



The Standing Senate Committee on National Security and Defence

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Le Comité sénatorial permanent de la sécurité nationale et de la défense

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Canadian Security Guide Book 2007 Coasts

*A Report of the Senate Committee on
National Security and Defence*

CONTAINS 10 NEW RECOMMENDATIONS

At the core of the current federal government's national defence philosophy are the words *Canada First*. Canada First is a simple concept: while the Canadian military is going to continue to defend Canada's interests abroad, the defence policy priority is to assure the security of Canadians and Canada's sovereignty at home.

Any priority, of course, requires a vision if it is to be properly implemented – a vision that matches problems with solutions and coordinates solutions so they work in harmony. Such a vision must take Canada's geography into account.

Militarily, Canadians used to have what seemed like a tremendous geographic advantage – that being the remoteness of our country from the world's major trouble spots. But that was then; now is now. The events of September 11, 2001 clearly demonstrated that North America's enemies are capable of exploiting any domestic vulnerabilities that become apparent to them.

One of Canada's most obvious vulnerabilities is the sheer size of the perimeter that we must defend. At 243,000 kilometers, Canada has the world's longest shoreline. This presents a huge challenge in terms of national defence.

This report updates the Committee's analysis of what has been done – or not done – to improve surveillance and policing of our country's coasts. **The crux of its message is that the Committee has seen little evidence of the kind of governmental vision it is going to take to coordinate and strengthen Canada's**

coastal defence – either from the current government, or the government that preceded it.

It has been three and a half years since the Committee published *Canada's Coastlines: the Longest Under-Defended Borders in the World*. Since that time the Committee acknowledges that it has witnessed some modest efforts to upgrade coastal defence.

But there have been far more disappointments than achievements.

For instance:

NO GUARD COAST GUARD. The Canadian Coast Guard, which the Committee has recommended be given constabulary powers, remains a largely wasted resource in terms of strengthening Canada's defensive capabilities. The Auditor General recently declared that the Coast Guard is badly in need of revamping. The Committee believes that this revamping should be built around a vital new capacity to do what the CCG's name implies: *guard our coasts*.

NO IDEA WHAT'S OUT THERE. The High Frequency Surface Wave Radar project that the Department of National Defence seemed so confident about would finally give our military a clear picture of what threats may be coming at Canadians across our littoral waters has been put on the back burner after it proved to be unreliable as well as an interference to a licensed frequency. HFSWR has not been replaced by drones or satellites or any other technology that provides real-time surveillance. This leaves Canada incapable of detecting potential threats in real time.

SIMPLE IDENTITY SIGNALS NOT REQUIRED. Transponders that signal the location and identity of a vessel have now become cheap enough that they should be required on cabin cruisers and any other vessel of a size that could carry a dirty bomb. These devices would not only improve Canada's security, they would be useful for search and rescue. But the only vessels required to use transponders in Canadian waters are those weighing more than 300 tonnes, leaving about 99 percent of vessels plying Canada's littoral waters unidentified and unidentifiable.

THE SOFT UNDERBELLY OF THE GREAT LAKES. Canadian security on the Great Lakes and adjoining waters consists of three patrol vessels (one RCMP and two Coast Guard) staffed by 14 RCMP officers and some provincial and local police. Security on the vast Canadian waters of the Great Lakes is largely in the hands of small marine units of local police forces. These patrols have barely

enough resources to deal with local pleasure boat traffic let alone protect critical infrastructure or prevent acts of terrorism. Compare that to U.S. security on the Great Lakes and adjoining waters: the 9th Division of United States Coast Guard (USCG) – the lead agency in the United States responsible for securing the Great Lakes, employs approximately 2200 active duty members located at 48 stations from Alexandria Bay, New York to Duluth Minnesota.

WHY FOCUS ON NORTHERN WATERS? With defence on the Canada's littoral waters in disarray on our East, South and West coasts, the Committee finds it unfathomable that the government has announced its intention to get the Canadian Navy much more involved in Canada's northern waters, where little or no threat exists to the security of Canadians. Disagreements over Canada's sovereignty in these waters are not going to be settled through the use of gunboats. They will be settled through the use of diplomacy or in the courts. Canada's Navy is not trained or equipped for icebreaking, nor is it the right agency to exert Canadian sovereignty in the North. Draining the Navy's already inadequate budget to play such an inappropriate role makes no military sense.

These are some of the components the Committee believes are creating huge gaps in what should be a coherent vision about how to best defend Canada's coastal waters. The examples are not inclusive. The report contains analysis of other issues as well. It also contains a series of recommendations meant to redress the inadequacy of Canadian coastal security.

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The report is available online in the "Reports" section of the Committee's Web site, www.sen-sec.ca.

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