

1991

A Training Centre for Peacekeepers

Erika Simpson

Political Science, simpson@uwo.ca

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/politicalsciencepub>



Part of the [Political Science Commons](#)

Citation of this paper:

Simpson, Erika, "A Training Centre for Peacekeepers" (1991). *Political Science Publications*. 94.
<https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/politicalsciencepub/94>

*Peaceful Conversion:***A Training Centre for Peacekeepers**

Across Canada several communities are facing the closure of nearby military bases. In Nova Scotia consultants Peter Langille and Erika V. Simpson developed the following proposal to convert CFB Cornwallis to a training centre for UN peacekeepers.

Over the past four decades, Canadian governments have earned considerable respect, both at home and abroad, for maintaining an exemplary commitment to the United Nations and multinational peacekeeping. The award of the Nobel prize to both Prime Minister Pearson in 1956 and to UN peacekeepers in 1988 signifies the sincere appreciation of the international community. It can be argued that peacekeeping has been the least expensive and yet also the most high profile commitment of the Canadian Armed Forces. Canada's Chief of Defence Staff, General de Chastelain, acknowledges that peacekeeping is viewed by most Canadians as the *raison d'être* of our defence effort. Professor Albert Legault, a Canadian defence analyst, also notes that in a 31-one year period between 1949 and 1980, the non-recoverable cost to Canada for our participation in peacekeeping operations was \$266 million dollars, approximately 0.4 percent of the total defence budget in that period. In short, this relatively minor investment has brought Canada remarkable international credit.

A renaissance of interest in both the United Nations and multinational peacekeeping operations has accompanied the end of the Cold War. Several longstanding conflicts are slowly being resolved and there are now greater prospects that peacemaking will follow from peacekeeping. Whereas most analysts concur that there is a low probability of being involved in a major conventional war in the near future, there is a high likelihood Canada will be involved in a wide range of future peacekeeping operations. Canada's past Chief of Defence Staff, General Paul Manson, acknowledges that the demand for Canadian

peacekeeping expertise is likely to continue. He writes:

With their reputation and experience, the Canadian forces will surely be able to make an important contribution to international stability through peacekeeping in the coming years. For this effort to be most effective, however, Canada should work with her peacekeeping partners and the United Nations to develop new and better ways to keep the peace in a changing world. (*Canadian Defence Quarterly*, Summer 1989)

Recent peacekeeping experiences have demanded innovation and entailed new tasks in areas such as election-monitoring, verification, policing and the provision of humanitarian assistance. In the aftermath of the Gulf war, serious consideration is being accorded to expanding the scope of operations to include preventive peacekeeping, maritime peacekeeping as well as the collective security enforcement operations that were initially envisaged under Chapter Seven of the UN Charter. Security Council members have submitted proposals for the development of rapidly deployable stand-by forces. Last year, the UN Secretary General appealed to member states to identify troops and material that can in principle be made available to the UN through regional co-operation and burden-sharing. In May 1991, Parliamentarians for Global Action also called on gov-

ernments to set up UN peacekeeping training centres in each region of the world.

The international community is beginning to respond. For example, the Netherlands recently made a commitment to allocate air, land and naval forces to future UN missions. The Scandinavian countries have already established four peacekeeping training centres and arranged cost-saving areas of specialization.

Canada's involvement in nearly every UN peacekeeping mission to date has provided considerable experience and expertise in areas such as communications and logistics. Yet insufficient attention has been devoted to consolidating, building-upon or sharing this knowledge. Although there are numerous combat training facilities in Canada, we have yet to develop a peacekeeping training centre. In fact, there is no on-going or institutionalized peacekeeping training programme in Canada.

In the opinion of several internationally-acknowledged experts, Canada's peacekeeping training programme has been neglected. With an institutional bias toward acquiring combat training and equipment, there has been a reluctance to devote scarce resources or a facility to train for peacekeeping. Brigadier-General Clay Beattie (ret.) credits Canada with having great experience and expertise in peacekeeping but as he says, "with



A Canadian Forces helicopter in UN service in Central America: Six nations were involved. (UN Photo)

challenges and tasks, there is much to be done to improve our training programme. We can meet the new challenges if we are better structured and more formally prepared. A number of crucial areas now deserve special attention."

Now, in the event of a peacekeeping posting, a one-to-two week programme of briefings and seminar instruction is usually all that supplements regular training. More specialized training in the important areas of conflict resolution and negotiation is neglected. Canadian experts in this field acknowledge that there are problems and risks in deploying peacekeepers who have not been provided with adequate information regarding their posting, the foreign culture, the political climate or with basic language training. This *ad hoc* and reactive approach to preparation is difficult to understand when there are currently 1,926 Canadian armed forces personnel deployed to 10 UN peacekeeping operations. As former Chief of Defence Staff, Admiral Robert Falls, acknowledges, "if Canada is going to be in the peacekeeping business, it ought to be training people adequately for the job."

The objectives of a peacekeeping training centre are straightforward: it would facilitate the development of standardized training and operational procedures and it would ensure that the necessary expertise and forces were readily available. In turn, it would serve to enhance the planning and safe management of future operations. Lieutenant Colonel Christian Harleman, a former Commander of the Swedish UN Training centre, writes that the purpose of their training programme is "to give individuals and units a wider specialized knowledge of their various fields and to acquaint them with current security, political, cultural, religious and ethical conditions in those places of the world where they will be called upon to serve."

The development of a peacekeeping training centre would make it possible to conduct operational training for officers, civilians, and for complete military units in their peacekeeping roles. With the benefit of advance training, Canadian forces could be much more rapidly mobilized and deployed to a theatre of operation.

A Canadian peacekeeping training centre would also offer the opportunity to host a larger multinational training programme. The co-ordination and co-operation required in multinational operations could be pre-planned and rehearsed in joint exercises and simulations

conducted on the base and in the surrounding communities. Brigadier General William Yost (ret.), Director of the Conference of Defence Associations, acknowledges that Canada has a lot to contribute to teaching other armed forces about peacekeeping and in this respect "we shouldn't hide our light under a bushel".

A number of internationally-recognized experts now recommend the development of a Canadian centre that could also host a multinational peacekeeping training programme. General Indarjit Rikhye emphasizes, "such a training centre should not only be for Canadians, who are invited to almost all missions, but for other countries, especially those who lack the ability and resources to organize such a training establishment." Lt. Colonel Christian Harleman,

Canada has a lot to contribute to teaching others about peacekeeping.

Director of Peacekeeping Operations at the International Peace Academy, also recognizes Canada's extensive experience in this field and suggests that it is time to support other countries with this knowledge and understanding of peacekeeping. As well, Sir Brian Urquhart, a former Under-Secretary General of the United Nations, states:

[A Canadian peacekeeping training centre] could be extremely beneficial not only to Canada's participation in peacekeeping operations but also to a number of neighbouring countries. Existence of such a training centre for the countries of the Western hemisphere could be a great advantage at a time when there is going to be increasing demand for peacekeeping contingents from a far wider range of countries than hitherto.

With an identified training centre and earmarked forces, Canada would also be well positioned to host one of the first UN stand-by forces. As the Honourable Barbara McDougall, Secretary of State for External Affairs, recently stated, "the other major lesson of the Gulf War is that if we strengthen the capacity of the UN to respond to breaches of security more effectively, in the future, we shall render such breaches less likely."

Joint funding arrangements for multinational training could be negotiated through the Canadian Government's Military Training and Assistance Programme (MTAP). At a minimum, participating member states would have to be responsible for providing return transportation and salaries to their respective contingents. Indeed, Canada could develop such a centre and programme without great expense.

CFB Cornwallis is virtually unique in already having facilities for this type of training. As a longstanding school for basic training, it includes an array of residences, administrative offices, training halls, drill areas, classrooms and recreational centres. Given the recent decision to reduce recruit enrolment at Cornwallis by 56 percent, there will be ample space and facilities for a peacekeeping training centre.

Situated on the Annapolis Basin, Cornwallis provides easy access to a range of resources and terrain. In addition to the 615-acre-base, there is a 3000-acre site 10 miles away in Granville that currently accommodates a firing range. Air transport is presently available within 50 miles at CFB Greenwood. An underutilized airfield near Digby is within 10 miles. The Annapolis Basin and nearby Bay of Fundy would also provide a challenging environment for future maritime peacekeeping training. In addition, Cornwallis has an ideal geo-strategic location for rapid deployment to operations in the Middle East, Central America, Eastern Europe, and Africa.

Over the past 400 years, the surrounding Annapolis community has suffered numerous violent conflicts, changing hands on seven occasions in the struggle to establish control over North America. From these conflicts a new country emerged — Canada — a nation that has since set numerous international precedents in its commitment to promote peace and security.

The prospect of accommodating a peacekeeping training centre would be appealing to the local community, the larger Annapolis Valley region and the province of Nova Scotia. This is a common security initiative with obvious advantages to all related parties. As a clear commitment to regional development and constructive internationalism, the decision to develop a peacekeeping training centre at CFB Cornwallis would receive widespread popular and political support. ♦