

Globalization and Asymmetrical Warfare: Operation Athena

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Abstract

Since 2003, *Operation Athena* represents Canada's contribution to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. This article explains the Canadian role as an international security provider in general and a closer look on the background, the rationale and the structure of *Operation Athena* - how it supports the Canadian priorities and objectives in Afghanistan toward 2011.

Keywords: globalization, Operation Athena, terror

The 9/11 terrorist attacks represent the largest lost of human life resulted from a foreign attack in North America. In less than a day, the world political map had dramatically changed. A new enemy forced us to redefine our concepts in terms of defense and security. More sophisticated, disciplined, patient and lethal, who make no distinction between military and civilian targets, who don't use words like "collateral damage", this new kind of danger reveal us that our democratic values are far from being safe. This lesson shows us, beyond any doubt, that in this new age of terror, we all are primary targets.

In the immediate aftermath of the terrorist attacks, the international community became aware of the necessity of an elaborated plan of action capable to prevent future attacks of this kind. The ultimate goal is to preserve our democratic values, our present civilization. To accomplish that, we have to enter into a new global conflict, which soon has become known as the "War on terror". In terms

of defense and security, Canada has always considered United States as a loyal and traditional partner. Bound by strong economic ties, sharing similar democratic values, our countries continue to work together to preserve our common legacy. The 9/11 terrorist attacks shows us the necessity to reevaluate our security architecture to meet this type of new threats. Facing this new enemy, it became evident the necessity of a strong and more synchronized global response. As partners in North American Aerospace Defense Agreement and North Atlantic Treaty Organization and also by conducting military exercise together, collaborate in security-related research, Canada and United States stress the necessity to improve their efforts in providing a unique and adequate defense solution.

As Canada First Defense Strategy states, the security efforts should be focus on keeping our citizens safe and secure, defending our sovereignty, and ensuring that Canada can return to the international stage as a credible and influential country, ready to do its part. Defending North America is an important commitment assumed by Canada. To create a more effective and responsive army, the Department of National Defense's budget will be substantial increase with funds close to 490 billion \$ over a period of two decades. As a partner in the campaign against terrorism, Canada had deployed civilian and military personnel to Afghanistan and to the Persian Gulf since 2001 and participated in joint operations with US. A mutual commitment to "war on terror" demonstrates the importance of cooperation in securing North America. As a result, to better protect our citizens and economic interests and also to create a zone of confidence against terrorist activity, we combined our efforts to increase the security of our borders. This agreement was also a common approach to securely facilitate the flow of people and commerce between Canada and United States.

Defending North America against 21st century threats remain a priority for Canada as well as for United States. Geography, economic interdependence, share values and interests had increased our close cooperation. Therefore, we have currently over 80 treaty-level defense agreements (such as North American Aerospace Defense Command, Canada-United States Permanent Joint Board on Defense, Canada-United States Military Cooperation Committee, Defense Development and Defense Production Sharing Arrangements, The Canada-US Testing and Evaluation Program, The North American Technology Industrial

Base Organization, Mutual Support and Integrated Lines of Communication Memoranda of Understanding etc), more than 250 memoranda of understanding between our defense departments and close to 145 bilateral forums related to defense issues. These military organizations, created as a result of these agreements, became more important in achieving our common security. The importance of domestic issues, like Hurricane Katrina - 2005, increased also the role played by Canadian Force in providing help to local authorities in North America. Also, as a part of its aerospace control mission, NORAD assists in the detection and monitoring of aircraft suspected of illegal drug trafficking. In May 2006 a maritime warning mission was added to NORAD Agreement which also shows the importance of cooperation between Canada and United States. Canada-United States Permanent Joint Board of Defense remains the highest-level defense forum on security issues affecting North America since its creation in August 1940.

Canada was a trusted ally of United States in most major conflicts since the Second World War, including the Korean War, the Gulf War and most recently the war in Afghanistan. In terms of defense, the “Framework for Enhanced Military Cooperation among North American Aerospace Defense Command, United States Northern Command and Canada Command” stress the necessity of complementary mission and cooperation to meet our individual and collective responsibilities for the defense and security of North America. To eliminate gaps, our common effort should be focus on issues like contingency and crisis planning, operations, intelligence and information sharing, exercises and trainings, and working with mission partners.

Reflecting the increasing importance of preserving our common security, Canada First Defense Strategy proves, once more, that our leaders regard the defense of North America as a top priority and stress its importance by sustain it with an ambitious financial effort and a very strong political commitment. Canada is far from self-sufficient with regard to its economic prosperity or national security. The recent international political developments show that the well being and security of Canadians depend on how they respond to the constraints, dangers and opportunities which come from the global environment.

Therefore, the Canadian defense policy must be focused on participating in politico-military alliances and international forums to prevent and to combat terrorist activities, to promote peacekeeping, arms control and disarmament. For that reason, Canada had signed international agreements such as the Charter of the United Nations, the North Atlantic Treaty, the NATO Status of Forces Agreement, Geneva Conventions, and the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Canada has been an active member at the United Nation who brought pragmatic ideas and solutions, from peacekeeping proposals in the 1950s (the participation of the Canadian Forces in peacekeeping missions in Suez Crisis, Cyprus or Yugoslavia), to creating the International Criminal Court and banning landmines in the 1990s. The military obligations taken by Canada in 1949, defined by the fifth article of the North Atlantic Treaty, were fully assume by the Canadian Forces as a part of “Operation Athena” in Afghanistan. The terrorist attacks of 9/11 in United States or those who follow in Madrid and London reveal, once again, that we need to reconsider our priorities in term of security. As a result, NATO has been reformed and reshaped to better respond to this new kind of threat. A new policy of engagement was designed to better protect our transatlantic community and values. With this new vision, it comes clear that the war against terrorism should be conducted worldwide, especially in so-called “terrorist heavens”.

Domestic laws and international agreements are vital components in providing security and well being for Canadians. On a long term, building strong relations with Canada's traditional partners, preventing terrorist activities home and worldwide, applying the internal legislation and assuming the obligations stated in international agreements are very important factors in preserving our well being and economic prosperity.

On searching for answers, after 9/11, mostly all worldwide intelligence agencies confirm that Al Qaeda terrorist group, run by Saudi Osama Bin Laden, was responsible for this ferocious attack and that it was operating in Afghanistan under the protection of dictatorial Islamic regime known as the Taliban (The 9/11 Commission report, W.W.Norton & Company, New York). The international community, under the auspices of the United Nations, created an International Security Assistance Force (Resolution 1386) with the authority to replace the Taliban regime with a new governmental body created under

the term of Bonn Conference (December 2001). Soon after Taliban's defeat, to support the reconstruction of Afghanistan, United Nation mandated the International Security Assistance Force in creating and maintaining a secure environment in and around Kabul and to assist the new established Afghan Interim Authority.

As a member of international community, Canada had joined the International Security Assistance Force with one over-arching objective: to leave Afghanistan to Afghans, in a country that is better governed, more peaceful and more secure.

Canada's contribution to the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan, known as "Operation Athena" began on 17 July 2003 with the installation of Brigadier-General Peter Devlin of Canada for six months as commander of ISAF's Kabul Multinational Brigade. Two weeks after, the International Security Assistance Force became a NATO mission focused on providing a security environment during the adaptation of the Afghan Constitution. As a result, the first free elections were held in 2004 (Presidential) and 2005 (National Assembly and Provincial Council) and represent a milestone in the development of Afghanistan's emerging democracy. The inauguration of Hamid Karzai as the President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan ended the first phase of Operation Athena – Kabul, and marked the beginning of the second phase – Kandahar. Since that moment, International Security Assistance Force extends its operation on a national level to support the reconstruction and development of Afghanistan and to assist the government efforts in training and increasing the Afghan National Army to a force of 70,000 by 2010.

Task Force Kandahar is a major Canadian contribution to the reconstruction process. Part of International Security Assistance Force Regional Command (South), based on Kandahar Airfield, it includes units supported by intelligence, communications and field security assets, operational mentor and liaison teams, a headquarters, maneuver units and a provincial reconstruction team. By promoting development and increasing security, the Kandahar Provincial Reconstruction Team support the Afghan government to implement local policies, foster reform initiative and support development projects such as the Dahla Dam and irrigation system, education in Kandahar province and eradication of polio.

Canada had defined six major objectives to help rebuild Afghanistan. The first four priorities, mostly concerning Kandahar,

stressed on the importance of supporting the Afghan National Army and Police in creating a security environment, support the local efforts in justice and corrections (for example Sarpoza prison), increase the management of Afghanistan-Pakistan border, create jobs, support the educational system and provide humanitarian assistance and essential services for the Afghans. On a national plan, Canada point out the importance of building strong political institutions, support democratic developments (such as 2004 democratic elections) and sustain the reconciliation process to obtain a sustainable peace in this region. Close to 50 percent of these funds will be designated to support these priorities.

Canada commitments on “War on terror” remain a strong proof in our effort to maintain and develop a secure worldwide community based on democratic values, human rights and economic cooperation. Operation Athena is an excellent example of our financial, military and logistic effort to help rebuild a failed state. These recent political developments show us our vulnerabilities and stress the importance of investing in new security strategies, home and abroad, designated to preserve our well-being.

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