

# The Chronicle Herald

THE MILITARY AFFAIRS COLUMN BY TIM DUNNE

## Here's what you'd miss if Forces were neutered

April 25, 2014

“The government is misspending,” Canadian Voice of Women for Peace spokeswoman told Chronicle Herald reporter Emma Davie at the group’s April 14 demonstration. “They spend twice as much on military as they do on education and health care combined.”

While I commend the group for its idealism, its spokespersons should take greater pains to ensure the accuracy of the information upon which they base their idealism.

My Chronicle Herald colleague noted that the Public Accounts of Canada listed Department of National Defence spending at almost \$23 billion last year.

What’s missing from the group’s comment is that defence is a federal responsibility while health and education are both provincial responsibilities. The combined cost of health and education in Canada is more than 800 per cent greater than defence spending.

The health care bill for Quebec alone is \$30 billion, and Ontario’s is \$48.9 billion. The total budgeted cost for health care across Canada is more than \$134.4 billion. When the \$59 billion for education is added, the total is \$193.4 billion, a figure that is more than \$170 billion above what the nation spends on defence.

Groups like the Canadian Voice of Women for Peace and the Rideau Institute wish to see the Canadian Armed Forces disarmed, disabled and disbanded.

Idealistic? Certainly, but also short-sighted and naïve. Without a military that is active and engaged both nationally and internationally, we would be left without an essential resource for emergency services, a version of 911 for the federal, provincial and territorial governments, as well as a force that contributes to international peace and security.

During HMCS Toronto’s year-long deployment to the Indian Ocean, the ship intercepted and destroyed 8.5 tonnes of illegal heroin.

Canadian military search and rescue (SAR) squadrons respond to approximately 1,000 calls for help annually. The military’s 140 highly trained SAR technicians provide advanced pre-hospital medical care and rescue for people in distress at sea and in remote or hard-to-reach areas. These multi-skilled specialists frequently place themselves in extreme peril to rescue those who, by mistake or misadventure, find themselves in mortal danger.

During Slobodan Milosevic’s ethnic cleansing operations against ethnic Albanian Kosovars in 1999, Canada accepted 5,000 as international refugees, 2,600 went to southern Ontario and 2,400 came to

Atlantic Canada, arriving at CFB Greenwood. The Canadian Forces, working in support of Citizenship and Immigration Canada, received, cared for, fed and accommodated them for as long as they remained in Canada as refugees.

Haiti's 7.0 magnitude earthquake killed almost a quarter of a million people and injured 300,000 on Jan. 12, 2010. HMC Ships Halifax and Athabaskan, which took on a Sea King helicopter from 12 Wing Shearwater, sped to Haiti. Concurrently, Canada deployed the Disaster Assistance Response Team, joined by RCAF transport aircraft, army helicopters, Canadian soldiers, military medical and dental specialists, military engineers and a field hospital. In total, some 2,000 Canadian military personnel were sent to that stricken island.

When Swissair Flight 111 crashed in St. Margaret's Bay on Sept. 2, 1998, the military and Coast Guard Joint Rescue Co-ordination Centre launched a massive rescue operation, ultimately code-named Operation Persistence. When it became apparent there were no survivors, our navy, augmented by the RCAF, the army, the coast guard, coast guard auxiliary, RCMP and a host of provincial and federal agencies and local volunteers, supported the Canadian Transportation Safety Board investigation team's efforts to recover the bodies and aircraft parts.

The submarine HMCS Okanagan, returning to Halifax to be retired, was diverted to the recovery effort. It found the aircraft's "black boxes."

In addition to these high-profile operations, the Canadian Armed Forces have assisted with the January 1998 ice storm that paralyzed southern Ontario and western Quebec; had the largest military deployment since the Korean War to assist recovery efforts for the 2011 Winnipeg floods; assisted with forest fires, Olympic security, prison riots, and extreme storm damage.

This is not to diminish the combat capabilities of our Armed Forces, whose first responsibility is to defend Canada, and second, to participate in collective defence with our NATO allies.

Canada is not a neutral nation. We support our allies and, in return, they support us. This is an important underpinning of our foreign policy, particularly when we look at Russian militarism. Our northern neighbour has already annexed the Georgian provinces of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and Ukraine's Crimean peninsula, and has expressed a strong interest in Arctic resources.

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