promise to expand "the size and capabilities of the Arctic Rangers," an unfortunate but revealing misnaming of the Canadian Rangers.⁶

The Rangers – habitually depicted as Canada's frontline sovereignty soldiers – have been highly visible in the recent spasm of attention paid to Arctic issues. Most commentators assert that Canada needs a continuous military presence to maintain Canadian sovereignty in remote reaches of the Arctic Archipelago and over the Northwest Passage – a contortion of legal realities that nevertheless has significant political and popular traction. "The Rangers are our eyes and ears, and there's no substitute for boots on the ground and people living in the communities," Brigadier-General David Millar explained during a tour of Arctic communities in March 2009. "Technology doesn't always work in the extreme conditions of the High Arctic. That's why nothing can replace the Rangers, and why I reassured them they are the vital link in the North for maintaining sovereignty, representing the forces and providing security for their communities." According to Millar, the Rangers' red sweatshirts and ball caps have become "as symbolic to Canadians as the Snowbirds or RCMP."⁷

Politicians, always keen to tap into symbolism, understood this. As political interest in Arctic sovereignty and security issues rose, pressure to expand the Rangers grew apace. "The Rangers are the sole military presence over large parts of the Canadian north," the Standing Senate Committee on National Security and Defence reported in 2006. "The Government has committed to a robust presence in the North to maintain Canadian sovereignty in the region. Announcements of icebreakers, deepwater ports, [and] training facilities are welcome news, but the implementation of these initiatives is still a long way off. Until that time, Canadian security is in the hands of our Rangers." The committee recommended expanding "this valuable resource for national security" to seventy-five hundred members by 2011.⁸ The committee offered no clear rationale for this number, nor an explanation of how an expanded force

⁴ On this notion, see Rob Huebert, "Canada and the Changing International Arctic," in *Northern Exposure: Peoples, Powers and Prospects in Canada's North*, ed. Frances Abele, Thomas J. Courchene, F. Leslie Seidle, and Francis St-Hilaire (Ottawa: Institute for Research on Public Policy, 2008), 1. For indications of popular support, see Ekos Research, *Rethinking the Top of the World: Arctic Security Public Opinion Survey – Final Report* (Toronto: Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation and the Canada Centre for Global Security Studies at the Munk School of Global Affairs, January 2011).

⁵ Kathleen Harris, "Laying Claim to Canada's Internal Waters," *Toronto Sun*, 23 February 2007.

⁶ Speech from the Throne, 16 October 2007. See also Don Martin, "Invisible Force in the North; Rangers Guard Sovereignty with Old Guns, Radios," *National Post*, October 26, 2007.

⁷ Darrell Greer, "Commander Visits Rangers in Eight Communities," *Northern News Services*, 11 March 2009.

⁸ Standing Senate Committee on National Security and Defence, *Managing Turmoil: The Need to Upgrade Canadian Foreign Aid and Military Strength to Deal with Massive Change*, interim report (October 2006), 83.

would provide Canada with greater security and sovereignty. The political calculus was simple: more Rangers would evoke an image of stronger security and sovereignty.

The need for action took on new urgency when a Russian expedition led by Artur Chilingarov, a bombastic Duma politician and explorer, planted a titanium flag at the North Pole in July 2007. Although Russia's foreign minister later dismissed the act as a publicity stunt undertaken without Kremlin approval, the world took notice. Many Canadian politicians and journalists held up Chilingarov's action as the quintessential example of Russian belligerence and an abject disregard for due process and international law.⁹ Their response in turn spurred domestic and international fears of a "polar race" for frontier resources. Academics Rob Huebert, Michael Byers, and Suzanne Lalonde raised serious doubts about Canada's ability to uphold its sovereignty in the face of external challenges. Reports that the Arctic contained up to one quarter of the world's undiscovered oil and gas reserves amplified the alarm.¹⁰

Building on his earlier campaign promises and spurred by this external development, Prime Minister Harper announced measures to bolster Canada's sovereignty in the Arctic on 10 August 2007. He unveiled plans for a Canadian Forces Arctic Training Centre in Resolute, a deepwater docking and refueling facility at Nanisivik, and the expansion of the Canadian Rangers from 4,100 to 5,000 members. The Ranger expansion program had four objectives:

- to add new patrols and strengthen existing ones in the North and farther south where required.
- to put in place the command-and-control systems necessary to manage the expanded force.
- to formalize business plans for the Rangers' \$29-million-annual budget.
- to support the Ranger Modernization Project, designed to address all aspects of the Ranger' uniforms and equipment.

The plan would cost \$12 million dollars more each year – a nearly quarter-billion-dollar investment over twenty years.¹¹ According to the Prime Minister's Office, the commitment would "significantly strengthen Canada's sovereignty ... [and] benefit communities throughout the region by creating jobs and opportunities and enhancing the safety and security of the people who live here."¹²

Media commentators uniformly applauded the prime minister's announcement.¹³ "There's obvious potential to improve surveillance over a region claiming 75% of Canada's coastline using a force that's five times the size of our combat troop deployment in Kandahar yet costs less than the sticker price for three light-armoured vehicles," Don

⁹ See, for example, P. Whitney Lackenbauer, "Mirror Images? Canada, Russia, and the Circumpolar World" *International Journal* 65, 4 (2010): 879-97.

¹⁰ Franklyn Griffiths coined the label "purveyors of polar peril." Byers changed his tune abruptly in 2008 and became a strong proponent of Arctic cooperation. On these trends in a Canadian context, see Kenneth Coates, P. Whitney Lackenbauer, Bill Morrison, and Greg Poelzer, *Arctic Front: Defending Canada in the Far North* (Toronto: Thomas Allen, 2008); Michael Byers, *Who Owns the Arctic? Understanding Sovereignty Disputes in the North* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 2009); and Griffiths, Huebert, and Lackenbauer, *Canada and the Changing Arctic*.

¹¹ Stephen Harper, "Expanding Canadian Forces Operations in the Arctic," 10 August 2007, <http://pm.gc.ca/eng/media.asp?id=1785>.

¹² Prime Minister's Office, news release, "Prime Minister Announces Expansion of Canadian Forces Facilities and Operations in the Arctic," 10 August 2007, <http://pm.gc.ca/eng/media.asp?id=1784>.

¹³ In the North, some residents welcomed new infrastructure that could reduce transportation costs; others, such as Arctic Bay Ranger Sergeant Manasie Kilukishak, worried that the port and noise pollution associated with marine traffic could affect wildlife in the area. CBC Calgary, "Northerners Divided over Proposed Arctic Military Facilities," 13 August 2007.

Martin wrote in the *National Post*.¹⁴ The Rangers' cost-effectiveness had always been a key selling point, and so it remained.

Basic questions lingered. Why did Canada need more Rangers? Should the Rangers continue to expand along the East and West Coasts and in the Subarctic? What should grow: the number of patrols or the number of Rangers in existing patrols? Would new patrols be opened for sociopolitical or for operational reasons?¹⁵ Canadians feared external threats to their sovereignty and security. Should the Rangers be trained for combat or interdiction roles? Did the Rangers need to be modernized to fit with the evolving security environment of the twenty-first century?

Stephen Harper's Inheritance

The Canadian Rangers that Harper inherited were a clear success story, more numerous and well known than ever before. They had emerged from the shadows to occupy centre stage in the unfolding Arctic drama. After Operation Nunavut in 2008, reporter Bruce Valpy wrote that "just as sturdy stone inuksuit mark the territory of Inuit hunters, [Rangers] David Issigaitok, Douglas Nakoolak and Pitisulaq Ukuqtunnuaq are living symbols and not so secret weapons in Canada's Arctic sovereignty strategy."¹⁶ The Rangers had become icons of Canadian sovereignty.

Large-scale military patrols, those that extended to the remotest reaches of the Arctic, received the most attention from media and politicians. The Rangers' primary responsibility throughout the second half of the twentieth century had been to know their local areas. In the twenty-first century, however, their operational area extended far beyond their home communities. From 2007 onward, Rangers participated in three major exercises: Nunavut in the High Arctic, Nunakput in the western Arctic, and Nanook in the eastern Arctic. The annual Nunavut operations featured an "all-star" team of Rangers.¹⁷ The Rangers exercised their skills, showcased their unique contributions, and worked with other elements of the Canadian Forces (and foreign military representatives on occasion).¹⁸ Although other patrol groups mounted their own enhanced sovereignty patrols or expeditions to showcase their Rangers and raise their profiles, the absence of a perceived sovereignty threat meant that they drew comparatively little national and international media attention.

The sovereignty frame and Northern focus was typical of recent decades. The government's intermittent interest in Arctic sovereignty and security had generally dictated the military's attentiveness to the Rangers (in theory and in practice) since the Second World War. As Canada lurched from sovereignty crisis to sovereignty crisis, military interest rose and fell accordingly. The improbable threat of an enemy incursion on Canadian soil, strained defence budgets, alliance obligations, and simple geography precluded the Canadian Forces from maintaining a conventional presence over the entire length and breadth of the country. Having a lightly-equipped, self-sufficient group of local experts to act as Canada's eyes and ears in remote regions had always made sense – and the idea fit the budget when it came to meeting sovereignty and security agendas.

¹⁴ Don Martin, "Invisible Force in the North," *National Post*, 26 October 2007.

¹⁵ Major D.C. Knowles, "Record of Discussion of the Canadian Ranger National Authority Working Group held in JTFNHQ Yellowknife 31 Jan–2 Feb 2007," March 2007, Department of National Defence (DND), f. 5030-1 (ACOS DGLRes Sec).

¹⁶ Bruce Valpy, "Operation Nunavut 08," *Northern News Services*, 28 April 2008.

¹⁷ Kent Driscoll, "Where Only Rangers Tread," *Northern News Services*, 9 April 2007.

¹⁸ See, for example, Adrian Humphreys, "Defending the North," *National Post*, 7 March 2006, A8; Philippe Morin, "Boots on the Ground," *Northern News Services*, 21 August 2006; John Thompson, "Military Mounts Its Most Ambitious Arctic Trek," *Nunatsiaq News*, 23 March 2007; Hon. Lawrence Cannon, House of Commons, Debates, 4 May 2009; Hon. Chuck Strahl, *Debates*, 16 November 2009; and Claude Bachand, *Debates*, 23 February 2009 and 4 May 2009.

The Rangers survived waning interest in their activities mainly because of their tiny cost, modest material demands, and grounding in local communities. The low priority given to the defence of northern and isolated coastal regions meant, however, that the organization lacked a clear national policy and financial support for much of its history. By necessity, the Rangers developed a local and regional orientation. The unorthodox approach to recruiting and sustaining Rangers accommodated diversity. Commanders insisted that adopting national directives that failed to take into account their region's distinctive demographic, social, and cultural realities would undermine the positive relationships that grounded the Rangers.

This grassroots, regional approach had its own set of complications. For more than a decade, military studies suggested that the persistent confusion over command and control hindered the organization's growth. In operational terms, the Rangers fell under the command of their patrol group headquarters after 1997. (The "areas" owned the patrol groups and directed operations.) Less clear was who controlled the Canadian Rangers as a "national program providing a channel for governmental presence in remote communities, a bridge between the Canadian Forces and aboriginal peoples, and participating in a vital and successful youth program." The decentralized command structure worked on an operational level, but it lacked a central authority to coordinate and oversee enhancement and expansion on a national scale. The chief of review services cautioned in 2003 that "different interpretations of directives, different levels of oversight and even different views of the program's *raison d'être*, place what is generally accepted as a vital national program in some jeopardy, especially as the program becomes more complex as it inevitably will."¹⁹

To solve the problem, the chief of review services recommended the creation of the Canadian Ranger National Authority (CRNA), which would issue national directions on nonoperational elements but leave command of the units to the Land Force areas and Canadian Forces Northern Area. The Armed Forces Council approved the idea, but before the idea could be implemented the Canadian Forces announced that it would overhaul its entire command structure in June 2005. The new blueprint created Canada Command, which would be responsible for domestic and continental operations and oversee six regional joint task forces. This fundamentally changed how the military viewed Canada as an operational command – as well as the perceived operational value of the Rangers. Consequently, on 1 April 2007, the Canadian Rangers returned to the army. The chief of the land staff assumed responsibility for setting standards for Ranger readiness and employment (as the force generator) to meet Canada Command's operational needs (as the force employer). This development brought some cohesiveness to the organization and paved the way for consistent recruitment, training, equipping, and administrative support. Although each patrol group remained under the command of its respective land force area or joint task force, the transfer to the army gave them a clearer identity within the military hierarchy.²⁰

The Rangers' modest uniforms and equipment marked their unique place in the Canadian Forces. Their red sweatshirts are associated with honour and respect in their communities and across the country. Their .303 Lee-Enfield rifles – issued since 1947 and respected for their reliability in some circles and ridiculed as relics of a bygone era in others – likewise distinguish them. When journalists characterized the Rangers as "ragtag forces,"²¹ they were really using them as a means to deride the military's weak Arctic capabilities. Some outside commentators misread the modest uniforms and kit as evidence that the military valued the Rangers less than other Reservists, but they could also interpret their lack of uniformity as an acceptance of diversity. Journalists relished opportunities to depict Rangers in stereotypical costumes: sealskin mukluks, fur-trimmed hoods, wolverine mitts, or weather-beaten

¹⁹ Chief of Review Services (CRS), "Review of the Canadian Rangers," draft, September 2003, iii-v, 17.

²⁰ Staff officers could work on force and policy development on behalf of the entire organization and "plug into proper homes" within the larger land staff. Major Guy Ingram, interview with author, Geraldton, ON, 8 July 2008.

²¹ Colin Campbell, "Canada's Ragtag Arctic Forces," *Maclean's*, 22 August 2006, 30-32.

rainwear. The Rangers' self-sufficiency, borne of adaptation to unique environments, was, and remains, a key part of their mystique. They serve as a touchstone to a way of life unimaginable to most Canadians living in southern, urban centres.

Popular descriptions of the Rangers emphasized their Aboriginal composition and typically equated Rangers with Inuit defending their homeland.²² In the spectacle of the media and in political discourse, the most appropriate boots on the ground were mukluks on the tundra, planted during regular hunting activities or sovereignty patrols. As Sheila Watt-Cloutier, the president of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference (Canada) in 2002, explained, "Inuit are proud Canadian citizens and our commitment to the country is enduring; and Inuit will hold up the Canadian flag." She in turn held up the Rangers as the primary example of how instrumental her people had been in Canada's attempts to assert sovereignty in the Arctic. Inuit would not tolerate being seen or treated, and would certainly not act, "as powerless victims of external forces over which we have no control."²³

Readers of the Inuit publication *Naniiliqapita* learned in early 2006 that the Rangers gave Inuit a critical and direct role: "I get a little tickle in the back of my neck when I think about [the Canadian Forces] depending on us," Ranger Abraham Kudlu of Pond Inlet explained. "This is important to Inuit because we've never had much military presence here. It makes us feel more like Canadians." The Rangers themselves had no question that their role, mission, and tasks remained appropriate. "We hunt here so I want to keep this as ours," explained Ranger Norm Simonie, also with the Pond Inlet patrol. "This is our hunting area for muskox, walrus, beluga, polar bear, [and] rabbits." Nunavut commissioner Ann Hanson described the Rangers' vital importance and how their knowledge of land, sea, and skies had inspired Nunavummiut. "Every time I go into a community," she observed, "I see the respect and admiration of their peers. They have the skills for survival."²⁴

The Canadian Rangers represent both Canada's military presence in the North and a national strategy that engages northerners directly, accommodating both Prime Minister Harper's characterization of sovereignty as a simple matter of "use it or lose it" and Inuit leaders' appeals to the Canadian government to "use the Inuit."²⁵ Interest in their homelands is not transient, their commitment does not vacillate according to the whims of the South's political agenda,²⁶ and their activities reflect the interests of both the military and their communities. The Rangers build capacity, embody the idea of sovereignty as stewardship, and are neither reactionary nor alarmist in their design or operations. Furthermore, the organization's established record of operations, extending back over more than half a century, affirms the interconnectedness between Aboriginal knowledge, identities, and practices, on the one hand, and the nation's interest in exercising its sovereignty on a continuous basis, on the other.

The Rangers' practical contributions to their communities – not only in the Far North but from coast to coast to coast – reflect roles and responsibilities that transcend the national, regional, and local scales. The benefits of the community-military relationship flow both ways: the military receives local expertise, traditional knowledge about lands and waters, and practical support for activities in "extreme environments." Local people benefit from modest pay, training and operational experience, leadership development, and public recognition of their contributions to

²² See, for example, Randy Boswell, "Inuit Ask Ottawa for Authority to Keep Eye on Arctic," *Edmonton Journal*, 2 October 2009. The official website describes the Canadian Rangers as dedicated, knowledgeable members of the forces who "play an important role in advancing public recognition of Canada's First Nations and Inuit Groups." Quoted in Kenn Oliver, "Unsung Arm of Military Work for Common Good of the Nation," *The Labradorian*, 5 March 2007.

²³ Sheila Watt-Cloutier, "Inuit, Climate Change, Sovereignty, and Security in the Canadian Arctic" (remarks presented to Canadian Arctic Resources Committee Conference, Ottawa, 25 January 2002).

²⁴ Kerry McCluskey, "The Critical Role of the Canadian Rangers," *Naniiliqapita* (Nunavut Tunngavik Inc.), Winter 2006, 12-15.

²⁵ See, for example, Paul Kaludjak, "Use the Inuit," *Ottawa Citizen*, 18 July 2007.

²⁶ Franklyn Griffiths, "The Shipping News," *International Journal* 58, 2 (2003): 279.

sovereignty and security. “Both the Canadian Ranger and the Junior Canadian Ranger programs are strong and effective in the North and make a real contribution to local safety, national sovereignty and preservation of land skills,” Jackie Jacobson, the representative for Nunakput, told the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly in 2008.²⁷ As a long-standing member of the Rangers and the patrol sergeant in Tuktoyaktuk, he was well situated to make this case.

How do you improve upon a success story without changing the essential characteristics that made the organization a success in the first place?²⁸ To preserve trust, expectations that grow during an upswing must be sustained during a downswing. How do you balance the needs of a community-based organization with regional agendas and those of the nation? As political and popular interest in the Rangers grew – and as more resources flowed into expansion, operations, equipment, and training – decision makers had to confront basic questions debated since the early postwar period: What should the Rangers be expected to do? Where should they be located? Who should participate? How should they be organized? And how does Ranger service fit with Canada’s evolving military and civic identities?

Expansion

The Harper government promised to expand the Canadian Rangers to an average paid strength of five thousand members by fiscal year 2011-12.²⁹ There is no evidence that increasing the Rangers’ size would have any effect on the Canadian Forces’ ability to fulfill its mission. Five thousand Rangers would not provide more security or more sovereignty than forty-two hundred Rangers. By championing Ranger expansion, however, the new government could claim an existing success story as its own.

The genesis for Ranger growth did not come from the Department of National Defence, where staff officers had little advance notice of the prime minister’s announcement. In fact, some patrol groups thought numbers would only increase in 1 CRPG, given that the media and political announcements had trumpeted Ranger expansion as part of the government’s Arctic sovereignty agenda. Central authorities quickly clarified that the military would expand the organization nationwide.³⁰ Based upon its operational requirements, Canada Command ranked the priorities for new patrols in British Columbia, Ontario, the Territorial North, and the prairie provinces.³¹

Despite the government’s strong Arctic sovereignty focus, 1 CRPG would see the smallest percentage of overall growth. This weighting reflected the Rangers’ general evolution since the 1970s. Arctic sovereignty and security crises usually prompted Ranger growth, but actual expansion extended beyond settlements along the Northwest Passage and in the Arctic Archipelago, where some commentators suggested that Canadian sovereignty remained precarious. The Rangers already had a permanent footprint in all of the High Arctic communities by the early 1990s. This footprint, coupled with simple demographics, limited expansion possibilities north of the treeline. Captain Conrad Schubert, the deputy commanding officer of 1 CRPG, reported in October 2007 that “Military membership in

²⁷ Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories, *Hansard*, 2nd session, 16th Assembly, 12 June 2008, 1181.

²⁸ Captain Terry Stead, the commander of the 5 CRPG detachment in Gander, explained that the basic army principle of reinforcing success, not trying to reinvent the Rangers, should guide the process. Capt. Terry Stead, “5 CRPG Rangers Briefing,” Gander, NL, 31 October 2008.

²⁹ Lt.-Gen. M.J. Dumais, “Commander Canada Command Recommendation for the Expansion of Canadian Ranger Patrols,” 20 March 2008, DND, Canada Command, f. 3440-2 (J3 Plans 7), referencing “VCDS Report on Plans and Priorities 07/08.”

³⁰ This ambiguity was not helped by the October 2007 speech from the throne, which reiterated that “the size and capabilities of the Arctic Rangers will be expanded to better patrol our vast Arctic territory.”

³¹ Dumais, “Commander Canada Command Recommendation.”

the North ... is already more than five times the national Canadian average with 1.44% of northerners serving as Canadian Rangers against 0.27% of Canadians serving in the Regular Force and all other reserve components.”³² Every community in Nunavut had a patrol except Bathurst Inlet – an Inuit outpost in the Kitikmeot Region with no population, according to the 2006 census.³³ Five communities south of the treeline in Northwest Territories and Yukon could, potentially, accommodate new patrols.³⁴ These patrols could hardly be justified on the grounds that they would bolster Canada’s sovereignty against threats to its maritime domain in the Far North.

The Rangers could expand in the Arctic by recruiting more people into existing patrols. This approach would ensure (in theory at least) that each patrol would “make a credible presence if called on in an emergency or for training.” Once again, local demographics constrained that possibility. The average strength of patrols in 1 CRPG was twenty-seven Rangers in late 2007. This meant that, in many communities, most able-bodied adult members already participated. In patrols with a waiting list, raising the authorized limit from thirty to forty Rangers would open up new spaces. Accordingly, Schubert produced a theoretical total of twenty-four hundred potential Rangers in the Territorial North.³⁵ 1 CRPG eventually settled on a more modest target of eighteen hundred Rangers in sixty patrols by 2012.³⁶

This expansion plan met with a mixed response at the patrol level. When 1 CRPG cleaned up its administrative files and removed inactive personnel from its nominal roll in 2009, its Ranger strength actually decreased by three hundred members. Although this did not surprise local patrol commanders, they now faced pressure to make up “lost ground” in addition to expanding their membership more generally. Some long-serving Rangers expressed concern that increasing numbers for arbitrary political reasons could actually dilute the quality of recruits and destroy the fabric of their patrols. As self-administered units, many patrols managed to strike a healthy balance between youth and experience. A rapid influx of people without experience on the land or the right chemistry with existing Rangers could lessen the patrol’s ability to respond confidently in an emergency.³⁷ The long-term implications remain unclear, but 1 CRPG is set to exceed its expansion quota, indicating (numerically at least) that the growth plan has proven successful.³⁸

The national attention directed towards Rangers in the Territorial North conceals the simple reality that expansion plans after 2007 focused on Rangers “south of sixty.” Indeed, two-thirds of the expanded Ranger organization would be located in the provinces.³⁹ Defence planners had previously hesitated to authorize new patrols in the Subarctic, which faced no perceived sovereignty threat. National Defence Headquarters had invoked Operation Pause in 2003 precisely to ensure that regional sociopolitical agendas, developed by individual patrol group commanders, did not propel Ranger growth. The political imperative to reach a national target set by the prime minister himself trumped these concerns. The restraints were lifted.

³² Capt. Conrad Schubert to Comd., JTFN, “Briefing Note – 1 CRPG Ranger Expansion,” 22 October 2007, DND, 1 CRPG, f. 1920-1(DCO).

³³ See the 2006 community profile at <http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/>. The 2001 census listed five residents at Bathurst Inlet.

³⁴ Schubert to Comd., JTFN, 22 October 2007. Northwest Territories had three communities with populations over three hundred that could support Ranger patrols (Norman Wells, Hay River, and Yellowknife–Detah–N’Dilo) and two in Yukon (Watson Lake and Faro).

³⁵ Schubert to Comd., JTFN, 22 October 2007.

³⁶ Brig.-Gen. G.J.P. O’Brien, “Canadian Ranger Expansion Update,” 20 April 2010, DND, f. 1920-1 (CRNA).

³⁷ Based on interviews in Northwest Territories and Yukon in 2009. I have chosen not to cite individuals in light of the sensitive nature of this material.

³⁸ Capt. Neal Whitman, “1 CRPG Sit Rep,” 29 October 2009. Copy provided by CRNA.

³⁹ Lieutenant-Colonel Ian Pedley and Master Warrant Officer Bruce Dunn, interviews with author, Ottawa, ON, 17 February 2011.

The overall impact of this latest round of Ranger expansion remains to be seen. Once the organization reaches an active strength of five thousand Rangers, it will have reached the authorized ceiling set in 1947 for the first time – a political triumph.⁴⁰ Nonetheless, one wonders if the old maxim from the early postwar period still rings true: having the right Rangers in the right locations, doing the right things, is more important than having more of them.⁴¹

Operational Roles

Are the Rangers doing the right things? Since the Second World War, military officials have debated the Rangers' role, mission, and tasks. History reveals a litany of enhancement proposals. Some officials wanted more Ranger training, others more equipment, and still others a more orthodox military structure. Bold plans to reconstitute the Rangers as a typical regular or reserve force unit have never come to fruition. Typically, authorities in Ottawa cast aside ambitious plans because of their cost. For years, the patrol groups operated on subsistence funding augmented by money from their respective land force or joint task force headquarters.⁴² With the federal government's commitment to dramatically increased funding and its promise to enhance the Rangers, is it time to update their responsibilities?

The Rangers evolved from simply being the military's eyes and ears to serving operational, sociopolitical, and representational functions. Patrol group commanders continue to debate whether the operational or the social dimension should take priority, and commentators from outside the military have joined the discussion. Seldom do their proposals display an appreciation for how and why the Rangers took their unique form or how the Rangers' role, mission, and tasks translate across national, regional, and local scales – for both military and civilian partners. Instead, various stakeholders have pushed to repackage the Rangers into a form that fits their agendas, without recognizing the broader implications for the organization.

First and foremost, Aboriginal advocacy groups hold strong opinions about what the Rangers are and what they should become. Their perceptions align with the four pillars of Canada's northern strategy as well as their calls for a deeper understanding of sovereignty than simply "use it or lose it."⁴³ Mary Simon, the leader of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, which represents the fifty-five thousand Inuit in Canada, insisted in 2007 that Canada needed more than new Arctic patrol ships to prove that "sovereignty begins at home." Suicide rates, respiratory diseases from overcrowded housing, unfulfilled land claims provisions, and global climate change all pose more serious challenges to Inuit communities than external military threats. "It is sometimes said that war is too important to be left to the generals," Simon wrote. "In Canada's case, Arctic sovereignty is too important to be treated as just an adjunct to foreign relations or as a stage for foreign investment. It must be built from the inside out. The bedrock of Canada's status as an Arctic nation is the history of use and occupation of Arctic lands and waters by Inuit for thousands of

⁴⁰ It would silence critics who have chastised the Conservatives for failing to meet their Arctic sovereignty commitments. See, for example, Liberal Party of Canada, "Harper Conservatives' Latest Northern Strategy Announcement Amounts to Much Ado about Nothing," *States News Service*, 30 July 2009.

⁴¹ Major Jeff Allen, interview with author, Yellowknife, NT, 13 June 2011.

⁴² Maj. K. Sproule, "JTFC/LFCA Response: 3rd Canadian Ranger Patrol Group Enhancements," April 2007, DND, f. 3121-2-1 (J5 Ops). Copy provided by CRNA.

⁴³ The government's northern strategy, outlined in the 2007 speech from the throne, "focused on strengthening Canada's sovereignty, protecting our environmental heritage, promoting economic and social development, and improving and devolving governance, so that northerners have greater control over their destinies." On these speeches, see P. Whitney Lackenbauer, *From Polar Race to Polar Saga: An Integrated Strategy for Canada and the Circumpolar World* (Toronto: Canadian International Council, July 2009), and Klaus Dodds, "We Are a Northern Country," *Polar Record* 47, 4 (2011): 371-74.

years.” Simon’s practical program of action suggested ways “to goose up Arctic surveillance at a fraction of the cost” of new naval vessels. She included within her list the dramatic expansion of the Canadian Rangers.⁴⁴

Northern Aboriginal groups tout the Rangers as a key component of an integrated Arctic strategy that can contribute positively to isolated communities. The Rangers confirm how Aboriginal people “continue through use and occupancy to assert sovereignty in quiet ways.”⁴⁵ Ranger service meshes well with messages of Aboriginal patriotism, cultural viability, capacity building, and community sustainability. As a result, spokespersons have promoted transforming the military-community partnership to create jobs and to effect sociopolitical change. Why not have the military hire full-time Rangers to alleviate unemployment in Arctic communities rather than paying transient southern troops to come north on sovereignty exercises?⁴⁶ Why not recast the Rangers as a work-training program? Nunavut Senator Willie Adams observed that “boosting the Rangers’ abilities could lead to more jobs for Inuit, who could work on ships and in the Canadian Coast Guard.”⁴⁷ In Pond Inlet, settlement manager Malachi Arreak argued that “we want our Rangers trained to be pilots, military specialists, search and rescue technicians, anything to create jobs.”⁴⁸ Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami called for “a re-conceptualization and expansion of the Arctic Rangers program” so that the Rangers’ official tasks would include environmental monitoring, supplying country food to communities, providing “work for those unqualified or unable to work in wage employment, particularly in small communities,” and sustaining land-based skills, cultures, and languages.⁴⁹

Rangers already perform many of these tasks. The net result of formalizing this vision, however, would be the transformation of the Rangers into a military workfare program directed at Aboriginal communities.⁵⁰ The Rangers are not an Aboriginal program, even if some military officers, journalists, and politicians have characterized them as such. The Rangers are a subcomponent of the Canadian Forces Reserves. Proposals to recast them as a socioeconomic program, however well intentioned, threatened to erode the Rangers’ relationships with and within the Canadian Forces. Their credibility with the broader military community – one half of their identity – is at stake.

Rising expectations in regard to the Rangers’ operational role may also pull them away from community activities and local service, the other half of their identity. In 1 CRPG, the heightened tempo of activity, coupled with shortages of clerks and Ranger instructors, began to have direct effects on the ground. Ranger instructors had managed to insulate the Rangers from staffing shortages in the past, but they could not contain the impact of a deluge of extra taskings in 2009. Rangers learned that 1 CRPG would not support the Yukon River Quest, the Yukon Quest, or territorial shoots in the upcoming year. These important regional and community events fell below sovereignty operations and implementing a new national training program on the list of priorities.⁵¹ Rangers took offence. They

⁴⁴ Mary Simon, “Inuit: The Bedrock of Arctic Sovereignty,” *Globe and Mail*, 26 July 2007. For a similar message, see Paul Berton, “Time to Stake Solid Claim over Arctic,” *Toronto Sun*, 27 February 2007, and Mary Simon, “Inuit and the Canadian Arctic,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 43, 2 (2009): 250-60.

⁴⁵ Jose Kusugak, “Stewards of the Northwest Passage,” *National Post*, 3 February 2006.

⁴⁶ Patricia Bell on CBC Radio, *The House*, hosted by Chris Hall, 12 August 2006.

⁴⁷ CBC North, “Reaction Mixed to Senate Call for Stronger Canadian Ranger Presence,” 11 May 2009.

⁴⁸ Bruce Valpy, “Operation Lancaster Launched,” *Northern News Services*, 21 August 2006.

⁴⁹ Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, “An Integrated Arctic Strategy,” January 2008, 15, <http://itk.ca/>.

⁵⁰ On the concept of “military workfare,” see Deborah Cowen, *Military Workfare: The Soldier and Citizenship in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008).

⁵¹ Rangers in Haines Junction warned that 1 CRPG would start losing people if it started cancelling things such as shoots. Other Rangers said the patrol members would run these activities regardless of whether they got compensated. Observations by the author at the monthly patrol meeting, Haines Junction, YT, 16 June 2009. Rangers used to be paid in cash at the end of exercises. They had gone to direct deposit, but it now took months to get paid because headquarters was short-staffed. Larry Bagnell, MP for Yukon, also raised this issue in the House of Commons on 10 April 2008.

had built and maintained the Yukon Quest trails as an official military exercise for seventeen years and considered the task an important way to exercise their skills, publicize their contributions, and support a Yukon tradition.⁵² They questioned whether the third pillar of Ranger tasks – that of maintaining a Canadian Forces presence in the community – had become less important than politically motivated growth plans hatched in Ottawa? After a change in patrol group leadership, Ranger support for the Yukon Quest and similar community-based events resumed in 2011.⁵³

Although these situations reinforced the need for a careful balance between operational and community roles, concerns about Arctic sovereignty and security renewed debates about whether the Rangers should evolve into a more typical military unit and receive more conventional training. Photographs of Rangers in Zodiac skiffs participating alongside southern troops in beach landings during Operation Nanook in 2009 suggested a tactical role, but the Rangers officially served the exercise as guides and as “predator control.”⁵⁴ Back in the 1950s, Ranger liaison officers in Newfoundland and Quebec had cautioned that Ranger activities during army exercises could set up unrealistic expectations and distort perceptions about roles. Was imagery of Rangers operating alongside combat-ready soldiers during high-profile sovereignty operations having the predicted effect a half century later?

In a world where perception often matters more than reality, some commentators believed that the military should better prepare the Rangers for combat. Unaware of previous proposals to improve the Rangers and oblivious as to why the Rangers’ responsibilities and relationships had evolved to their present form, these pundits downplayed the Rangers’ practical contributions while propagating the idea that without more formal training they would not, and could not, contribute to Canadian sovereignty or security. One former intelligence officer scolded the Canadian Forces for vesting its Arctic defence responsibilities in reservists, particularly the Rangers, who, despite “the flow of public affairs ink at National Defence,” were “nowhere near being a serious military presence in the region.”⁵⁵ This observation reflects historical debates about amateur versus professional soldiering as much as it is a critique of the Rangers themselves. Geographer and popular author James Raffan asserted that “the Rangers’ sovereignty patrols on snow machines are something of legend, but for all their virtues, this willing band of some 4,000 part-time armed reservists in 163 communities across the North hasn’t the training or the equipment to consider any kind of interdiction, in winter or summer, on the open sea, where the only real tests to Canadian sovereignty will occur.”⁵⁶ In other words, unless they could enforce Canadian laws themselves, the Rangers had little value.

Other commentators went further in their calls to professionalize the Rangers. John Ralston Saul, renowned author and formerly Canada’s vice-regal consort, told an audience in Montreal in 2010, “I think if you asked any Canadian officer in any one of the three services they would tell you that the defence of the Arctic must primarily be civil, although there is a real need for a military presence ... There is a very real need not simply to enlarge the Canadian Rangers – the one truly Northern force – but to formalize them as a Regiment with Inuit and other Northerners in its

⁵² CBC News, “Canadian Rangers Pull Out of Yukon Quest,” 10 November 2009, <http://www.cbc.ca/>. See also Annalee Grant, “Yukon Quest Plans Alternative as Canadian Rangers Step Down,” *Whitehorse Star*, 10 November 2009.

⁵³ Several Rangers said they would break and maintain trail and run shoots without instructor support or pay. Suzanna Caldwell, “2011 Yukon Quest Begins Today in Whitehorse, Yukon,” *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*, 5 February 2011. On the superiority of the trail put in by the Rangers compared to the Alaskan leg, see Justine Davidson, “Quest Stalwart Pushes All-Yukon Replacement Race,” *Whitehorse Star*, 25 February 2011.

⁵⁴ Gabriel Zarate, “A Simulated Apex Invasion,” *Northern News Services*, 24 August 2009.

⁵⁵ Robert Smol, “When Will We Get Serious about Arctic Defence?” CBC News, 11 May 2009, <http://www.cbc.ca/>. See also Robert Smol, “We’re Not Serious about Arctic Defence,” *National Post*, 27 August 2009.

⁵⁶ James Raffan, “Policing the Passage,” *Canadian Geographic* 127, 1 (2007): 43-47, 50-52, 54, 56, 58, 60.

officer-level leadership.”⁵⁷ Without explaining how or why formalization would improve the organization, Saul’s solution sought to correct the “perfectly colonial” way in which Rangers reported to “southern commands.”⁵⁸ He did not explain how command and control actually functioned or acknowledge the military hierarchy’s respect for and unique relationship with the Rangers’ patrol-level leadership.

Parliamentary committees provided similar lines of advice. In April 2009, the Standing Senate Committee on Fisheries and Oceans recommended that the military should make the Rangers “an integral part of the Canadian reserves” and provide them with a “marine capability.”⁵⁹ Committee chair William Rompkey of Labrador explained that this would entail converting them into full reserve units with extensive formal training and more equipment. “It’s a signal for us that they’re not useful simply as guides,” Rompkey explained to reporter Bob Weber. “They are fully capable of doing the job that needs to be done in the Arctic.” Rompkey acknowledged that transforming the Rangers into primary reservists would change their terms of service, but he promised – like others before him – that a more formal maritime role and enhanced military status would bolster Canadian sovereignty over lands and seas. Who better to assert ownership and control over coastal and marine resources than a more muscular Ranger force?⁶⁰

As the debate about Arctic sovereignty and security picked up tempo, northerners complained that their voices were being marginalized by so-called experts who had jumped on the bandwagon and had no qualms about offering recommendations on how to improve matters, without having spent actual time on the ground. Few of these southern pundits displayed the self-awareness of Captain Ambrose Shea, who, humbled by his travels north in the mid-1950s, studiously avoided claiming any special authority on Arctic matters. As he put it, “the only real Arctic experts are the Eskimoes, who have forgotten more about living in the North than most white men ever learn.” Had anyone canvassed the Rangers (or the instructors who worked with them on a regular basis) about whether they thought their military status needed to change? Were commentators aware that their proposals to reconstitute, modernize, and professionalize the Rangers had been floated (and sunk) previously? Could they anticipate the real consequences for the Rangers, or could they only proffer answers to national sovereignty and security questions as they framed them from afar?

⁵⁷ John Ralston Saul, “The Roots of Canadian Law in Canada,” *McGill Law Journal* 54, 4 (2010): 671-95. Saul is married to Adrienne Clarkson and, as her consort, visited many Ranger patrols during her tenure as governor general.

⁵⁸ John Ralston Saul, “Listen to the North,” *Literary Review of Canada*, October 2009, 3-5. His idea of re-enrolling Rangers in primary reserve battalions is rebuked by Geoff Hamilton in a letter to the editor, *Literary Review of Canada*, December 2009, 31.

⁵⁹ The report cited Joseph Spears, who “believed that marine-capable Canadian Rangers would be useful in the areas of pollution response, marine SAR, security (naval boarding), climate change research, and in the exercise of jurisdiction in conjunction with other federal departments.” Standing Senate Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, *Rising to the Arctic Challenge*, 12 March 2009.

⁶⁰ Bob Weber, “Arm Icebreakers, Beef Up Rangers to Assert Canadian Control of Arctic: Senate,” *Whitehorse Star*, 7 May 2009. In Rompkey’s view, giving the Rangers enforcement powers would help the government beef up control of the Northwest Passage by monitoring small vessels and provide the Coast Guard with “the necessary muscle to enforce Canadian law.” Bob Weber, “Clamp Down on Arctic Shipping, Beef Up Coast Guard Armament: Senate,” *Waterloo Chronicle*, 14 December 2009. The government backgrounder that outlined Ranger expansion in August 2007 mentioned that the Rangers would also see an “enhancement of transportation capabilities.” As part of the Arctic Strategy Plan in 2007, Brigadier-General David Millar, the commander of Joint Tax Force North, intended to formalize the task of water surveillance and search and rescue for the Rangers. This would require equipping specific patrols with boats. Captain Neal Whitman, “1 CRPG Sit Rep,” 29 October 2009, provided by 1 CRPG. In a 2011 article, former Canadian Forces Northern Area commander Pierre Leblanc concurred that it is time to “think outside the igloo” and equip and train the Rangers for a maritime mission. See “Northwest Passage Unguarded: Thinking Outside the Igloo?” *FrontLine Defence* 3 (2011): 58-59. Commentators never discuss the practical issues of responsibility for these boats and how government ownership would affect the basic principle that the Rangers be “lightly equipped” and “self-sufficient.”

Local reactions to these calls for militarization varied, but the core debate revolved around training for combat and interdiction. “I didn’t become a Canadian Ranger to go fight in combat,” Master Corporal Warren Esau of Sachs Harbor explained. “I’d have a big problem if they decided to do something like this ... I’d rather be out shooting caribou and geese, not humans. It’s not what I want to be doing as a Ranger.” Sergeant Jonah Nakimayak of Paulatuk, a Ranger since 1988, said that he would quit if the military foisted combat training on the Rangers. “I’m getting up there in age and it wouldn’t be something I’d be interested in doing,” he said. “I can’t speak for the younger rangers, it might be something they would want to do, but I don’t really like the idea personally.”⁶¹ These voices (and others like them) clearly indicated that the Rangers had a strong sense of their personal contributions. Many imposed specific conditions on their service, and the vast majority of Rangers whom I interviewed over the last decade were pleased with their unique military status. Nevertheless, did treating and equipping the Rangers differently than other members of the Canadian Forces imply that they were lesser members?

“Let’s hope there’s never a Canadian Ranger put in a potential combat situation,” Darrell Greer, a reporter in Nunavut, stated. “But it’s asinine to suggest large numbers of Canadian Rangers would quit if the challenge to Canadian sovereignty in the North ever reached the point where they were called upon to do their share.” The Rangers’ origins lay with Pacific Coast Militia Rangers, which had been designed to repel a Japanese invasion. During the Cold War, the Rangers formed to defend northern communities from the Soviets. “Maybe it’s just me,” Greer stated, “but that doesn’t sound like the lineage of a group of people who would cut and run at the first sign of trouble.” Although he found it ridiculous to expect elders to prepare themselves for combat, he conceded that they would be among the first to sign up in an emergency. “Either way you cut it, they’re indicative of most Nunavummiut in that they’re a long way from being the undereducated and unpatriotic bunch some who don’t know any better suggest they are.”⁶²

Greer, and others like him, missed the point. No one was questioning northerners’ patriotism, their knowledge of lands and waters, or their capacity to learn from the military. The real issue was not whether the Rangers *could* be trained up to the Primary Reserve’s standards but whether they *should* be. The Rangers had proven their value in recent decades, and they had achieved a balance between their military and community contributions. Their original combat role had been removed from the Ranger task list, but that did not mean that the Rangers had ceased to contribute to the Canadian Forces. The military still had to be able to “force project” into remote regions in case of emergency, and the Rangers remained a vital force multiplier – essential subject-matter experts in their home areas. Was there a probable threat of enemy invasion that required enhanced military status and rigorous combat training for citizen-soldiers who were never expected to deploy overseas? Journalists seldom explored the deeper question of *probable* risks; they preferred instead to cite *potential* scenarios that played to a basic (and largely fictional) storyline of volatility and uncertainty in the circumpolar Arctic.⁶³

⁶¹ Andrew Livingstone, “Make Rangers Reservists,” *Northern News Services*, 20 May 2009. In this article, Dennis Bevington, the NDP member of Parliament representing the western Arctic, concurred that militarizing the Rangers and changing their mandate was the wrong approach to bolstering Arctic sovereignty. “Reservists can be called up for duty in Afghanistan,” he warned. “The assumption was that Canadian Rangers were civil authority, search and rescue and giving capacity to the communities with linkage to the military. I think they can be enhanced within that concept without having to look at full militarization.” See also CBC North, “Reaction Mixed to Senate Call for Stronger Canadian Ranger Presence,” 11 May 2009. These concerns were not confined to the North. “If you try to turn the Rangers into the Primary Reserve,” Major Tim Byers explained to me in Victoria on 13 July 2005, “it will die miserably.” Making the Rangers more militaristic would kill it, Ranger Sergeant Curtis Hicks of the Cape Freels patrol in Newfoundland told me during an interview in Musgrave Harbour on 1 November 2008.

⁶² Darrell Greer, “Not as Slow as Some May Think,” *Kivalliq News*, 20 May 2009.

⁶³ For a larger discussion of this theme, see Lackenbauer, *From Polar Race to Polar Saga*.

History should play a greater role in discussions about the Rangers' future. Lieutenant-Colonel Bob Keane wrote in 1947, "We don't want, and we don't need, further organized military bodies supplementing Active and Reserve Forces but what we need is that small groups of specially adapted people take an interest in the defence of their country in order that we may derive the greatest benefits from their knowledge and particular facilities and it is necessary that they be organized to some extent; but I am afraid that if we try to make them too military we will certainly stand to lose by it."⁶⁴ This line of argument is as valid today as it was when Keane wrote it more than six decades ago. The Ranger organization, managed on a local level, succeeds because it draws on the indigenous knowledge of its members rather than conditioning them through regularized military training regimes. If the Rangers as an organization are not broken and actually accomplish their mission through an intimate connection between the military and their home communities, why do they need to be fixed?

Fortunately, the army has rejected the idea of turning the Rangers into combat-ready units.⁶⁵ Public statements by senior military officers suggest that the Canadian Forces are pleased with the Rangers' existing roles and contributions and do not intend to add new responsibilities.⁶⁶ The army already considers the Rangers a cornerstone of their emerging Arctic strategy, which relies heavily upon reservists: four newly created Arctic response company groups designed to respond to incidents in the Arctic as well as the Yellowknife Company of the Loyal Edmonton Regiment.⁶⁷ Building an effective response capability will take time, but the army considers the Rangers "a mature capability" and "the foundation of the CF's operational capability across the North for a range of domestic missions."⁶⁸ In a military emergency, the army would expect the Arctic response groups, not the Rangers, to conduct "combined arms kinetic manoeuvre operations" – military jargon for actual fighting.⁶⁹ Nevertheless, the Rangers could keep them abreast of local developments and would help to advise and act as guides. In preparing for this unlikely eventuality, the Rangers play an important role in teaching southern-based units how to survive on the land, a skill not included in training tailored for foreign missions such as Afghanistan.⁷⁰

The patrol groups still have latitude within their areas of responsibility to undertake activities that reflect national, regional, and local priorities. Major Jeff Allen, who assumed command of 1 CRPG in mid-2010, insists that the

⁶⁴ Lt.-Col. B. Keane to Col. L.M. Chesley, 9 July 1947, Department of National Defence, Directorate of History and Heritage, f. 112.3M2(D49), vol. 1.

⁶⁵ Because many Reserve Force policies did not apply to the Rangers, the Armed Forces Council directed in April 2006 that the Rangers should form their own component of the Canadian Forces outside of the Reserve Force. Lt.-Gen. W.J. Natynczyk and Lt.-Gen. A.B. Leslie, "Canadian Rangers National Authority Transfer Instruction – Vice Chief of the Defence Staff to Chief Land Staff," 31 May 2007, DND, f. 1950-3 (1901-260/4 D Res).

⁶⁶ Scott Taylor, "On the Road with the CDS," *Esprit de Corps* 16, 10 (2009): 14. In early 2011, the chief of the defence staff clarified that the Canada First Defence Strategy was intended to increase Ranger membership, not responsibilities. Jason Unrau, "General Visits 'the Eyes and Ears of Canada,'" *Whitehorse Star*, 12 January 2011.

⁶⁷ Lt.-Gen. A.B. Leslie, "CLS Planning Guidance: Land Force Arctic Strategy," 9 March 2009, DND, f. 3000-1 (DLFD).

⁶⁸ Lt.-Gen. A.B. Leslie, draft, "CLS Planning Guidance – Arctic Response," July 2009, DND, f. 3000-1 (A/DLFD). This Ranger contribution includes sovereignty patrolling and the majority of activities in extreme conditions.

⁶⁹ Leslie, "CLS Planning Guidance: Land Force Arctic Strategy." The Rangers are cast as a "critical enabler and capability for operations in Canada's north." Brig.-Gen. G.R. Thibault, "Operationalization of Canadian Ranger Patrol Groups: Support to Canada Command," 16 October 2006, JTF(C) HQ, f. 4500-1 (COS), copy provided by CRNA.

⁷⁰ Herb Mathisen, "Looking for Company," *Northern News Services*, 12 June 2009; Keith Doucette, "Forces to Set Up Permanent Reserve Unit in Yellowknife," *Waterloo Region Record*, 6 September 2008. 1 CRPG developed a concept plan with JTFN so that the unit could act as a rapid reaction force in the North. It was first tested during Operation Nunaliivut 2011. This concept repackaged an existing capability, and the implications remained unclear at the time of writing. Jeanne Gagnon, "Speeding Up Response Time," *Nunavut News/North*, 28 March 2011; Capt. Neal Whitman, "1 CRPG Sit Rep," 29 October 2009, copy provided by CRNA; Captain Neil Whitmann, interview with author, Yellowknife, NT, 17 June 2011.

Rangers' official role, mission, and tasks do not need amending.⁷¹ Rangers have ample room to support nonconventional activities that meet military, community, and "whole of government" objectives. For example, during Nunavut's two-week mass vaccination program against swine flu (the H1N1 virus) in November 2009, Rangers played a pivotal role guiding Nunavummiut through the process and helping them fill out paperwork. *Nunatsiaq News* editor Jim Bell noted that, alongside health workers, the Rangers "achieved something that most other governments in the country have fumbled so far ... They managed to conduct a mass flu-shot clinic that worked."⁷² On the scientific front, Rangers supported southern scientists working on an International Polar Year project on ice shelves during Operation Nunavut in 2008 and set up huts for polar bear researchers along M'Clintock Channel in 2010. They also supported other government departments in identifying and verifying sites as part of the federal "legacy sites" cleanup project, and they worked with Fisheries and Oceans Canada to install navigation buoys. Allen encourages these activities, which provide new opportunities for collaboration, serve broader national interests, and give his Rangers opportunities to "patrol with a purpose."⁷³ Maintaining the balance between operational and sociopolitical benefits continues to lie at the heart of sustaining the Rangers as both a military formation and as a community-based organization.

Enhancement

What does Ranger enhancement actually mean if the Rangers, and the military establishment more generally, consider their existing role and military status to be sound? After the chief of the land staff became the Canadian Rangers National Authority on 1 April 2007, he set up a dedicated cell of staff at National Defence Headquarters to provide "overall direction and clarity" to the army commander, the patrol groups, and the Rangers. This direction included establishing national policy, validating equipment and training needs, coordinating dress changes, standardizing human resources and financial management practices, and ensuring that patrol groups had a similar structure and organization across the country.⁷⁴ In short, the army would provide the Rangers with a stronger national framework without making that framework so restrictive that the Rangers could not do their job in their particular environments. In this context, *enhancement* meant improving the day-to-day operations and administration of the Rangers as a national organization while fostering the unique aspects of each patrol group and each patrol. The army would need to recognize and balance the Ranger's operational and representational value to the military with their roles in local communities and in Canada as a whole.

Striking the right balance between national direction and flexibility is challenging. The army could no longer use the Rangers' distinctiveness as an excuse to avoid devising and implementing national policies. New Land Force Command Orders standardized enrolment, set criteria to determine whether individual Rangers were "non-effective," and articulated a formal process for releasing them.⁷⁵ The national authority also simplified the claims

⁷¹ Jeff Allen interview.

⁷² Editorial, "When Government Serves the Public Good," *Nunatsiaq News*, 3 November 2009. See also Jim Bell, "It Is Still the Best Protection You Can Get," *Nunatsiaq News*, 1 November 2009.

⁷³ Major Luc Chang, "1 CRPG Briefing to CRNA WG," October 2008, copy provided by CRNA; Jeff Allen interview.

⁷⁴ Col. S.C. McQuitty, "Briefing Note to CLS on Command and Control of 1 CRPG," 24 April 2006, DND, f. 1310-1 (DGLRes); Lt.-Col. B.G. Derbach, "Briefing Note for Commander Canada Command – Subject: Transfer of Authority – 1 Canadian Ranger Patrol Group (1 CRPG)," 24 July 2006; Lt.-Gen. A.B. Leslie, "Transfer of Canadian Ranger National Authority to Command of Land Force Command – 1 Apr 07," DND, f. 1310-1 (CR Fin DGLRes). Within the land staff, the assistant chief of staff director general land reserve secretariat oversees four CRNA positions staffed by reservists: policy, training and equipment, human resources, and finance. Lt.-Gen. W.J. Natynczyk and Lt.-Gen. A.B. Leslie, "Canadian Rangers National Authority Transfer Instruction – Vice Chief of the Defence Staff to Chief Land Staff," 31 May 2007, DND, f. 1950-3 (1901-260/4 D Res).

⁷⁵ "LFCO 11-99 – Canadian Rangers, 1 December 2010." Copy provided by CRNA.

process for damaged equipment,⁷⁶ and it raised and standardized compensation rates for equipment use.⁷⁷ The net result brought more coherence and greater protection for Rangers and patrol groups across the country. Master Warrant Officer Bruce Dunn, responsible for implementing national training standards, explained that the national authority got rid of the grey areas that used to get the commanding officers into trouble. Clearer policies meant that they were “no longer put out on a limb and acting in a dangerous zone.”⁷⁸

What about safeguarding the Rangers themselves? Staff officers had long complained about the lack of national policies to cover Rangers whose activities in harsh and unforgiving environments placed them in hazardous situations. The military expected Rangers to report unusual activities but did not pay them for this everyday task. What if Rangers had accidents that caused damage to themselves or their equipment en route to reporting a submarine or strange aircraft? What liability would the military incur for medical injuries and long-term disability benefits?⁷⁹ When Ranger Sergeant Jamesie Kootoo of Kimmirut broke his pelvis while providing support to a dog sled race across frozen Frobisher Bay, he was airlifted to hospital in Ottawa, where he remained for several months.⁸⁰ To apply due diligence, 1 CRPG began to apply basic medical screening to Rangers who wanted to participate in sovereignty patrols.⁸¹ And what if a Ranger died on duty? In April 2007, Pauloosie Paniloo, a sixty-four-year-old Ranger and highly respected elder from Clyde River, died during a routine patrol to the Fox-3 North Warning site. His family requested that he be buried in his Ranger uniform, a tremendous honour to the Rangers given his distinguished political career. He received a full military funeral akin to that of a soldier killed overseas.⁸² The death of Ranger Corporal Donald Anguyoak, a member of the Gjoa Haven patrol, in a snowmobile accident at the start of Exercise Polar Passage on 17 February 2013, serves – in the words of Prime Minister Harper – as “a stark reminder of the very real dangers that the Canadian Rangers and other members of the Canadian Armed Forces face regularly

⁷⁶ Brig.-Gen. I.C. Poulter, “Submission of Loss or Damage Claims for Personal Equipment Used in the Performance of Canadian Ranger Duties,” 16 May 2008, DND, f. 7200-1 (CRHR). Previously, processing claims for damaged equipment took too long, making Rangers reluctant to use their personal equipment. “2005 Annual Historical Report – 5 Canadian Ranger Patrol Group,” 27 February 2006, f. 1326-2 (LFAAHQ).

⁷⁷ Annex A to 7209-1 (Dres), 1 April 2003; Annex C to LFCO 11-99, 1 August 2009, copies provided by CRNA.

⁷⁸ Master Warrant Officer Bruce Dunn, interview with author, Ottawa, ON, 17 February 2011. DAOD 5100-Canadian Rangers and DAOD 5511-0 Promotion, Seniority, Reversion and Relinquishment (to be issued) will provide national direction on day-to-day operations.

⁷⁹ CRS 2003. Participants in the 2009 CRNA working group agreed that Rangers would be considered on duty when they were being paid or when authorized by the chain of command and that they were covered by the Queen’s Regulations and Orders, Chapter 9, when travelling to and from a place of duty. Maj. Jim Mills, “Record of Discussion of the Canadian Ranger National Authority Working Group (CRNA WG) held in Ottawa, 29 Sep-1 Oct 2009,” 2 November 2009, DND, f. 5030-1 (SO CR Pol DGLRes Sec).

⁸⁰ Yumimi Pang, “Ranger Injured While Helping Dog Race,” *Nunavut News/North*, 31 March 2008; CBC North, “Military to Investigate Accident Involving Canadian Ranger,” 1 April 2008; Yumimi Pang, “Kimmirut Ranger Recovering,” *Nunavut News/North*, 7 April 2008; Gabriel Zarate, “Making Ready for the Qimualaniq Quest,” *Northern News Services*, 9 February 2009; Herb Mathisen, “Alone in the Snow with Broken Bones,” *Northern News Services*, 15 September 2008.

⁸¹ Major Luc Chang, “1 CRPG Briefing to CRNA WG,” October 2008. Copy provided by CRNA.

⁸² Paniloo died while hunting caribou for his tent group. He had served as MLA for the former Baffin Centre Riding in the Northwest Territories government from 1983 to 1987 and was a former mayor of Clyde River. Adrian Humphreys, “A Ranger’s Final Patrol,” *National Post*, 25 April 2007. On Paniloo’s death, see also Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Liberal), Hansard, 23 April 2007. Paniloo’s wife, Lucy Mingeriak, was eligible for the Memorial Cross, a medal for the next of kin given when soldiers die for their country. A second death of a Ranger on active duty – that of Corporal Charlie Sheppard of Flat Bay, Newfoundland, who died during a winter indoctrination exercise with the Second Battalion, Royal Newfoundland Regiment, in 2008 – confirmed the need for clear policies. 2Lt. G.J. (Junior) Roberts, “Tribute: Farewell to Ranger Cpl. Charles Sheppard,” *Western Star* (Corner Brook), 5 March 2008.

while promoting national security and exercising sovereignty in our harsh northern territories.”⁸³ Deceased Rangers are now recognized for their Canadian Forces service with permanent grave markers on their headstones,⁸⁴ physically marking their military status.

While national policies made sense in many respects, the Ranger organization needed to retain enough latitude to manage regional diversity. The Canadian Ranger National Authority had no interest in making Rangers into warriors through standardized and streamlined training. Although the original Ranger concept had not included formal military training, over time Rangers had received both basic and collective instruction. Each patrol group had developed its own training packages and standards with varying degrees of formality and success. Representatives from each patrol group and the director of reserves had met to discuss training policies, but the need to incorporate regional uniqueness stymied efforts to standardize the training regime. When the army commander assumed responsibility for the Rangers in 2007, he specifically tasked the directorate of army training and the national authority with developing a Canadian Ranger training package in line with the army training system.⁸⁵ The resulting program comprised two development phases: DP1 Ranger, designed to provide Canadian Rangers with the general military knowledge and skills necessary to operate as a patrol member and to interoperate with other Canadian Forces units; and DP2 Patrol Commander, designed to enhance Ranger leadership skills.⁸⁶

During my visits to patrols across the country, long-serving Rangers expressed frustration that training had become boring and repetitive. Instructors trained recruits and experienced Rangers simultaneously; some Rangers had heard the same material on expectations and basic skills for decades. The new training system introduced in 2009 allowed Ranger recruits to take their DP1 course at a centralized location within their patrol group area. They received basic training in map and compass, GPS, first aid, weapons safety, and marksmanship. Much friendlier than “boot camp” in southern units, the course gave new Rangers an opportunity to receive focused attention from instructors (both patrol group staff and Canadian Rangers), meet new people, and build a sense of patrol group identity. When they returned to their patrols, they had basic qualifications that paved the way “for more advanced, formal training that would keep the Canadian Rangers interested, motivated and challenged.”⁸⁷

According to Canadian Rangers and Ranger instructors, developing and applying common training standards helps everyone, as long as the instructors can deliver the program in ways that can be adapted to the socioeconomic and cultural diversity of the Rangers they visit. Whereas training lessons in the past had been inconsistent, the new national training plan has both substance and structure. Alongside common courses, delivered to every Canadian Ranger, Rangers take supplementary courses customized for their patrol’s tasks, terrain, population, location, and culture.

One of the most acute pressures facing the Ranger organization is the need for more Regular and Reserve Force instructors. Historically, these soldiers forged and sustained relationships based on trust even as high-level support

⁸³ “Nunavut Canadian Ranger dies in snowmobile mishap,” *Nunatsiaq News*, 19 February 2013.

⁸⁴ Peter Moon, “Veterans’ Grave Markers,” *Northern Voice* (Cochrane, ON), 3 November 2009. In October 2009, the Last Post Fund presented the first headstones to deceased Rangers in Sandy Lake and Fort Albany. Major G.C. Ingram, “Annual Historical Report 2009 for 3 CRPG,” 21 January 2010, DND, DHH, 3687.

⁸⁵ Mills, Record of CRNA WG, 2 November 2009.

⁸⁶ Lt. G.J. Roberts, “5 CRPG Offers First Formal Training to Canadian Rangers,” *What’s New* (5 CRPG), September 2009.

⁸⁷ Ranger Sergeant George Sutton of Milltown, quoted in G.J. Roberts, “Busy Weekend for Canadian Rangers of the Milltown Patrol,” *The Coaster* (Harbour Breton, NL) 29 September 2009. See also Jennifer Geens, “New Rangers Graduate from Training Course,” *Northern News Services*, 27 March 2009; Major Luc Chang, 1 CRPG Briefing to CRNA WG, October 2008; Lt. Shalako Smith, “Canadian Rangers Go Back to the Basics,” *The Labradorian*, 20 July 2009; Emily Ridlington, “Nunavut Has Four New Canadian Rangers,” *Northern News Services*, 26 February 2010.

for the Rangers ebbed and flowed. They often did (and do) so at personal expense, enduring much of the year “on the road” or “on the land,” adapting their training to distinct communities and cultures, all the while learning from the Rangers.⁸⁸ When the government promised expansion and enhanced training in 2007, the patrol groups were already overstretched by the high tempo of training and the small number of instructors available. Some patrol groups found it difficult to fill instructor positions given the competition for experienced combat arms sergeants while Canada was at war abroad. For all the heightened political interest in the Rangers, instructors remain a Priority 6 posting – the lowest in the military.⁸⁹ More money now flows into the Ranger organization than ever before, but instructors – the critical link between the patrols and the military establishment – remain the scarcest commodity of all.

If the chief constraint on the Rangers’ growth has been their budget, this ceased to be the case when Prime Minister Harper made his announcement in August 2007. To facilitate expansion, his government promised sustained annual funding of \$29 million, an incremental investment of \$12 million annually that would amount to more than \$240 million over twenty years.⁹⁰ Once the money started flowing, it more than doubled the operating budget of some patrol groups.⁹¹

The Rangers reaped material benefits. Equipment usage rates for “use, wear and tear” on their personal equipment during formal activities increased, as did their allotment of Ranger kit.⁹² Since the initial Ranger Enhancement Project in 1995, patrols and individual Rangers had received a growing array of military-issued equipment. The Canadian Rangers Equipment Modernization Project allotted \$45 million to ensure that the Rangers have “light equipment of the best quality to allow them to perform their tasks effectively.”⁹³ The new equipment list (scale of issue) includes duffel bags, ballistic eyewear, backpacks, and multi-tools.⁹⁴ Despite this investment, communications remain a persistent issue. The modernization program has allocated satellite phones to patrols and will also deliver a new

⁸⁸ On their roles, see P. Whitney Lackenbauer, “Teaching Canada’s Indigenous Sovereignty Soldiers,” *Canadian Army Journal* 10, 2 (2007): 66-81. In 2007, all five commander officers at the Canadian Ranger national working group agreed to try to reduce the instructor-to-patrol ratio from one to six to one to four. This reduction would heighten demands for new instructors even further. Maj. T.C. Byers, “Request for Additional Canadian Ranger Patrols within Land Force Western Area,” 2 March 2007, DND, f. 1901-1-2 (GSC).

⁸⁹ In 2007, 1 CRPG requested support from CRNA to increase its posting priority from six to at least five or four to address personnel shortfalls. Mills, Record of CRNA WG, 9 October 2007. It noted that further expansion would require at least two more Ranger instructors in the patrol group (assuming seven patrols per instructor). Capt. Conrad Schubert to Commander, JTFN, “Briefing Note – 1 CRPG Ranger Expansion,” 22 October 2007, DND, 1 CRPG, f. 1920-1 (DCO).

⁹⁰ Stephen Harper, “Expanding Canadian Forces Operations in the Arctic,” 10 August 2007, <http://pm.gc.ca/eng/media.asp?id=1785>.

⁹¹ Ian Pedley and Bruce Dunn interviews. For example, 5 CRPG’s budget rose from \$2.5 million in 2008 to \$4.2 million in 2009. Lt.-Col. Jamie Morse, “5 CRPG Canadian Ranger Program,” Briefings to CRNA WG, October 2008 and October 2009. Copies provided by CRNA.

⁹² “LFCO 11-99 – Canadian Rangers,” 1 December 2010. Copy provided by CRNA. Rangers could freely invest this money in either maintaining or purchasing new personal equipment, which they could also use in their daily lives. This directive reinforced the principle that Rangers would be lightly-equipped and self-sufficient and not dependent on the military for equipment and vehicles. Most of the Rangers I spoke to preferred increasing these allowances over (taxable) increases in pay. On the pay issue, see, for example, the editorial “Enhancing the Uniform,” *Northern News Services*, 21 July 2008; Yvon Lévesque (Abitibi-Baie-James-Nunavik-Eeyou, BQ), *Hansard*, 13 June 2007; Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Liberal), *Hansard*, 4 November 2009.

⁹³ Harper, “Expanding Canadian Forces Operations.”

⁹⁴ “Canadian Ranger Prioritized Individual Clothing and Equipment List as of 24 October 2007,” Flag C to DND, 22 October 2007, DND, f. 100001-1 (DGL Res Sec).

radio.⁹⁵ More equipment (still unspecified) will be prepositioned in communities so that Rangers can respond more quickly to emergencies.⁹⁶

The Ranger uniform is also changing. The red sweatshirt, however modest a form of military dress, is distinctive and unique to the Canadian Rangers. It is also compatible with the original principle that the Rangers be self-equipped and wear their own environmentally appropriate clothing when operating on the land. For decades, Rangers have requested additional army clothing so they can look more uniform while on parade. Individual patrol groups issued pieces of clothing on their own initiative, but senior military authorities usually resisted increasing the official scale of issue on logistical and financial grounds. After the handover ceremony of the Ranger national authority in October 2007, however, the chief of the land staff committed to a “Clothe the Ranger” project so that all Rangers would receive tangible evidence that the army valued them.⁹⁷ Only a few years before, patrol groups were refused CADPAT combat pants for their Rangers. Once they joined the army, however, the rules changed. The military has begun to supplement the Rangers’ ballcap, sweatshirt, and t-shirt with a red fleece, an ICE jacket, a rain suit, wet-weather boots, socks, wind pants, and combat gloves.⁹⁸ The army still expects the Rangers to wear personal clothing appropriate for local conditions, but this new ensemble has clearly expanded the “Ranger red” brand.

Although the red sweatshirt has become an icon of Canadian sovereignty and patriotism in remote regions, the .303 bolt-action rifle remains the most enduring symbol of the Rangers. “For more than half a century, the mostly Inuit patrols have roamed around the rugged region on snowmobiles and on foot, toting antique wooden rifles in defence of Canadian sovereignty,” one journalist noted.⁹⁹ The depiction of the rifle as an obsolete relic of a bygone era is less a metaphor for the Rangers themselves than a means for media commentators to criticize the military for not supporting the organization sufficiently. A few Rangers complained about the rifle,¹⁰⁰ but most appreciated its reliability. Military officials had discussed replacing the rifle for decades, but without a clear deficiency they had trouble identifying and justifying a replacement. General Walt Natynczyk, the chief of defence staff, explained the problem during a brief stop in Yukon in January 2011: “Over the past five years, this is an issue that’s come in and gone out so many times, because we have folks, mostly from the South, who want to give the Rangers a newer, more modern weapon ... But the feedback we get from many Rangers, depending on who you talk to, they want a simple weapon. And the Lee Enfield .303 rifle that the Rangers have, although it’s old, it’s one of the most reliable, simple and accurate weapons, that’s ever been designed.” He recalled a conversation at Rideau Hall with Ranger Sergeant Allan Pogotak of Ulukhaktok (Holman), who told him that “you can take this weapon, it can be dropped in the ocean, you pick it up and shoot and it fires and fires true. And when anyone in my patrol breaks this weapon, I can go on the Internet and order the parts, and it’s delivered in a week.”¹⁰¹

⁹⁵ The Rangers’ current radios have limited range, cannot be operated on the move, and are unreliable in extreme conditions, which Rangers frequently encountered. CRNA WG, minutes, October 2007.

⁹⁶ Maj. K. Sproule, “JTFC/LFCA Response: 3rd Canadian Ranger Patrol Group Enhancements,” April 2007, DND, f. 3121-2-1(J5 Ops). Copy provided by CRNA. See also “New Equipment Will Soon Be Distributed,” *Arctic Exposure: 1 CRPG Newsletter*, 1 March 2010, 9.

⁹⁷ Capt. J. Mills, “Briefing Note to the CLS on the Proposed Canadian Ranger Equipment Modernization Project (CRMP) and Immediate Individual Equipment Requirements,” 29 October 2007, DND, f. 10001-1 (DGL Res Sec), and Ian Pedley and Bruce Dunn interviews, 17 February 2011.

⁹⁸ Mills, “Record of Discussion of CRNA WG, 30 Sep-2 Oct 2008.”

⁹⁹ Alexander Panetta, “Jean Dons Red Sweater on Her Arctic Visit,” *Globe and Mail*, 14 April 2008.

¹⁰⁰ For example, Sergeant Eddie McPherson, the patrol commander in Tulita, told a reporter that his biggest frustration was with “these antique guns ... It’s hard to get parts for them. A lot of them have bent barrels.” Tim Querengesser, “Embedded with the Canadian Rangers,” *Up Here* 26, 7 (2010): 31.

¹⁰¹ Jason Unrau, “General Visits ‘the Eyes and Ears of Canada,’” *Whitehorse Star*, 12 January 2011.

Time, however, has caught up with the Ranger rifle. In 2007, the military estimated that, with the planned expansion to five thousand Rangers, its existing stock of Lee-Enfield rifles would only last up to twelve years. The worldwide pool of used .303 rifles has shrunk steadily, and there is a high risk that the Canadian Forces will not be able to procure suitable replacements when its stock runs out. Finding a replacement will not be easy. “There is a good probability that the New Ranger Rifle would resemble the current rifle in fit, form and function,” Major Jim Mills, the staff officer responsible for Ranger training and equipment, noted. “Only a very robust model, with a bolt-action would have the guaranteed reliability and service life to meet the Rangers’ expectations.”¹⁰² Delivery of the new rifle is expected to start in 2014.¹⁰³ Time will tell if the replacements have the same endurance, reliability, and mystique as the vaunted .303.

Conclusion

“If Canada’s Arctic sovereignty has a brand, it’s the red Rangers hoodie,” journalist Tim Querengesser noted in *Up Here* magazine in 2010.¹⁰⁴ The military does not take this symbol lightly. Historically, commentators often associate military practices (and those of the state more generally) with physical dislocation, environmental degradation, political disruption, and culture shock.¹⁰⁵ In the case of the Canadian Rangers, however, the interconnectedness between the military, remote communities, and Canadian society is respected as a constructive force. “We’re here to make sure Canada’s North stays safe and sovereign,” Ranger David Nivingalok explained. “Rangers patrol some of the most important hunting ground of the Inuit people.”¹⁰⁶

This comment encapsulates how Ranger service straddles community, nation, and country. During a decade of travel with Rangers across the country, I have been struck by the strong current of patriotism and loyalty that underpins their sense of service. One of the original benefits that defence planners emphasized when they conceived the Rangers was having “friends on the ground” when conducting operations in remote regions. This remains as true today as it was during and immediately after the Second World War. In Inukjuak, Ranger Eli Weetaluktuk told me that the Rangers bring “respect and integrity” to the military in Nunavik.¹⁰⁷ This is true from coast to coast to coast.

Rangers in the eastern Arctic unilaterally added the word *voice* to their organization’s official motto: they consider themselves the eyes, ears, and voice of the Canadian Forces in their communities and in the North more generally.¹⁰⁸ This grassroots addition reinforces the importance of meaningful communication at all levels. The Rangers represent

¹⁰² Capt. J. Mills, “Briefing Note to DGL Res on the Proposed Canadian Ranger Equipment Modernization Project (CRMP),” 31 August 2007, DND, f. 10001-1 (DGL Res Sec). Mills noted that very few modern “sport model” rifles would compare favourably to the Lee-Enfield. The calibre will be 7.62 mm/.308 Winchester, thus ending the historical connection between the Rangers and the .303 Lee-Enfield. Mills, “Record of Discussion of CRNA WG, 30 Sep-2 Oct 2008.”

¹⁰³ Ian Pedley and Bruce Dunn interviews. The rifle replacement is part of the formal Small Arms Modernization Project, an army project of which the Ranger rifle is only a small part. Delivery will be phased in over three years. Major Jim Mills, “Record of Discussion of the Canadian Ranger National Authority Working Group (CRNA WG) held in Ottawa, 29 Sep-1 Oct 2009,” 2 November 2009, DND, f. 5030-1 (SO CR Pol DGLRes Sec). This timeline was confirmed the following year. See Lt.-Col. Tim Byers, “CO’s Corner,” *The Ranger*, Fall 2010, 5.

¹⁰⁴ Querengesser, “Embedded with the Canadian Rangers,” 24.

¹⁰⁵ See, for example, Frances Abele, “Confronting ‘Harsh and Inescapable Facts’: Indigenous Peoples and the Militarization of the Circumpolar Region” in *Sovereignty and Security in the Arctic*, ed. Edgar Dosman (London: Routledge, 1989), 189, and Mary Simon, “Militarization and the Aboriginal Peoples,” in *Arctic Alternatives: Civility or Militarism in the Circumpolar North*, ed. Franklyn Griffiths (Toronto: Samuel Stevens, 1992), 60.

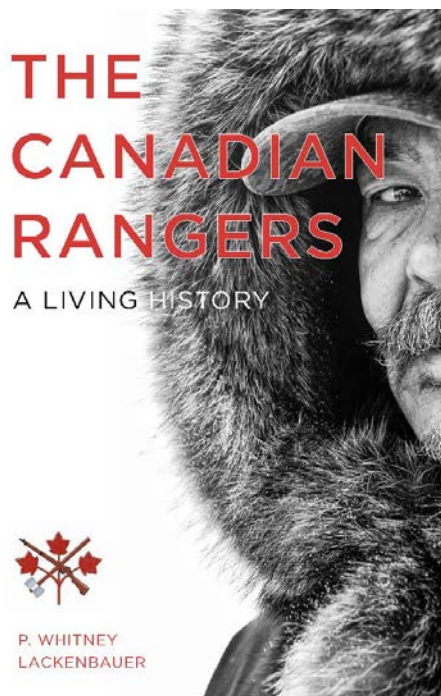
¹⁰⁶ Darren Stewart, “Extreme Weather School,” *Northern News Services*, 24 March 2003.

¹⁰⁷ Eli Weetaluktuk, interview with author, Inukjuak, QC, 1 September 2006.

¹⁰⁸ Peter Kuniliusee, quoted in an interview with Petty Officer Paul Smith, flight from Toronto to Halifax, 20 February 2006.

an ongoing dialogue – about what is happening in remote regions, about how the military can best operate in the North, and about the importance of connecting considerations of sovereignty and national security to an intimate sense of place. Skeptics may dismiss the Rangers as another form of subordination – as token accommodation by the military to co-opt Aboriginal people into accepting state sovereignty, militarism, and liberal state hegemony,¹⁰⁹ but this view denies the Rangers’ own sense of empowerment. Rangers recognize that they have power – the military depends upon them. During annual patrol training in 2007, Sergeant Simeonie Nalukturuk, the patrol commander in Inukjuak, described the Rangers as “the eyeglasses, hearing aids, and walking stick for the CF in the North.”¹¹⁰ His allusion to the Canadian Forces’ inability to operate unassisted in Inuit Nunangat—the Canadian Inuit homeland—is unmistakable.

The positive relationship between the Canadian Rangers, their communities, the military, and the Canadian state is a striking example of what can be achieved when policies and practices are rooted in a spirit of accommodation and mutual respect. Even strong relationships can be enhanced, but when something is not broken it is important not to break it. Promised investments to enhance the Rangers’ capabilities and training can be well directed, as long as they respect the Rangers’ longstanding roles and mission and are rooted in a robust awareness of how and why the organization has evolved into its current state. Canadians must be careful not to set up the Rangers to fail by asking too much of them, unravelling their ties and relevance to the military, or, conversely, trying to over-militarize them to face a theoretical enemy that is unlikely to challenge our Arctic sovereignty and security in the near future.



For a complete list of sources, please see the book *The Canadian Rangers: A Living History*, published by UBC Press in April 2013.

¹⁰⁹ For example, Peter Kulchyski insists that “regardless of the level of power provided to Aboriginal governments, every decision that is made following the dominant logic, in accordance with the hierarchical and bureaucratic structures of the established order, will take Aboriginal peoples further away from their own culture. Every decision that is made in the form appropriate to traditional cultures will be another step in the life of that culture”: *Unjust Relations: Aboriginal Rights in Canadian Courts* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1994), 121.

¹¹⁰ Participant observation with the Inukjuak patrol, 22 August–1 September 2006.

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