



DISPATCHES

THE ROYAL UNITED SERVICES INSTITUTE OF NOVA SCOTIA

Fall Edition 2013

RUSI (NS) PROGRAM

Day, Date	Time	Location	Remarks
Wed Sep 25	1200-1400	RA Park Air Force Room	Special General Meeting to discuss the future of RUSI Nova Scotia
Wed Oct 16	1200 - 1400	Citadel Army Museum	Distinguished Speaker Series commences. Major John Harrison will speak on the Middle East
Wed Nov 6	1830 for 1900	RA Park Main Dining Room	Annual Remembrance mess dinner
Wed Dec 4	1200--1400	RA Park Lower Bar	Annual Christmas get together

RUSI (NS) AT A CROSSROADS!

SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING PLANNED TO DISCUSS OUR FUTURE

Recently our President, Dan Tanner, sent out a letter to the general membership and in plain terms he spoke of a situation which hopefully, with your support, we can avoid. To quote some of his letter to you:

....."our current executive's mandate will draw to a close in February of 2014 and so we need committed individuals to succeed executive members at that time. In my letter to the Board, I asked that each of us give serious thought to serving RUSI (NS) in this way, either by indicating an interest yourself or approaching others who we feel may be inclined to serve. To date, we've received no response to the letter, and as a result, I plan to ask the Secretary to call a Special General Meeting for September 25th, 2013 at Royal Artillery Park in order to more appropriately deal with this crucial topic. The results of this general meeting will be brought before the Board later in the month.



For the time being, I again encourage all of us to continue to consider serving on the executive committee for 2014/2015 and beyond. It's not an over-dramatization to say the future of our Institute depends on how we resolve this issue, and indeed the Board has already put several otherwise important items on hold until we effectively respond to the current challenge. Notice for the Special General Meeting in September will be sent out in accordance with our Articles of Association".....

So there you have it. If we are to continue on as a viable organization, we need interested people who wish to work hard at keeping RUSI alive and more importantly, re-vitalize the way we operate, what we present to our members, and make the Institute one in which we are proud to belong to.

In keeping with the President's direction, a Special General Meeting will take place at RA Park, Air Force room at noon on Wednesday, September 25th. This will be a one agenda topic only – our future and our survival. Please plan to attend.

THE FALL PROGRAMME

In addition to the Extraordinary General Meeting planned for September, we are going ahead with three other interesting events for the fall. In October, our Vice President John Harrison will be making a presentation on the Golan Heights situation and providing an update on the turmoil in the Middle East. In November we will hold our members-only Remembrance Mess Dinner and close off the year early in December with a lunch-time get together to start us on the way to the Christmas holiday season. See the chart on page one for a listing of these events.

PAST PRESIDENT NAMED HONOURARY COLONEL

Our immediate Past President , Tom Birchall was informed by the Minister of National Defence in late June of his appointment as Honorary Colonel of 12 Wing Shearwater. Here is an excerpt from the MND letter:

"Upon the recommendation of the Chief of the Defence Staff, I am pleased to approve your appointment as Honorary Colonel of 12 Wing Shearwater.

The practice of honorary regimental appointments in Canada dates back more than a century. Although the tasks and roles of units have changed over the years, it remains the role of the Honorary to serve as a link between the community and the Canadian Armed Forces. In this activity, distinguished Canadians such as you, serve extremely well.

I am certain that over the next three years you will gain a heightened appreciation of the importance of your unit within the community. And in turn, this appointment will provide unique and satisfying experiences and will benefit the Canadian Armed Forces.

I wish to congratulate you on your appointment and thank you for your interest in the Canadian Armed Forces and the community".

The letter was signed by Peter MacKay. Congratulations from all of us Tom.



NEW WEBSITE

The chair of the SAC, Colin Darlington has informed us of a new website you may be interested in viewing for up to date military affairs. Go to: <http://paper.li/CanMNews/military>.

TIME TO REBOOT CANADA'S DEFENCE STRATEGY

The following op-ed is offered by former lieutenant-general George Macdonald, a research fellow of the Canadian Defence & Foreign Affairs Institute and senior consultant with CFN Consultants:

The Canada First Defence Strategy, released in May 2008, remains unchanged even though many of the circumstances that existed when it was written have evolved. In 2008, the Canadian Armed Forces were still very much occupied with a large contingent of personnel in Afghanistan, fighting in a combat situation that was becoming increasingly unpopular with the Canadian public. The transition to a smaller, training mission centered around Kabul has now all but removed the mission from our consciousness, even though almost 1,000 personnel continue to serve in what can only be assessed as a dangerous country.

The defence budget has also taken hits as a major target for a deficit-fighting government trying to limit federal discretionary spending. These reductions have affected operational budgets for the most part – capital spending on major new equipment remains protected in order to carry out the listed Defence Strategy plans.

So we have, for example, a situation where the (now former) commander of the Canadian Army raises the alarm about not having enough funding to conduct training and maintain skills hard-won in Afghanistan and, at the same time, a large project to purchase a fleet of close-combat vehicles for about \$2 billion. While having modern equipment is helpful, we should be comfortable that it will meet a need that is consistent with the government's defence policy and that the allocation of resources will be balanced to ensure adequate training and support will also be available to safeguard its effective employment.

What employment might that be?

If world events suddenly precipitated circumstances where another large combat mission was potentially needed, would Canada be as ready to stand up as we were in the months following 9/11? (Indeed, would the Americans be as aggressive in their actions if a similar scenario played out again?) Do we remain as concerned about the threat of terrorism as we should be, given the incidents that have occurred in allied nations since 9/11? Do we have an adequate understanding of other threats that could demand a military reaction? Do we understand the implications for Canadian security of the many instances of strife and conflict in the world? Is our ability to deal with cyber-attacks anywhere near what it needs to be to ensure the security of our power supply, electricity, transportation system and health care?

Overall, we should be asking ourselves if we are being realistic in assigning the necessary priority to the defence and security capabilities we will need in the future, however uncertain these might be. This is certainly easier said than done, but demands regular, concerted focus if we are serious about what capabilities we need and how we might employ them.

This is not a new dilemma. Unexpected developments such as the fall of the Berlin Wall, a world recession, terrorist attack or major natural disaster, all with fallout implications for our economy and security, will



continue. Sometimes the best we can do is hedge our bets to develop capabilities that will be as multi-purpose, efficient and effective as possible.

Defence resources should be dedicated to nurturing capabilities that will have the highest probability of being useful, recognizing that we will likely be employing them in a multinational effort, working closely with like-minded nations. This was the case, for example, in the support provided to the Libyan air campaign.

By almost any measure, then, it is time to review, modify and re-issue the Canada First Defence Strategy. A failure to recognize that circumstances have changed since it was issued will almost certainly result in the procurement of capabilities that are less relevant to future operations than they were initially thought to be. New technologies are evolving. Funding is not as available as previously projected. Major defence projects have fallen behind their anticipated procurement dates, and the need for personnel to deploy to a combat zone is not readily apparent at this time.

A reaffirmation of our defence priorities, with a realistic assessment of what can be done within the current and projected defence budget, is needed now. Otherwise, the prevailing uncertainty surrounding defence procurement, and the lack of direction in how funding should be allocated, will continue to compromise the real capability of the Canadian Armed Forces, to the detriment of the public it serves and the missions it might be called upon to fulfill.

George Macdonald is a research fellow of the Canadian Defence & Foreign Affairs Institute and senior consultant with CFN Consultants. He is a retired lieutenant-general who served 38 years in the Canadian Forces, and was vice-chief of the Defence Staff from 2001 to 2004.

IN MEMORIAM

We are sorry to announce the passing of long-time RUSI member, LCol Philip Dumaresq who passed away on May 23rd. May he rest in peace.