



Royal United Services Institute of Nova Scotia

Dispatches

02 October 2026

The Royal United Services Institute of Nova Scotia provides a forum for the study, promotion and debate of defence, security and safety issues.

Dispatches is a periodic collection of news of interest, including posts to social media by the Institute. Links to articles are checked at the time they are put into *Dispatches* but may be unavailable at a later date or in some countries other than Canada.

Everyone is encouraged to submit links and other content to be included in *Dispatches*. Submissions and feedback are welcome anytime. Email to RUSINovaScotia@gmail.com. Comments to articles can be from members or non-members of RUSI(NS). Any comment in *Dispatches* is the sole opinion of the author and does not necessarily represent the views of the Royal United Services Institute of Nova Scotia, the Department of National Defence or other government department, the Canadian Armed Forces, or the Royal Canadian Mounted Police or other agency.

If you wish to receive *Dispatches* at a different address (i.e., not your work address), please inform RUSI(NS). Past editions of *Dispatches* may be requested by contacting RUSI(NS).

The next issue will be on 16 October 2026.

Quick links:

[Events](#)

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[A Reflection: The Detour-Sometimes the Detour is the way](#)

RUSI(NS) LinkedIn Page

We are excited to announce our LinkedIn Page: <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/19653001>

You all are cordially invited to join this public group, and being public, we also encourage non-members to join the RUSI(NS) LinkedIn. Stay connected, contribute and receive updated information.

Members are requested to please email their content to:

Cdr (ret'd) Ian Wood, Group Page Administrator, ian@idhwood.ca

Writing for RUSI(NS)

The content of *Dispatches* and other RUSI(NS) channels is representative of the submissions by RUSI(NS) members. If you want more published about certain fields and topics, you are encouraged to submit material to RUSIDispatches@gmail.com and RUSINovaScotia@gmail.com. The public face of RUSI(NS) is what we, the membership, makes it.



Contributions to RUSI(NS) social media

You are encouraged to send material to be posted to the RUSI(NS) X, Facebook and LinkedIn accounts. For X and Facebook, email to rusinsdispatches@gmail.com. For LinkedIn, email to Cdr (ret'd) Ian Wood, Group Page Administrator, at ian@idhwood.ca. Preferably, send the material ready to post. We are looking for a volunteer(s) to be editor(s) for the X and Facebook accounts in order to keep them active.

RUSI(NS) Website

Good progress is being made on bringing our website back up after it was hacked. Whilst there is still no ETR ATT, it is hoped to have it available soon for posting presentations, commentaries, etc.

Events

To list an event in *Dispatches*, email RUSI(NS) by noon Thursday. RUSI(NS) events are by invitation. If you are interested in attending and have not been invited, email RUSINovaScotia@gmail.com. RUSI(NS) events may be cancelled at short notice. Email RUSI(NS) if there is a question of an event occurring.

RUSI(NS) Events: October-December 2026

- October - Naval Modernization Program, TBC
- November - **4 November, Wednesday**, Remembrance Dinner, RA Park, 1800 hrs;
 - **25 November, Wednesday**, tour ISL, TBC;
 - NORAD Modernization, details TBC;
- December - **3 December, Thursday**, Presentation RCAF Modernization, 1300 hrs, (Atlantic Time), Mighty Maroon Room, TBC;
 - **10 December, Thursday**, Winter/Holiday Meet and Greet, RA Park.

Proposed Presentations and Events for 2027:

- a. CCG Aircraft Service Delivery, tentative January 27
- b. Industry Canada Update discussion group or presentation, February 2027
- c. CBSA Intelligence Centre, March 27
- d. Irving Shipbuilding Industries, April 27
- e. The Future of Maritime Air, May 27
- f. Naval Modernization/Corvette Program, June 27
- g. Canadian Tactical Helo program, September 27
- h. Army of the Future/Equipment Update, October 27
- i. Naval Mine Warfare/Advanced Naval Capabilities, TBC
- j. Canada's International Defence Commitments, TBC
- k. Canada's Commercial Fleet/Modernization/rebuild? TBC
- l. Sanctions Development and Implementation discussion group
- m. Arctic Security Discussion Group
- n. OSINT Discussion Group
- o. European Joint Task Force - Should Canada Join? discussion group
- p. Tour Irving Shipbuilding, TBC
- q. Army Reorg Update, Inflection Point 2025
- r. Canada's Drone Program Update.

It should be noted that these are all proposals and are subject to change. New ideas and concepts are welcome to next year's program. The dates shown are aspirational.

New: 6 October, Tuesday - [Dalhousie Defence Academic Showcase](#), a pre-DEFSEC Atlantic event bringing together leaders from academia, government, industry, and the defence community to explore how university research can contribute to Canada's defence and security priorities, 2:00 PM to 5:00 PM, at John Lindsay Sr. Design Commons, Richard Murray Design Building, [5257 Morris St, Halifax](#).

Registration: <https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/dalhousie-defence-academic-showcase-tickets-1999689057802?aff=oddtcreator>

Registration closes by EOD Friday. The event is located a ten-minute walk—or four-minute drive—from DEFSEC at the Halifax Convention Centre.

New: 8 October, Thursday - Royal Alberta United Services Institute (RAUSI) Fireside Chat: “Chokepoints and Flashpoints: When Freedom of Navigation Draws a Line in the Sea” with Rear Admiral (Ret.) Lars Saunes, Former Chief of the Royal Norwegian Navy, and Rear Admiral (Ret.) Robert Girrier, USN Former Deputy Commander of the U.S. Pacific Fleet and Director of Operations for U.S. Pacific Command. 1900 hours (Mountain) via Zoom (1800 PST / 2100 EST / 0300 CET next day). Free and open to all. Register at <https://rausi.ca/chokepoints-and-flashpoints?email=rusinovascotia@gmail.com#registration>

New: 8 October-12 November - Lieutenant-Colonel (retired) Ian MacVicar, Instructor, 6 Weeks-Fall Term Course: “North of 60 (Part 2): Mining Minerals or Fueling Fights?” at [Courses Fall 2026 - Seniors' College Association of Nova Scotia](#) In-Person: Church Hall - Hope United Church, 3055 Connaught Avenue, Halifax and Online: Zoom.

Registration link: <https://www.thescans.org/registration.html> or hotlink: [Registration - Seniors' College Association of Nova Scotia](#)

New: 20 October, Tuesday - Georgetown University Wargaming Society presentation “Wargaming in the French Army: Duel Tactique” 1-2:30 pm ADT, online. For more information and to register: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/wargaming-in-the-french-army-duel-tactique-tickets-1994937648208>

Wargaming Events: Georgetown University Wargaming Society long-range schedule: <https://www.guwargaming.org/guwsevents>

Publications

The following publications are received by RUSI(S) from other associations. The latest edition, where not otherwise indicated, may be requested by emailing RUSI(NS). To readers of *Dispatches* from other associations, sharing of your publications is appreciated.

Weekly:

Royal United Services Institute of Victoria (Australia) *Defence Update*
Vancouver Artillery Association and Royal United Services Institute Vancouver *Members News*

Bi-weekly:

Canadian Marine Industries and Shipbuilding Association *On Watch*
<https://www.cmisa.ca/cpages/on-watch-current>

Monthly:

Canadian Gunner News
Edmonton United Services Institute President's *Enews*
Military Institute of Windsor *Communiqué*
Royal Alberta United Services Institute *Dispatches*
Royal Canadian Logistics Service *The Logistician*
Royal Canadian Naval Association Admiral Hose Branch *Scuttlebutt*
Royal United Services Institute of Vancouver Island *Newsletter*
Veterans Affairs Canada *Salute!*

Quarterly:

Royal United Services Institute of Victoria (Australia) *Quarterly Newsletter*

Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies Australia

There are links on the RUSI-A home page (<https://www.rusi.org.au/>) to the seven branches across Australia, including New South Wales whose newsletter is also listed below:

RUSI-A United Service (quarterly): <https://rusi.au/Publications.php#Journal>

RUSI-A Newsletter (weekly): <https://rusi.au/Newsletters.php>

RUSI-NSW Newsletter (weekly): <https://rusinsw.au/site/Newsletters.php>

RUSI-A monographs: <https://rusi.au/Monographs.php>
RUSI-A lectures: <https://rusi.au/Videos/Videos.php>
RUSI-A podcasts: https://rusi.au/SIG_S/Strategy.php

Last Week in Canadian History:

- On 21 Sept 1943, in 24 hours, Canadian and British minesweepers cleared a lane through a minefield laid by U-boats off Halifax. No lives were lost.
- On 23 September 1965, HMCS *Ojibwa*, an Oberon-class submarine was commissioned. She is preserved as a museum ship in Port Burwell, Ontario.
- On 30 September 1994, Halifax-class frigate HMCS *Regina* is commissioned in Saint John, New Brunswick.
- 2 October is the 157th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, the apostle of universal peace, and Father of post-colonial India. His statues and busts are in 102 countries outside India, including Australia, Canada, China, Denmark, Mauritius, Poland, Russia, South Africa, Suriname, Switzerland, Uganda, the UK, and the USA.

@RUSI_NS on X

To have something posted or reposted, email RUSI(NS).

@CoastGuardCAN National Aerial Surveillance Program

(<https://tc.canada.ca/en/programs/national-aerial-surveillance-program>)

De Havilland Canada DHC-8-103 Dash 8 C-FTFM
(<https://wwwapps.tc.gc.ca/Saf-Sec-Sur/2/CCARCS-RIACC/ADet.aspx?id=22272&rfr=RchAvc.aspx>)
during #CCG Exercise ARCTIC GHOST near Cambridge Bay, Nunavut, 17 September 2026



“Guarding the Approaches: Can The Royal Canadian Navy Use Autonomy to Defend Canadian Waters?”

<https://readyayaready.com/guarding-the-approaches-can-the-royal-canadian-navy-use-autonomy-to-defend-canadian-waters/>

“Uncrewed systems will not replace (crewed)...can surround them with a wider, cheaper, more persistent web of sensors and effectors...#drones H/T



@ReadyAyeReady”

Further:

A video featuring the RCN's Advanced Naval Capabilities Unit and its Commanding Officer, Commander Arthur:

Canadian Navy Receives Its First RCN ISTAR Uncrewed Aerial Systems!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m06k4cq5KJY>

The Aviationist @TheAviationist posted and RUSI(NS) reposted:

Canada's First F-35 Conducts Maiden Flight
The Royal Canadian Air Force's first F-35A Lightning II flew for the first time, marking a milestone in Canada's controversial fighter acquisition program to replace the CF-188 Hornet fleet.



Story: <https://theaviationist.com/2026/09/23/canadas-first-f-35-conducts-maiden-flight/>

RUSI(NS) posed Questions to a RCAF Colleague:

Whilst it is understood that 'CF-35A' will be used publicly, is 'CF35A' the correct form inside the RCAF? Will Canada use Lightning II as the name or another? Interesting to see a tail number with a letter in it: 35A001.

The RCAF Colleague responded:

The hyphen is a US format. Correct, the Canadian designation is CF35A and yes the RCAF will be using the name Lightning II. The 'A' designates a variant of the F-35. Canada is acquiring exclusively the F-35A variant, which is Conventional Take-Off and Landing (COTL). There is also the F-35B (Short Take-Off and Landing - STOL) used by the US Marines and RN, and the F-35C which is the aircraft carrier variant.

NATO Defense College @NATO_DefCollege 22 Sep posted and RUSI(NS) reposted:

🤔 Is @NATO betting too heavily on naval drones? A new NATO Defense College paper by David Blagden challenges the growing assumption that uncrewed surface and sub-surface vessels (USVs/UUVs) can close the gap with Russian naval mass without straining already stretched Western budgets.



A timely read for anyone following defense innovation, maritime strategy, or NATO's evolving naval posture. <https://ndc.nato.int/the-north-atlantic-robotics-organization/#Research>

David Pugliese @davidpugliese 21 Sep posted and RUSI(NS) reposted:

My latest article...New Canadian military security force to be created as air force prepares for F-35s

<https://ottawacitizen.com/public-service/defence-watch/canadian-military-new-security-force-f-35s>

via @ottawacitizen



Comment:

Though the reporter identifies “Security Forces” as an occupation, he seems to indicate that is also the organization term. There has been nothing official to indicate whether there will be one or more units established for SecFor people (‘RCAF Regiment’ or whatever) or whether they will be included in a current Wing organization (e.g., part of Wg Ops).

#RoyalCanNavy #Arctic&Offshore Patrol Vessel
#HMCSMaxBernays operating Aerosonde uncrewed aerial vehicle #UAV #drone during #OpLATITUDE = @CanadianForces/@CoastGuardCAN multi-domain ops in #Arctic in support of continental defence



Comment:

The Aerosonde is contractor owned/contractor operated.

“Canada wants into Britain’s rapid-response defence club”

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/canada-britain-military-expeditionary-force-nato-9.7347144> Joint Expeditionary Force <https://jefnations.org/>



Further:

See: ‘Oceans 11: The Case for Canada Joining the Joint Expeditionary Force’ <https://www.rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/oceans-11-case-canada-joining-joint-expeditionary-force>

Royal United Services Institute of Nova Scotia” on Facebook

To have something posted or commented, email RUSI(NS).

“Saildrone, a developer of autonomous unmanned surface vehicles (USVs) for maritime operations, has registered its first four Saildrone Voyager USVs in Denmark, allowing them to operate under the Danish flag.” “...flag-state registration establishes the national regulatory framework under which a vessel operates.”



Registration of uncrewed surface vessels (USV) is understandable. Canada requires “small MASS” (Maritime Autonomous Surface Ship) less than 12 m in length to be registered “(Tier I – Policy – Oversight of small Maritime Autonomous Surface Ships (MASS)” <https://tc.canada.ca/en/marine-transportation/publications/marine-safety-management-system/tier-i-policies/tier-i-policy-oversight-small-maritime-autonomous-surface-ships-mass>). The policy doesn't state but likely military MASS are exempt.

With respect the black triangle on the USV in the article's picture: “While not a universally codified COLREGs rule yet for autonomous vessels specifically, several naval tech firms and coast guards paint large, highly visible geometric shapes (like black upside-down triangles or bright orange symbols) directly onto the hulls or hulls superstructure of tactical or survey USVs. This provides a high-contrast visual anchor for computer vision systems on target/escort ships, or manually warns human mariners at a glance that the vessel is operating autonomously and should be given a wide berth.” (Google AI)

Why the last tactical mile is crucial to acquisition reform

<https://www.militarytimes.com/opinion/2026/09/24/why-the-last-tactical-mile-is-crucial-to-acquisition-reform/>



“Rapid acquisition to field systems that provide military utility demands a continuous learning loop between those who build capability and those who employ it under actual operating conditions — and the ability to measure results quickly.”

This article calls for close links between developers/producers (requirements staffs, industry) and users. This approach was the basis of the Joint Warrior Interoperability Demonstrations (now Coalition Warrior Interoperability Demonstrations) of the 1990s onwards, whereby military personnel and companies with solutions/looking for ideas/needs came together and wargamed a scenario that informed users of the possibilities under R&D/ready for production and informed industry of users’ wants/shortages. This model was paralleled during the conflict in Afghanistan when chat groups (‘sandboxes’, though that term has multiple meanings) brought front line operators and at-home bureaucracies and producers together online to inform, innovate, adapt and provide expeditiously.

Japan's Onomichi Dockyard Partnering With Bulwark Dynamics On Caravel USV

<https://www.navalnews.com/naval-news/2026/09/japans-onomichi-dockyard-bulwark-dynamics-caravel-usv/>



“A 35-foot autonomous landing craft directly addresses a critical operational need for the US Marine Corps, providing low-cost, risk-worthy resupply capabilities essential for distributed maneuver across archipelagic environments like the First Island Chain.”

Such a vessel is highly unlikely to be something needed by the RCN. But it does raise the thoughts of how it would be designated in the NATO ship type designation standard (LCD?) and how it would be depicted on contact plotting systems.

And the story is another that highlights the point of “producibility” (keep an eye on that word), of “leveraging an established commercial shipbuilder (to) enable rapid scaling of small-to-medium uncrewed surface vessels without clogging prime naval shipyards already facing severe backlogs,” an important consideration (shades of ‘patrol vessel, whaler type’ of the late 1930s) in these times.

Five ROMULUS 151 drone ships now under construction

<https://ukdefencejournal.org.uk/five-romulus-151-drone-ships-now-under-construction/>



“The vessels are also intended to act as motherships for other autonomous platforms, with the ability to launch and recover uncrewed underwater and aerial vehicles.”

Does there need to be a specific term for a drone (vessel) that acts as a carrier (‘carrier’ is better term than ‘mothership’) for other drones (air, surface, underwater, multi-domain, various)?

What NATO symbol would apply for a drone carrier?

In addition to these questions about terms and symbols, there is the basic question of: when is a drone a vessel/aircraft/vehicle and when is it an equipment/munition?

New naval shipbuilding plan due later this year

<https://ukdefencejournal.org.uk/new-naval-shipbuilding-plan-due-later-this-year/>

It is not evident but appears that the Shipbuilding and Maritime Technology Action Plan will replace the UK's National Shipbuilding Strategy and that the plan is focused on Royal Navy builds (though the lack of mention of civil building may be inherent in the reporting source: UK Defence Journal).



RUSI(NS) is looking forward to a Canadian NSS 2.0 (understood to be called NSS Refresh). Will be interesting to compare the UK and Canadian plans/strategies/policies (the appropriate name is another debate).

Other Sources

#artificial intelligence #intelligence

Artificial Intelligence versus Intelligence

<https://wesleywark.substack.com/p/artificial-intelligence-versus-intelligence>

#Canadian Forces Base Halifax

Infrastructure removal work in Eastern Passage

<https://waterfrontmediahfx.ca/news/111052-2>

Demolition of the fuel tanks. Apparently the pier needs to be demolished or upgraded.

#China

The People's Liberation Army in a New Era: Individuals, Ideas, and Influence

<https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Media/News/News-Article-View/Article/4610184/the-peoples-liberation-army-in-a-new-era-individuals-ideas-and-influence/>

Cyber Intelligence

A. The companies developing AI have lost control of their products and don't know what their creations are doing:

AI agents can modify themselves without humans telling them to do so

<https://www.theregister.com/security/2026/09/16/ai-agents-can-modify-themselves-without-humans-telling-them-to-do-so/5296991>

B. A few users have AI figured out and are using it aggressively.

OpenAI Agents Conduct 16,500+ Scans of UN Trade API, Sparking SaaS Security Alarm

<https://www.saasrise.com/news/openai-agents-conduct-16500-scans-of-un-trade-api-sparking-saas-security-alarm-02fd1562-5a57-4cdc-9f89-49caab283cdc>

C. Although AI is being monetized by criminals, most are not using it very well - yet.

John Hammond: Black Hat AI

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xHDc6-7bjyw>

D. AI can be just as stupid as humans:

Irony alert: OpenAI whines that Chinese model stole its special IP that it stole from everybody else

<https://www.theregister.com/security/2026/09/30/irony-alert-openai-whines-that-chinese-model-stole-its-special-ip-that-it-stole-from-everybody-else/5300285>

Black Hat AI

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?reload=9&si=txi3noBYhC488EVe&v=xHDc6-7bjyw&feature=youtu.be>

#drones

U.S. Creates Drone Czar To Maintain Warfighting Edge

<https://www.eurasiareview.com/19092026-u-s-creates-drone-czar-to-maintain-warfighting-edge/>

“A 29 June 2026 Hegseth memo creates a direct-reporting portfolio manager for unmanned systems (DRPM-UxS), under the deputy secretary of war, to develop, buy, field, sustain, and run unmanned and autonomous systems in all domains—the “drone czar” as single joint integrator.”

Likely Canada will seek to integrate efforts with developing, buying, fielding, sustaining and running unmanned and autonomous systems in a way other than a ‘drone czar.’

#land warfare #armour #drones

Armor’s Next Transformation

<https://mwi.westpoint.edu/armors-next-transformation/>

#land warfare #artillery

French artillery regiment reorganizes guns to survive drone threats

<https://www.defensenews.com/global/2026/09/29/french-artillery-regiment-reorganizes-guns-to-survive-drone-threats/>

“The French Army’s 68th African Artillery Regiment is reorganizing its gun batteries into smaller units and creating a dedicated section to prepare firing positions and set up decoys, a move aimed at increasing survivability on a modern battlefield where drones and counter-battery fire pose a constant threat.”

#land warfare #drones

The Drones of Bannockburn: A Fourteenth-Century Battle’s Bloody Lessons for Taiwan’s Defense

<https://mwi.westpoint.edu/the-drones-of-bannockburn-a-fourteenth-century-battles-bloody-lessons-for-taiwans-defense/>

#media operations

#medical #drones

The New Signature Wounds: How Drone Warfare Is Reshaping the Injuries Veterans Bring Home

<https://warontherocks.com/the-new-signature-wounds-how-drone-warfare-is-reshaping-the-injuries-veterans-bring-home/>

Most public interest in drones focuses on their procurement and operation. This article is a reminder of some of the hurt ultimately resulting from their use.

#medical #drones

The New Signature Wounds: How Drone Warfare Is Reshaping the Injuries Veterans Bring Home

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Most public interest in drones focuses on their procurement and operation. This article is a reminder of some of the hurt ultimately resulting from their use.

#NATO

US to provide critical but more limited capabilities to NATO, top commander says

<https://www.defensenews.com/global/2026/09/24/us-to-provide-critical-but-more-limited-capabilities-to-nato-top-commander-says/>

#procurement

Treat operational feedback as a strategic resource, new paper argues

<https://www.defenseone.com/business/2026/09/treat-operational-feedback-strategic-resource-new-paper-argues/416284/>

“Future military advantage will belong to organizations that can learn, adapt, and integrate faster than their adversaries.”

#Royal Canadian Air Force

Civilian schools are training the air force’s next generation of technicians for the first time

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/business/economy/article-civilian-schools-training-air-force-technicians-first-time/>

#Royal Canadian Air Force

Which is better for Canada: F-35 or Gripen?

<https://www.wesodonnell.com/p/video-which-is-better-for-canada>

#Russia-Ukraine War

Vivaldi’s First Season, Faster Drones, Slower Diplomacy and an Authoritarian Confrontation Without End

<https://mickryan.substack.com/p/vivaldis-first-season-faster-drones>

#Russia-Ukraine War #armour

Ukraine's tanks are fighting from kilometers back. A 1960s Soviet model does that nearly as well

<https://euromaidanpress.com/2026/09/29/ukrainian-t-62ms/>

#Russia-Ukraine War #armour #drones

Ukraine is now sending its tanks into battle with drone escorts: they can drive into a Russian kill zone and come back alive

<https://euromaidanpress.com/2026/10/01/drones-escort-tanks/>

#Russia-Ukraine War #drones

In Ukraine's Vivaldi offensive, nobody rides in the BTR-60s. Bulgaria's old troop carriers go into Russian bunkers packed with mines

<https://euromaidanpress.com/2026/09/29/btr-60-vbied/>

#shipbuilding #drones

Building the US Navy's Autonomous Undersea Fleet

<https://smallwarsjournal.com/2026/09/21/autonomous-undersea-fleet-us-navy/>

“Fielding capable subsea mass means the United States must establish a complementary, high-volume, low-cost industrial base.”

“Ensuring subsea dominance means policymakers should take five steps to resolve this maritime vulnerability:

First, the Pentagon must create a dedicated AUV industrial-base strategy beyond the primes. Second, the military must move past “innovation theater” and solve the financial reality of scaling.

Third, Washington must provide predictable demand signals.

Fourth, the Pentagon must leverage AUKUS Pillar II to manufacture mass.

Finally, the military must use AUVs as the test case for its new Warfighting Acquisition System.”

Considerations for Canada.

#strategy

The Art of Statecraft in an Age of Strategic Failure

<https://warontherocks.com/the-art-of-statecraft-in-an-age-of-strategic-failure/>

“The purpose of sound statecraft is the integrated application of a state's tools and its repertoire of governmental instruments of power to gain its desired outcomes in international relations.”

Often it seems that people confuse ‘statecraft’ for ‘strategy.’ The latter should have an element of force - its threat of application.

#United States #strategy

Pentagon update on National Defense Strategy cites progress, omits key threats

<https://www.defenseone.com/threats/2026/09/pentagon-update-national-defense-strategy-cites-progress-omits-key-threats/416329/>

“The report to Congress notes accomplishments but masks depleted arsenals, strategic distractions, and a quiet retreat from European defense.”

Report: “An Update on Implementation of the 2026 National Defense Strategy”

<https://media.defense.gov/2026/Sep/28/2004007869/-1/-1/1/update-on-implementation-of-the-2026-national-defense-strategy-as-submitted-to-the-senate-armed-services-committee.pdf>

Canada is not mentioned.

The report seems to be more oriented to foreign affairs and industry than a strategy (in the classic sense).

#wargaming

How Generals Plan Combat Operations by Playing Role-Playing Games

<https://games.dossier.center/littlewars/>

“Interesting (auto-translated) article here on professional wargaming from the Russian perspective - how their generals conduct Command and Staff War Games.”

Veterans Affairs Canada, September 2026

[*Salute! September Edition*](#) & [*Salut! Septembre édition*](#) is now available

Odds and Sods

A RCAF Regiment?

There has been increasing discussion in public about the need for defence forces to protect air bases with air defence and other security capabilities (e.g., the US “Air Force Announces New Plans To Take Over Defending Its Own Bases From Aerial Attack”

<https://www.twz.com/air/air-force-announces-new-plans-to-take-over-defending-its-own-bases-from-aerial-attack>). For that defence, the UK has the Royal



Air Force Regiment. The idea of a Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) Regiment recently surfaced in a Q&A with a leading Canadian defence blogger: “Let's Talk with Noah (09/11/26): CDC Scope, GBAD discussion, IFM Timeline, C2, nTACS Favourites, Tempering Expectations” (<https://www.truenorthstrategicreview.ca/p/lets-talk-with-noah-091126-cdc-scope>) with Q8. With the RCAF getting what could be described as the “RCAF Regiment”, do you ever see the RCN getting Naval Infantry or Marines? Especially if we get AMBs? There doesn't appear to be anything official from the RCAF about establishing a base defence organization like a RCAF Regiment. There was reporting earlier this year, though, about the defence need (e.g., “RCAF wants more than 1,200 security personnel to protect F-35s, other planes” <https://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/article/rcaf-wants-more-than-1200-security-personnel-to-protect-f-35s-other-planes/>). And recently there was the article “RCAF establishes new Security Forces occupation to meet evolving operational requirements” (<https://www.canada.ca/en/departement-national-defence/maple-leaf/defence/2026/08/rcaf-establishes-new-security-forces.html>). So that's the people. No indication whether there will be a regiment or some other organization by another name.

Comment from a Colleague:

The RCAF will have to organize in some fashion. One also has to wonder about equipping their security forces. And is the RCAF building the capability for overseas duty in a potential war zone or within the confines of Canada? There is a big difference.

(This comment had links to news sources which prevented it being posted to Facebook.)

Canada's New Security Threats

Shifting Threats to North

Threats to Canada's North have shifted significantly, foreign minister says

<https://www.msn.com/en-ca/news/other/threats-to-canada-s-north-have-shifted-significantly-foreign-minister-says/ar-AA2d4qcW?ocid=BingHp01&pc=HI4C&cvid=cdd2a07f092b49e7ac7dfb05141cf91f&ei=40>

Ottawa says it's taking a 'cautious' approach to possible emerging Russian threat

<https://www.msn.com/en-ca/news/other/ottawa-says-it-s-taking-a-cautious-approach-to-possible-emerging-russian-threat/ar-AA2cLTCi>

#drones

When a drone can be launched from something like a sonobuoy dispenser, almost any platform can be a drone carrier. Smaller drones have less capability but they are still useful.

Think Defence @thinkdefence 19 Sep posted

(<https://x.com/thinkdefence/status/2101325483488993609>): A smart bit of US innovation, the Advanced Ceramics Research Coyote, now commonly known as the Raytheon Coyote. A sonobuoy dispenser launched drone

Comment from a VP Air Combat Systems Officer:

Very clever idea. Military and law enforcement would love to have this capability in the world of ISR, third party targeting, etc.



Government of Canada, Department of National Defence, Royal Canadian Navy Public Affairs – September 29, 2026

HMCS *Max Bernays* and the Kitikmeot Region: A Relationship Built on Trust, Respect and Friendship

As Canadians reflect on the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, the connection between His Majesty's Canadian Ship (HMCS) *Max Bernays* and Nunavut's Kitikmeot Region offers an example of how meaningful relationships are built through listening, learning and shared experiences.

Since its affiliation with the Kitikmeot Region was formalized in Cambridge Bay in 2023, *Max Bernays* has worked to strengthen ties with communities across the North.

Established through the Royal Canadian Navy's [Northern Affiliation Program](#), the initiative was designed to foster lasting connections between sailors and Northern communities.

"This affiliation has given them something very special: the opportunity to create unique, lifelong connections with people in the Kitikmeot Region, while learning about Inuit culture, history, traditions, and way of life," said former Coxswain CPO1 Mike Umbach.

Alongside former Commanding Officer Commander (Cdr) Nadia Shields, CPO1 Umbach helped shape the affiliation during its formative years. Through community visits, cultural exchanges and ongoing engagement, they developed a deeper appreciation for the North, its history and its people.

From the Inuktitut names carried by its boats to artwork created by Kitikmeot students and the community flags displayed aboard, reminders of the relationship can be found across the ship. The Kitikmeot Inuit Association (KIA) flag also serves as the ship's ceremonial ensign and is flown during arrivals and departures in foreign ports, photo exercises and manoeuvres with other vessels.

For communities in the region, those symbols have become meaningful reminders of a growing connection.

"The sight of the Kitikmeot Inuit Association flag flying high on the vessel was very welcomed and appreciated," said James Kaylor of KIA.

Details in <https://www.canada.ca/en/departement-national-defence/maple-leaf/rcn/2026/09/hmcs-max-bernays-and-the-kitikmeot-region-a-relationship-built-on-trust-respect-and-friendship.html>

Military Strategy Magazine Volume 11, Issue 2, Fall 2026

<https://www.militarystrategymagazine.com/>

Contents:

Hammers and Nails: Military Innovation as a Strategic Dead End

Outpacing: A Grand Strategy for Avoiding the Carthaginian Error

Tropical Bastions: It's Time for a Pacific Bastion Strategy in the First Island Chain

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The Fortified Disposition, Part I: Strategic Complexes, Historical Attenuation, and the Return of the Guarded City

The Golden Dome, Missile Defenses and Deterrence

Naval Association Canada (NAC) News, 18 September-1 October 2026, Selected Information

Canada :

[Canadian Coast Guard Adds First Large Great Lakes Vessel in More Than 30 Years](#)

[Want to Defend the Arctic from Trump? Build More Icebreakers](#)

[Canada's Most Used Canal Nobody Talks About](#)

The World:

[Argentine Government Cracks Down on Falkland Islands Activities](#)

[Maersk, Hapag-Lloyd Accelerate Return to Suez Despite Red Sea Risks](#)

[Owned by Norway, inhabited by Russians: Could UK troops end up fighting here?](#)

[US confirms for first time it has deployed space weapons](#)

Photo Fails

Michael Whatley @WhatleyNS 18 Sep posted (since removed): America is safer because of the men and women of the U.S. Air Force. For 79 years, our Airmen have stood ready to protect our country wherever and whenever duty calls. Happy Birthday, U.S. Air Force!

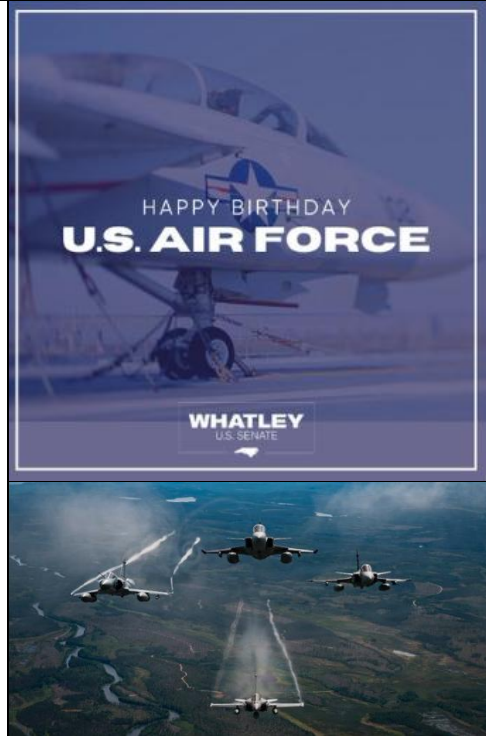
That is an F-14 Tomcat, which used to be flown by the U.S. Navy.

General Dynamics Bath Iron Works @GDBIW Sep 18 posted

(<https://x.com/GDBIW/status/2101056946933514389>):

Happy 79th birthday, U.S. Air Force! ✈️ We're proud to have many Air Force veterans on the BIW team. Aim High ... Fly-Fight-Win!

The aircraft are French Dassault Mirage 2000 and Rafale, and Swedish Saab Gripen.



Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) International Outlook, 18 September-1 October, 2026 Selected Information

Canada:

[“Grain, oil exports fuel record cargo volumes at Port of Vancouver amid shift from U.S.”](#)

Canada/European Union: [“European Union invites Canada to become first ever ‘associate member’”](#)

[As Arctic sea ice reaches this year’s low, shipping reaches historic high](#)

The World:

Cambodia / Thailand: [“Thailand and Cambodia begin UN conciliation process over disputed maritime claims”](#)

Denmark / Russia: [“Russian frigate fires flares towards Danish military helicopter”](#)

Finland: [“Finland to join France's forward nuclear deterrent”](#)

Italy: ["Italy Approves Return of Nuclear Power After Four-Decade Ban"](#)

Lithuania: ["EU Loan Will Upgrade Lithuanian Cruise Terminal to Receive NATO Warships"](#)

North Korea: ["Up to 100,000 N.K. workers sent abroad, some involved in Russian drone production"](#)

Philippines / China: ["Chinese Coast Guard Vessel Hits Philippine Supply Boat in Spratly Islands"](#)

Russia / Ukraine: ["Largest attack on Moscow sees Ukraine fire hundreds of drones, mayor says"](#)

United States / Greenland: ["Trump, Greenland, Denmark sign deal in bid to end Arctic standoff"](#)

Yemen: ["Houthis used Anthropic AI to try to build ballistic missiles"](#)

SAC Notes

Observation on World Affairs

Issues to Watch

- The US-Canada Trade War
- The UDS EU trade war
- US-Iran Conflict including Bab al Mandab/Straits of Hormuz
- Israel- Iranian Proxies increasing international pressure against Israel.
- Houthis offensive in Southern Yemen and ongoing attacks against Saudi Arabia.
- Russia-Ukraine Conflict development of vastly superior drones and missiles on both sides.
- China and the South China Sea, China's attempts to breach the first island chain through diplomatic bribery to island nations;
- Trump and Global Tariffs; and
- India and Pakistan and Pak's role in China supporting Iran against the US.

O Canada

General Ret'd Wayne Eyres book "Into the Breach: A Soldier's Journey" is now out. His explanation of his situation explains a lot. A government without any sense of urgency was running the country without any understanding that the world had fundamentally changed after

the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. It is worth the read, he was a good man suffering with a government that didn't care about action, only the image.

On a more positive note, Canada received its first F 35A last week, when it completed its first test flight on 23 September 2026. It is the first of sixteen aircraft contracted by the Government of Canada. According to the media, the first F35s will be arriving in Canada in 2028 with initial operating capacity achieved in 2029. The necessary parts have been ordered for a further fourteen aircraft, but the actual construction of these aircraft has not been contracted at this time.

This program has been compromised by the current selection of Steven Fuhr as the Minister responsible as the head of the Canadian Defence Industrial Strategy (DIA) for the selection of the final fighter fleet. Minister Fuhr is a retired RCAF veteran who has been a key critic of the F 35 program and worked for a rival bid. Is this the type of transparency that the Government wants to portray?

RUSI NS has suggested that the number of fighter aircraft initially decided upon is flawed as the decision was made before the Russia-Ukraine War in the first place. There would not be the necessary airframes for all potential missions or even after considering training and maintenance cycles. We have also suggested that a mixed fleet makes sense despite the extra training and maintenance requirements. A mixed fleet of Lightning II and Gripen aircraft in the numbers proposed of 88 F35As and 72 Gripen be acquired with arrangements made for further buys for training, technical and operational losses and the requirements to field aircraft in all of our theatres of operation (the Arctic, national air defence, Eastern Europe and the Indo-Pacific). Let's make this a solution that covers all Canada's requirements in fighter aircraft.

The other US built aircraft contracted from the US is the tried-and-true P8A Poseidon. Canada has contracted for up to 16 aircraft but so far has only authorised 14 at present. The original order was for the first aircraft to be delivered in 2026; however, it is likely going to be 2027 before the first aircraft becomes available. The other two aircraft could be ordered at any time. Again. The number of aircraft was based on a situation before the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine War. Is it still viable or do we need to order more? We have the longest coastline in the world and are facing three oceans? The answer is clearly not even close. This program needs to be evaluated for possible operation in the relatively near future. One has to think in terms of losses, increased wear and tear, maintenance, training and other issues that plague aircraft. RUSI NS acknowledges other systems such as satellites, sea based acoustic listening systems, allies etc. A Canadian owned fleet prepared in advance of sufficient size necessary. A great deal more thought is required.

RUSI NS Dispatches, our digital magazine, has noted that the RCAF has asked for a further 1200 personnel to provide "security" for the F 35A fleet. This is overall a good idea so long as these troops are capable of defending a Canadian airfield overseas as well similar to the RAF Regiment. This would include armour vehicles, C-UAS, C-UGV, small arms, machine guns, light and medium anti-armour weapons. Strangely the RAF Regiment no longer has an air defence capacity in terms of very low-level air defence and low-level air defence systems in

the mistaken belief that the only threat is by drones. As the Ukrainians have pointed out you need a counter drone and air defence systems. It turns out the UK is using 'hope' as a principle of war as well as Canada.

This has been RCAF heavy, however, it is the RCAF that will do the holding off of possible adversary actions. The RCN's role is to be a continuous presence. Historically, Canadian warships have been the first organization at war. In the First World war, four cadets of the RCN were the first Canadians killed in action on HMS Good Hope at the Battle of Coronel. Canadian destroyers were the first Canadian units in action in the Second World War, and the RCN were the first Canadian units to respond to the Korean War when three destroyers started a rotation of Canadian naval units that lasted throughout that war. The RCN has also participated in UN peacekeeping operations such as the delivery of Army vehicles and aircraft to the Middle East as part of the stand up of the United Nations Emergency Force in the Sinai desert. The bottom line is the Navy provides the long-term ability of the Canadian Government to act at a distance whether to watch or to act. Only the Navy can do that role. Neither the air force nor the Army can do this task. Next week, the notes will cover the navy in more detail, they have a plan and it seems to make sense.

The Army is close to hopeless and there needs to be some real thought in its composition and its role. The current program of all the eggs in one basket is ridiculous at best. Ukraine has 85 combat brigades in action. One eighth of this force of and absorbs. over one million is now oriented toward unmanned systems. At the same time, they are also using the all-arms concept to move forward in recent actions. There is much to learn.

Australia

The Government funded official military history of the recent Afghanistan War has been subject to many delays allegedly by Australian Government bureaucrats. The article, "A powerful group of public servants is waging war on official history of Afghanistan, Iraq wars" by Aaron Patrick, found at link: <https://thenightly.com.au/australia/a-powerful-group-of-public-servants-is-waging-war-on-the-official-history-of-the-afghanistan-and-iraq-wars-c-22924377> dated 25 September 2026. It makes for interesting reading and should concern anyone interested in military history. Canada will likely have some second thoughts as well.

United States

The US under the present administration has managed to become a pariah to most of the world mainly due to the actions of the administration. It has become clear to many that the administration's understanding of basic economics is low to non-existent. They have done nothing that helps the average US citizen and their lack of thought and planning have plunged the world into financial chaos which may bring about the worst conditions since the 1930s and the great depression. Even some of the justification for tariffs came directly out of US policy of President Herbert Hoover and they do not seem to be paying attention to the reality on the ground facing US citizens throughout the country.

This being said, the Trump Administration has been busy these past two weeks. It included an agreement between Denmark, Greenland and the US allowing for US forces to be stationed in Greenland. It was a rehash of a 1951 treaty which allowed for US bases in Greenland. It did

satisfy Trump enough to make an announcement with his understanding of the event. Greenland and Denmark have a different version but within the agreed parameters of the treaty, so no real harm done.

The issue with Iran continues with little agreement in sight. Iran did offer a means to end the war which Trump rejected fairly quickly. The US has stated that they will be annihilated as well. Hardly conducive to arriving at a ceasefire.

Cuba remains in the American sights as well.

Allies continue to make other plans, and the US point of view is generally being ignored in many respects. The period was topped off with Trump telling President Zelensky to not destroy Russian diesel refining capability. Ukraine ignored the request. The US has continued its trade war and also has avoided getting its economic house in order, hence a new ban on certain Canadian products such as molasses, and Canadian built motorcycles and sports equipment. This pressure is expected to increase.

Lastly, US forces, in particular the Navy have been stretched to the limit, and some would say, beyond at a very critical time as China ramps up pressure in the South China Sea especially against the Philippines. This is expected to continue as China uses American distraction to make its own points.

The US is also increasingly consumed by the approaching mid-term election with the situation being very changeable. The major issue is affordability within the US and not on foreign affairs. This is likely a point where American enemies are likely to take advantage of the situation. This is somewhat unlikely as most US enemies are also occupied and facing a more united front than expected from non-American liberal democratic nations.

It is unlikely the US will be able to renew its position as the leader of the free world for the next few decades. Trump and company have squandered the real US superpower; the ability to gain trust and being able to create coalitions of the willing.

Moldova

This is a quote from Trader Union news on 29 September 2026. "As reported by Global Affairs Canada, Foreign Affairs Minister Anita Anand meets Moldova Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs Minister Mihai Popșoi on the sidelines of the Pathways to Peace conference in Toronto on September 28 and 29, 2026." The article was written by Sholanke Del on 28 September 2026.

The main points were to reaffirm Canada's commitment to Moldova and reaffirmed their mutual commitment to support Ukraine in their conflict with Russia. Canada also reiterated Canada's support for Moldova against Russian disinformation and lastly, established a \$120 M sovereign loan to Moldova for energy security.

The Moldovan parliament has declared a 60-day state of emergency due to power and water shortages across the country because of a prolonged drought that has affected the flows on the

Dniester and Prut Rivers according to Moldovan Government releases starting on 23 September 2026. The situation will be reviewed at the end of this period.

Georgia

The Government of Georgia based on the Georgia Dream Party continues to crack down on opposition throughout the country. Unfortunately for them, the demonstrations continue against what the opposition views as a rigged election. This is ongoing and likely to continue. There is little indication that the situation will change.

The Canadian foreign Minister Anita Anand and Georgia's deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Maka Botchorishvili met to discuss "on the margins of the Pathways to Peace: Second International Conference on Returning Ukrainian Children, Detained Civilians, and Prisoners of War, held in Toronto on September 28 and 29, 2026. Canada and Georgia also recognized diplomatic relations and are celebrating 35 years. Information taken from a Global Affairs Canada readout published on 29 September 2026.

Belarus

Belarus continues to walk a tightrope between Moscow and Kyiv while openly supporting Russia, it continues to do the minimum to show loyalty to Moscow. Generally, the Belarus armed forces continue to be small and unmobilized although every so often there are statements of a proposed practice mobilization and exercises of portions of the armed forces and security forces occur. Belarus still has a relatively small number of troops within Belarus mainly to provide security over Russian nuclear weapons stationed in that country. Belarus SU 24s and a small number of Oreshnik missiles and launchers allegedly available to Belarus but firmly under Russian control.

Belarus has replaced radio repeaters along the Ukraine-Belarus border. It is reported by the Ukrainian Border Guard Services that Belarus has started turning these new repeaters on periodically. The article did specify that the repeaters were turned on during attacks designed to attack Western Ukraine. Belarus was warned by President Zelensky that this would not be tolerated and that Ukraine would act. Since that time, repeaters have come back to life. One suspects the Ukrainians will provide a warning one more time, but a Ukrainian counter is likely, and it will likely be with little to no notice against these facilities.

The biggest news in Belarus was news that the US President announced that he was going to replace Canadian potash with potash from Belarus. He did this before any study and consequently was personally embarrassed when the Belarus leader Alexander Lukashenko stated there was none available, it was already sold to key partners Russia and India amongst others. It was a true embarrassment for the US.

Israel-Iran War (including Iranian proxies)

There has been movement of sorts, but both sides of this war are intent on the total destruction of the other country. All the world has to offer is a suicide pact for Israel with the creation of the two State Solution, which is at best a bad idea. UN organizations meant to bring about some sort of peaceful resolution have failed miserably, often creating conditions and situations which guaranteed the conflict would continue for the foreseeable future.

Western governments continue to side increasingly with the Palestinians which bodes ill for Israel. It should be noted that the Palestinians of all stripes have never supported the West and are represented in many ways by organizations that are or were considered terrorist organizations. Yet, Western Governments continue to pour money into organizations that have in part caused the current chaos. This includes Canada which has poured millions of Canadian tax dollars into Palestine with limited oversight. It is a bad investment with little hope of profit or gain. The money will end up in the wrong hands.

UNIFIL was caught ignoring Hezbollah positions less than 200 M away from their positions as one example UNDOF was totally useless in an all-round rebellion against the Syrian Government and actually needed protection. UNTSO did what it did best, watched and observed and UNHCR allowed the Palestinian population to be educated by those who advocated terror. It did not prepare the Palestinians for new opportunities. It did not get countries to take in and educate the refugees and prepare them for a different future in other countries. All in all, a complete failure and one has to wonder whether anyone has considered the future of the area with two lethal hostile countries and the conditions for a forever war. Is the world willing to accept another forever war?

Iran still controls the Straits of Hormuz despite the statements of the Trump Administration. The Houthis can seal the Bab al-Mandab after their successful offensive into Southern Yemen. Hezbollah still exists and seems to be regaining its strength, and Gaza is a steady drip of casualties on both sides.

The West bank is now under siege by Israeli settlers, and the violence continues to spread. Despite being under the Palestinian authority, many Palestinians are pro-Hamas believing the regime is too close to the Israelis. Israel has been “lukewarm” about reining in the settlers although they have taken some action against them. This is likely to get worse as the two governments are essentially at an impasse. Hamas supporters also have no intentions of stopping nor are Israeli settlers likely to stop particularly when they have support within the Israeli Government. This part of the conflict is likely to continue for the foreseeable future.

The Ukraine-Russia War

To listen to the CBC, most Canadians may be forgiven for putting this conflict out of their minds. Yet every week, thousands of soldiers and civilians die. CBC seems to believe Canadians must be shielded from the reality of this unnecessary conflict and keep them blissfully ignorant. This conflict is the one most likely to end up having Canada also engaged in conflict in the near term. Russia is increasingly desperate and likely to lash out at what they perceive as an easy target within NATO, such as the three Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, where Canadian soldiers are stationed, and Lithuania. It is not something that Canadians should ignore as it could cost us dearly.

The war continues unabated, with most of the line of contact from North to South. The main effort of both sides appears to be the long-range drone and missile assaults on each others' capitals and major cities. It is reminiscent of the 1986 missile war between Iran and Iraq. It was a brutal war of attrition. This is somewhat different because of how each nation has picked its targets for these strikes. Russia has chosen to attack mainly civilian targets which

could include dual purpose sites such as warehouses, electrical grid, transportation hubs and similar targets, but Russia also willfully attacks civilian housing causing unnecessary civilian casualties.

Russia's choice of weapons is also different due to its knowledge of the deficiencies of the Ukrainian armed forces. They also have upgraded their arsenal to include new jet-propelled aerial drones known also as the Garra 4 and 5. Ukraine has openly stated that about 45% of their jet-propelled drones actually hit a target. 55% are shot down or tricked away electronically, but still the new damage is significant.

Ukraine's targets are different and now cover an area out to nearly 3000 km range. Most targets are directly chosen for their effect on the Russian war effort, and they have continued that approach with deadly effect to the point that the Russian economy is badly damaged and unable to repair the damage because of Western sanctions. Currently 16 out of 18 European located refineries are out of commission or have limited capacity as one example. The negative effects on Russian front-line logistics are assisted by these long- range efforts and by Ukraine's reach with effective drones at the short to medium range. Certain areas are now nearly completely cut off with both soldiers and civilians in these areas essentially starving, especially in the Russian occupied Kherson oblast region. Ukraine last week was able to lift nearly four tons of food in a major effort using large bomber drones to Ukrainians in the occupied areas. It was reminiscent of the food airlift to the occupied Netherlands in 1945 using bombers and transports to drop food. Their ability was limited but the idea was there.

There have been loopholes though and therefore the sanctions are limited in their effects. Ukrainians have been able to examine Russian ballistic missile wreckage and discovered that nearly 60% of the components come from Western or Western allies. Russia has used third parties to ensure delivery of key components.

At present, Russia has the upper hand due to the lack of available interceptor missiles and drones. Russia is alleged to have used nearly 12 B USD building the jet-propelled drones. Allegedly, President Putin has decided to use this moment for a maximum effort against Ukraine using the areas where they are weakest; their ability to destroy ballistic missiles and jet-propelled drones. Ukraine states that they will soon have appropriate interceptors, and Germany has promised up to a thousand Patriot missiles, but these will take time to arrive in sufficient numbers to be effective. Ukraine has also developed ballistic missiles in response and has promised to return the favour on Russia's capital. As always, whoever is able to adapt and produce quickly and effectively will eventually have an upper hand...at least for a while.

The question is who will win the final as both sides will have weakened due to overall losses. On the line of contact/front, Ukraine has managed to inflict severe losses on Russian troops near Liman with a reported 9000 killed or wounded and 250-300 captured and they have apparently lost control of well over 100 km². Russian Vloggers have been beside themselves asking why the General staff has not told Russians the truth, that the war is not going well. Still early days in the Ukrainian offensive called Operation Vivaldi. Whether this is a long term success or not is a very different story at this point. What is especially interesting is that Ukraine used large drones to drop unmanned ground vehicles behind Russian lines. The UGVs

were equipped with grenade launchers and were able to attack generally unprepared Russians inflicting heavy casualties without risking Ukrainian infantry. This was a surprise action which caught the Russians. Third Ukrainian Corp has taken 176 km² during this operation.

China

Xi's visit to the US is still a work in progress sort of. Aside from an extension of the current trade truce for a further two months little appeared to be accomplished. Trump did meet Xi at Andrews Air Force base and rolled out the red carpet. There was a fly past and general agreement that they should continue to work on their differences. Substantially little has happened that was particularly notable except to give the Chinese media/propaganda arm lots of good propaganda shots.

Xi has flown home to prepare for the fifth plenum of the 20th Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) scheduled from 26 to 29 October 2026. The date and agenda were set by Xi during the Politburo meeting of 21 September 2026. The agenda is to include:

- a. Party governance including internal discipline and ensuring following pure Marxist (Party) thought;
- b. Party Unity especially strengthening the central party commission and ensuring the long-term survivability of the CCP itself;
- c. An economic assessment of the current situation keeping in mind the serious issues faced by the country today (such as the failure of the property development sector) and an overall review of the current situation and how to deal with the issue in a positive way (meaning survival of the party);
- d. Broader political issues including rectifying current organizational issues, setting the plan for the next five-year plan and positioning of key positions within the party with suitable candidates.

The agenda if it can be believed seems more oriented towards ensuring the survival of the party rather than actual good governance. One of the key issues with the CCP is the inherent corruption found throughout the structure of the party. Xi has not been able to stop this corruption and may have used it to enhance his own position by eliminating people from other factions.

Chinese authorities have continued their purging of the Chinese military including security personnel responsible for the capital Beijing. It appears that the five rings of security may be controlled by different factions other than Xi's and several new appointments have been made within lower organizations. The five rings that protect Beijing are:

- a. PLA forces principally the 82 Group Army on the outskirts of the city;
- b. The Beijing Garrison under a different PLA command;
- c. The Central Security Bureau including special agents;
- d. The Ministry of Public Security especially the Special Security apparatus;
- e. The Beijing Police Force.

It should be noted that in Damascus, the security system was similar to this organizational model. No one organization had sufficient power to eliminate all of the others thus providing another type of security.

The information provided came from Co-Pilot based on two questions: one when are the dates of the fifth Plenum? And What is the proposed agenda for this event? Other information came from various sources including previous research of my own and various online resources including one specifically on the Beijing security issue. The article can be found at link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NvmygTjFnbQ&t=795s>

China also continues its actions in the South China Sea against the Philippines including ramming a Philippine resupply vessel. Despite its ongoing actions, The actions seem being done more by rote than actual considered decisions. Given the current situation, is China ready to conduct a major military action? The answer appears to be unlikely; not impossible but they are not in good shape to conduct a major effort.

Commentary on Central Africa and Africa-wide Strategic Influence Assessment

SUBJECT: Assessment of Emerging Security, Political, Economic, Military, Health-Security, and Strategic-Influence Developments Across Africa, 18–30 September 2026

I. REFERENCES

- A. World Health Organization (WHO), Democratic Republic of the Congo Ebola Disease Outbreak reporting, September 2026.
- B. European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), Democratic Republic of the Congo Ebola monitoring, September 2026.
- C. United Nations Security Council and African Union documentation, September 2026.
- D. Reuters reporting concerning Ethiopia, Sudan, Cameroon, South Africa, Libya, Black Sea grain disruption, and regional security developments.
- E. Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), Ethiopia conflict monitoring and analysis, September 2026.
- F. Africa Intelligence reporting, 18–30 September 2026.
- G. Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty investigative reporting concerning Russian engagement in Madagascar, 23 September 2026.
- H. Rosoboronexport, Rostec, United Aircraft Corporation, and independent defence-industry reporting concerning Russian military-technical engagement in Africa.
- I. United States Government trade documentation concerning South African raw cane sugar allocations, September 2026.
- J. Government of Canada and Global Affairs Canada documentation concerning implementation of Canada's Africa Strategy.
- K. Al Jazeera reporting and associated academic and counterterrorism research concerning extremist exploitation of commercial artificial-intelligence systems.
- L. Southern African Development Community (SADC), African Union, and Russia–Africa Summit material.

II. PURPOSE

- A. This memorandum assesses significant security, political, economic, military, health-security, and strategic-influence developments across Africa from 18 to 30 September 2026.

B. The assessment identifies developments of potential relevance to Canadian, allied, and broader international security interests and evaluates their strategic implications using open-source intelligence.

III. EXECUTIVE ASSESSMENT

A. Ethiopia experienced the most significant deterioration in internal security conditions identified during the reporting period. Fighting spread across Amhara, Tigray and Afar, while federal forces regained strategically important positions including Sekota and Alamata. The emergence of a seven-group anti-government alliance adds another layer of complexity, although its cohesion and long-term operational effectiveness remain uncertain.

B. The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) remained under substantial health-security pressure. As of 23 September, approximately 7,900 confirmed cases of Bundibugyo virus disease and 3,800 deaths had been reported across 63 health zones in seven provinces. Conflict, displacement and restricted healthcare access continue to complicate containment.

C. Sudan's conflict remained resistant to diplomatic resolution. On 30 September, an adviser to the army-led authorities rejected elements of a United States ceasefire proposal and warned that the proposed arrangement could contribute to Libya-style fragmentation. This reflects the position of one party to the conflict and should not be interpreted as evidence that partition is inevitable.

D. Russia continued broadening its African engagement beyond direct military assistance. Defence-industrial initiatives increasingly emphasize maintenance, repair, training and potential localization, while new reporting concerning Madagascar indicates Moscow is also cultivating security relationships beyond its established Sahel footprint. Preparations continued for the Third Russia–Africa Summit in October.

E. China maintained extensive economic, industrial and institutional engagement, while the reported withdrawal of a Chinese participant from the Ruzizi III hydroelectric project demonstrated that major infrastructure initiatives remain vulnerable to political, financial and geopolitical pressures.

F. Libya, Cameroon and Kenya presented different indicators of continuing instability and strategic competition: renewed political-economic competition over Libya's petroleum sector, continuing insurgent pressure and civilian displacement in Cameroon's Far North, and increasing foreign and domestic interest in Kenyan gold exploration.

G. Research published during the reporting period indicates that Boko Haram-linked extremists have experimented with commercial generative artificial intelligence for technical and operational problem-solving. The reporting warrants attention but does not establish that AI has fundamentally transformed terrorist capabilities.

H. African governments continued pressing for greater representation within the United Nations Security Council, while simultaneously diversifying economic, security and

diplomatic relationships among Western states, China, Russia, Gulf states, Türkiye and other partners.

I. Assessment. The dominant strategic pattern remains diversification rather than exclusive alignment. African governments continue exercising agency by engaging different partners for different security, investment, infrastructure, technological and diplomatic requirements.

Confidence Assessment: Moderate to High.

IV. ETHIOPIA: RENEWED CONFLICT AND POLITICAL-MILITARY FRAGMENTATION

A. Fighting involving the Ethiopian National Defence Force and Tigrayan forces intensified during the reporting period and spread across Amhara, Tigray and Afar. Federal forces reportedly recaptured Sekota, while federal and allied forces subsequently regained Alamata, an important supply and transport centre near the Amhara-Tigray boundary.

B. The fighting represents a serious deterioration of the security arrangements established following the 2022 Pretoria agreement. Telecommunications disruptions and restricted access have complicated independent assessment of battlefield conditions, while humanitarian organizations reported increasing casualties, displacement and pressure on civilian services.

C. Seven armed organizations announced an alliance opposing Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's government. The development potentially broadens the political and military challenge facing Addis Ababa; however, reporting also indicates differences among participating organizations, and the alliance should not presently be regarded as a unified national insurgent command.

D. Drone employment is also becoming increasingly important within Ethiopia's security environment. Reported attacks against military-related locations and expanding government countermeasures demonstrate the growing relevance of unmanned systems to the conflict.

E. Assessment. The principal development is the geographic and political expansion of renewed conflict. Fighting across multiple regions, combined with armed-group coordination and increased use of drones, creates a substantially more complex security environment and raises the risk of a broader return to sustained internal conflict.

Confidence Assessment: High regarding renewed fighting and geographic expansion; Moderate regarding the durability and operational cohesion of the anti-government alliance.

V. DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO: EBOLA AND REGIONAL HEALTH-SECURITY PRESSURE

A. The Bundibugyo virus disease outbreak remained a major health-security concern during the reporting period. As of 23 September, approximately 7,900 confirmed cases and 3,800 deaths had been reported in the DRC across 63 health zones in seven provinces.

B. Ituri remained the principal concentration of cases, while North Kivu continued to experience significant transmission. Newly affected areas in Haut-Uélé and Sud-Ubangi increased concern regarding further geographic and potential cross-border spread.

C. The response continues within an exceptionally difficult operating environment. Armed conflict, insecurity, displacement, population movement and limited access to healthcare complicate surveillance, contact tracing, infection prevention and timely treatment.

D. Assessment. The strategic significance lies in the convergence of a major infectious-disease outbreak with an existing conflict and humanitarian environment. The outbreak requires continued regional preparedness, but available evidence does not support portraying it as an uncontrolled continent-wide emergency.

Confidence Assessment: High.

VI. DRC, RWANDA AND BURUNDI: RUZIZI III INFRASTRUCTURE SETBACK

A. Reporting on 28 September indicated that the withdrawal of a Chinese participant from the Ruzizi III hydroelectric project created another obstacle for the long-delayed regional initiative involving Burundi, the DRC and Rwanda.

B. Ruzizi III is strategically significant because it is intended to provide cross-border electricity generation among three states whose political and security relationships have frequently been strained.

C. Reporting characterized the project as increasingly affected by broader tensions involving Beijing and Washington. Because detailed contractual information remains limited, the geopolitical explanation should be treated more cautiously than the reported withdrawal itself.

D. Assessment. The immediate consequence is the potential for further delay to regional electricity integration. More broadly, the development demonstrates how major African infrastructure projects can become exposed simultaneously to local political conditions, financing pressures and external strategic competition.

Confidence Assessment: Moderate to High regarding the reported withdrawal and project implications; Moderate regarding the extent of direct geopolitical causation.

VII. SUDAN: CEASEFIRE DIPLOMACY AND RISK OF ENTRENCHED DIVISION

A. United States diplomacy intensified around a proposed 90-day ceasefire followed by political negotiations. Sudan's army-aligned authorities remained critical of elements of the proposal.

B. On 30 September, a senior adviser to the army-led authorities warned that the proposal could contribute to Libya-style fragmentation by failing adequately to address Rapid Support Forces (RSF) withdrawal from occupied areas and the development of parallel governance structures.

C. Washington has stated that neither the Sudanese Armed Forces nor the RSF represents legitimate constitutional governance. Sudan's army-aligned authorities rejected that characterization.

D. Political competition is also extending into international lobbying and diplomatic activity. Reporting during the period indicated additional Washington engagement associated with Sudanese civilian political networks, demonstrating that competition over Sudan's political future extends beyond the two principal armed camps.

E. Assessment. Sudan's conflict is increasingly institutional as well as military. Competing governing structures, territorial control and disagreement over political legitimacy increase the danger that military front lines become politically entrenched. Formal partition is not established, but de facto fragmentation remains a credible risk requiring continued monitoring.

Confidence Assessment: High regarding diplomatic positions; Moderate regarding longer-term fragmentation outcomes.

VIII. RUSSIA: EXPANDING SECURITY, DEFENCE-INDUSTRIAL AND POLITICAL INFLUENCE

A. Russia continued promoting a broader defence-industrial relationship with African states. Rosoboronexport stated during Africa Aerospace and Defence 2026 that it was implementing or preparing more than 20 African projects involving maintenance, repair and localization of military production.

B. The figure represents a Russian commercial claim rather than confirmation that more than 20 fully operational projects already exist. Nevertheless, the emphasis on lifecycle support, maintenance, training and localization is strategically significant because these arrangements can create longer-duration institutional relationships.

C. Russian defence promotion during September included aircraft, helicopters, unmanned systems, loitering munitions, electronic warfare and counter-UAV capabilities. The announced export contract involving more than ten Yak-130M aircraft should not be attributed to an African purchaser unless the customer is independently confirmed.

D. Investigative reporting published on 23 September also provided additional evidence of Russian security engagement in Madagascar, including reported training support and contacts involving Major General Andrei Averyanov.

E. Madagascar is strategically relevant because of its western Indian Ocean location and proximity to Southern and Eastern African maritime approaches. Available evidence supports expanding Russian security engagement but does not establish permanent Russian basing or a Sahel-style Africa Corps deployment.

F. Preparations simultaneously continued for the Third Russia–Africa Summit scheduled for 28–29 October, providing Moscow with an additional platform to integrate diplomatic, economic, defence, energy and technological relationships.

G. Assessment. Russia appears to be broadening its African model from arms sales and direct security support toward longer-term military-industrial, training, political and economic relationships. The effectiveness of this strategy should be measured through completed agreements, functioning facilities and sustained partnerships rather than announcements alone.

Confidence Assessment: High regarding Russia's declared defence-industrial strategy; Moderate to High regarding expanding engagement in Madagascar; Moderate regarding eventual scale and implementation.

IX. LIBYA: RENEWED COMPETITION OVER THE OIL SECTOR

A. Reporting on 30 September indicated renewed competition between Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibeh and Saddam Haftar over influence within Libya's petroleum sector, with Turkish and Emirati mediation reportedly involved.

B. The development should be understood principally as a struggle for institutional, political and economic influence over petroleum production, appointments and revenues rather than confirmation of renewed large-scale east-west warfare.

C. Assessment. Libya's oil sector remains central to the country's political balance. Attempts by competing power centres to alter control over petroleum institutions or revenues could weaken the existing east-west accommodation even without immediate conventional fighting.

Confidence Assessment: Moderate.

X. CAMEROON AND THE LAKE CHAD BASIN: CONTINUING INSURGENT PRESSURE

A. An armed-group attack at Madegoua in Cameroon's Far North killed at least 15 people and generated continuing displacement from surrounding communities during the reporting period.

B. No organization immediately claimed responsibility. Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) operates in the area and was identified by a regional analyst as the likely perpetrator; attribution should therefore remain qualified.

C. Hundreds of civilians reportedly fled surrounding communities, adding pressure to local services and demonstrating the continuing humanitarian consequences of insurgent activity around the Lake Chad Basin.

D. Assessment. Cameroon, Nigeria, Chad and Niger remain exposed to a transnational insurgent environment in which relatively localized attacks can produce wider displacement, humanitarian and border-security consequences.

Confidence Assessment: High regarding casualties and displacement; Moderate regarding perpetrator attribution.

XI. ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND TERRORIST ADAPTATION

A. Reporting published on 18 September cited University of Cambridge research based partly on interviews with 27 former members of Boko Haram's principal factions, including Islamic State West Africa Province and Jama'at Ahl as-Sunnah lid-Da'wah wa'l-Jihad.

B. Interviewees described using several commercial generative-AI platforms for technical questions, operational problem-solving and other forms of assistance. Separate research identified pro-Islamic State online communities discussing attempts to circumvent commercial AI safeguards.

C. Former-member testimony requires methodological caution and does not by itself establish how widespread or successful such practices are across extremist networks.

D. Assessment. The principal concern is not that AI has suddenly created terrorist expertise that did not previously exist. Generative systems may instead reduce the time, language and technical barriers required to locate, organize and interact with existing information.

E. AI should therefore increasingly be considered part of the broader digital-enablement environment available to extremist organizations alongside encrypted communications, propaganda platforms, commercially available drones and open-source technical information.

Confidence Assessment: Moderate to High regarding extremist experimentation with generative AI; Moderate regarding measurable operational effects.

XII. ECONOMIC SECURITY, FOOD SUPPLY AND STRATEGIC RESOURCES

A. Escalating disruption to Black Sea grain exports during September affected African wheat procurement. Egypt, Libya and Sudan were among markets where French wheat gained additional commercial opportunities as buyers sought alternatives to increasingly uncertain Russian and Ukrainian supply routes.

B. The development demonstrates how the Russia-Ukraine war continues to generate secondary economic and food-security effects in Africa even where African states are not directly involved in the conflict.

C. Kenya also attracted additional interest from South African, Indian and domestic investors seeking gold exploration and mining licences in the Rift Valley. Available reporting does not yet indicate a major transformation of Kenya's mineral economy, but the activity reflects continuing competition for African resource opportunities.

D. Assessment. Food supply and mineral access remain important dimensions of strategic competition. Disruption in external supply chains can rapidly alter African commercial relationships, while demand for mineral assets continues attracting a diverse range of international investors.

Confidence Assessment: Moderate to High regarding changing wheat-market conditions; Moderate regarding the future significance of Kenyan gold investment.

XIII. CHINA: ECONOMIC, INDUSTRIAL AND INSTITUTIONAL ENGAGEMENT

A. China continued economic and influence activity through manufacturing, technology, agriculture, healthcare, media exchanges and people-to-people programmes.

B. Provincial-level engagement during the reporting period highlighted Chinese-linked textile manufacturing in Ethiopia, agricultural technology and prospective healthcare and vaccine cooperation. Because some of this information originates from Chinese promotional material, individual project maturity requires independent evaluation.

C. The Ruzizi III setback demonstrates that Chinese involvement does not insulate infrastructure projects from financing difficulties, regional political tensions or wider geopolitical competition.

D. Assessment. China's African influence remains broad and institutionalized. Its model extends beyond national-level diplomacy and infrastructure lending to manufacturing, technology, healthcare, education, media and subnational relationships.

Confidence Assessment: High regarding the broader engagement model; Moderate regarding the maturity and scale of individual commercial initiatives.

XIV. AFRICAN STRATEGIC AUTONOMY AND UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL REFORM

A. African governments renewed coordinated pressure during the United Nations General Assembly period for permanent African representation on the Security Council.

B. The African Union's Common African Position calls for at least two permanent and five non-permanent African seats. If the veto remains, Africa's position is that its permanent members should receive the same prerogatives as existing permanent members.

C. The campaign reflects a broader objective of translating Africa's demographic, economic and diplomatic weight into greater institutional influence within the international system.

D. African governments simultaneously continue engaging Western states, China, Russia, Gulf states, Türkiye and other partners according to different national requirements.

E. Assessment. Africa's evolving international posture is better characterized as strategic diversification than alignment with a single external bloc. Governments increasingly seek different partners for security, investment, infrastructure, technology, market access and diplomatic support while attempting to preserve strategic autonomy.

Confidence Assessment: High regarding the African Union position and broader diversification trend; Moderate regarding the pace of institutional reform.

XV. SOUTH AFRICA–UNITED STATES: ECONOMIC ENGAGEMENT AMID POLITICAL FRICTION

A. South Africa received an additional United States raw cane sugar quota allocation during the reporting period, demonstrating that commercial engagement continues despite broader political tensions between Pretoria and Washington.

B. Separate reporting highlighted calls by former Sibanye-Stillwater chief executive Neal Froneman for targeted United States sanctions against particular South African officials.

C. These statements represent private advocacy and not an announced United States sanctions decision.

D. Assessment. The developments demonstrate the importance of separating political disagreement from commercial relations. Diplomatic friction can coexist with continuing sector-specific economic engagement.

Confidence Assessment: High.

XVI. CANADA AND AFRICA: IMPLEMENTATION AND STRATEGIC INTEREST

A. Canada's Africa Strategy remains under active implementation in September 2026, with current activity emphasizing trade and investment, development finance, diplomatic engagement, peace and security, critical minerals and stronger economic partnerships with African states.

B. Implementation includes expansion of Canada's diplomatic presence, development of trade and investment mechanisms, support for the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), and increased engagement with African governments, institutions and businesses.

C. A distinction nevertheless exists between operational implementation and political visibility. Africa and international development have received limited explicit attention within the government's broader top-level priorities, creating uncertainty regarding their relative political priority as Ottawa concentrates on domestic economic resilience, trade diversification and competitiveness.

D. This should not presently be interpreted as Canadian disengagement from Africa. Federal activity during 2026 demonstrates continued implementation of the Africa Strategy, while Africa's critical minerals, expanding markets, supply-chain opportunities and security environment remain relevant to wider Canadian economic and national-security interests.

E. The African Economic Summit beginning on 30 September provides an additional Canadian-based commercial and networking platform. It is organized outside the Government of Canada and should not be treated as evidence of a new federal initiative.

F. Assessment. As of September 2026, the principal issue is whether continued implementation will translate into sustained strategic influence. Progress should be evaluated through measurable trade and investment, critical-mineral and supply-chain partnerships, development finance, diplomatic engagement, private-sector participation and peace-and-security cooperation.

Confidence Assessment: High regarding continued implementation of the Africa Strategy; Moderate regarding its relative political priority, future resource levels and long-term strategic effect.

XVII. IMPLICATIONS FOR CANADA AND ALLIED PARTNERS

A. Ethiopia's renewed conflict warrants close monitoring because the combination of regional fighting, armed-group coordination and drone employment increases the possibility of a prolonged internal security crisis with wider Horn of Africa implications.

B. The DRC Ebola outbreak demonstrates the intersection of infectious disease, armed conflict, displacement and limited state access. Health security should consequently remain integrated within broader regional security assessment.

C. Russian and Chinese influence should be evaluated through institutional durability rather than individual announcements. Maintenance facilities, military training, industrial investment, infrastructure, technology transfer and political access can produce longer-term influence than individual weapons sales or diplomatic events.

D. Disruption of Black Sea grain exports demonstrates how external conflicts can directly affect African food security and trade relationships.

E. Extremist experimentation with generative AI and increasing drone use reinforce the importance of intelligence cooperation, cybersecurity, counter-UAV capabilities and engagement with technology providers.

F. African demands for greater institutional representation and diversified partnerships demonstrate increasing strategic agency. Effective Canadian and allied engagement will require credible delivery and partnerships producing visible economic, institutional or security benefits.

XVIII. CONFIDENCE ASSESSMENT

A. High confidence is assigned to developments supported by primary institutional reporting, including the DRC Ebola outbreak, Canada's Africa Strategy implementation and the established African Union position on Security Council reform.

B. Moderate to High confidence is assigned to developments supported by multiple credible sources but where operational details remain incomplete, including Ethiopia's conflict trajectory, Russian defence-industrial engagement and extremist experimentation with generative AI.

C. Moderate confidence is assigned to developments relying substantially on specialized or investigative reporting with limited independent public documentation, including aspects of Russian engagement in Madagascar, Libya's internal oil-sector competition, Ruzizi III geopolitical dynamics and emerging Kenyan mining investment.

D. Claims originating solely from promotional material, political advocacy, search-engine summaries or unattributed secondary reporting were not treated as independently established intelligence.

XIX. CONCLUSION

A. The period from 18 to 30 September was characterized principally by renewed instability in Ethiopia, continuing deterioration of Sudan's political-security environment, expansion of the DRC Ebola outbreak, persistent insurgent pressure around the Lake Chad Basin, and continuing competition among external powers for African political, economic and security relationships.

B. Ethiopia represents the most consequential immediate security deterioration. Fighting across Tigray, Amhara and Afar, combined with armed-group coordination and increasing drone employment, creates a more complex security environment and places additional pressure on the post-2022 settlement.

C. The DRC Ebola outbreak remains a major health-security emergency. Approximately 7,900 confirmed cases and 3,800 deaths, combined with geographic expansion, insecurity and population displacement, continue to complicate containment and regional preparedness.

D. Sudan remains vulnerable to increasingly entrenched political and territorial fragmentation. The immediate intelligence requirement is to distinguish rhetorical warnings of partition from observable consolidation of competing institutions and territorial authority.

E. Russia is pursuing a broader African strategy than direct security deployment alone suggests. Defence-industrial localization, maintenance and training relationships, political diplomacy and emerging engagement in Madagascar indicate an effort to establish longer-duration institutional relationships.

F. China continues operating through a different but similarly layered model combining infrastructure, manufacturing, technology, healthcare and institutional engagement. Individual setbacks such as Ruzizi III should not be interpreted as evidence of a broader Chinese retreat from Africa.

G. African governments continue demonstrating strategic agency rather than simple alignment with competing external blocs. Their expanding partnerships and campaign for United Nations Security Council reform reflect increasing emphasis on sovereignty, institutional influence and strategic autonomy.

H. Canada's Africa Strategy remains active, with established mechanisms supporting trade, diplomatic engagement, development finance, critical-mineral cooperation, the African Continental Free Trade Area and peace-and-security partnerships. However, Africa's limited visibility within broader federal priorities creates uncertainty regarding relative political priority over the longer term.

I. Canada's principal challenge is sustained implementation and strategic effect. Progress will depend on whether existing mechanisms generate measurable growth in trade, investment, critical-mineral partnerships, diplomatic engagement, private-sector participation and security cooperation.

J. Canada retains the potential to pursue an integrated approach combining commercial investment, mining and critical-mineral expertise, development finance, education, institutional capacity, technology and peace-and-security cooperation. This provides a distinct model rather than requiring Canada to replicate China's economic scale or Russia's security-focused approach.

K. Overall, the reporting period reinforces a continental trend toward strategic diversification rather than exclusive alignment. African governments increasingly engage different partners for different requirements while seeking sovereignty, domestic value creation and strategic autonomy.

Overall Confidence Assessment: Moderate to High.

A Reflection

The Detour: Sometimes the Detour is the way

By Lt. Col. Joanne Seviour

My body was dripping as though I had just stepped out of a hot shower, except there was no shower. There was only Badakhshan, in the far northeast of Afghanistan, and heat that seemed to rise from the earth and press down from the sky at the same time. Behind me, the engines of a Hercules thundered across the airstrip.

The General—the commander of NATO forces in Afghanistan, Lieutenant-General Rick Hillier—had just boarded a C 130 Hercules back to Kabul. I watched the aircraft begin to move. Lucky bastard.

“Sawar!” I yelled over the engines, “we’d better get going.” He climbed into the G-Wagon beside me. We had two, perhaps three days of driving ahead of us, depending on the condition of the roads through the Hindu Kush. And in Afghanistan in 2004, the word *road* was sometimes generous.

I wrestled myself behind the steering wheel. Flak jacket. Rifle. Pistol. Ammunition. Small pack. Everything seemed to have been designed separately, with no thought that one person might have to wear it all while trying to drive.

The G-Wagon had air conditioning—technically. Turn it on and it blasted sand and dust through the vehicle until you couldn’t breathe and could barely see through the windshield. So we drove without it, in temperatures pushing 50 degrees Celsius. I remember thinking that Mercedes-Benz had apparently designed a military vehicle without considering that militaries might occasionally operate in deserts.

The suspension wasn't much better. Every hole in the dirt road travelled through the G-Wagon and directly into my spine. I was already dreading the long road back to Kabul.

A week earlier, I couldn't wait to make the trip north. I had, in fact, manoeuvred my way onto it. The General was travelling with a very small contingent of staff to meet local leaders in northern Afghanistan.

There was the General and his close-protection team, his aide-de-camp, a captain from the Royal 22^e Régiment, his Afghan interpreter, Sawar—and eventually, through a little strategic persuasion, me. Originally, a female civilian political adviser was supposed to go.

I had helpfully mentioned to her that the conditions would be challenging: long days, primitive accommodations, very few proper bathrooms. Although none of this was untrue, I may simply have emphasized certain details more than others.

The night before we were scheduled to leave, she stormed into the General's office and announced that she was no longer available and recommended me instead. I tried to look surprised.

The next morning, I was wedged shotgun of a G-Wagon in full body armour, heading north. I couldn't have been happier. We were travelling into the region where the Northern Alliance had been born and where the memory of Ahmad Shah Massoud—the Lion of Panjshir—was everywhere. Massoud had fought the Soviet occupation and later the Taliban.

He had been assassinated only two days before Sept. 11, 2001. His photograph appeared in shops, homes and along roadsides. To many people in northern Afghanistan, he wasn't simply a dead commander, he was still a presence.

On our journey north, we stopped in Kunduz and met local officials, tribal elders and commanders, including General Abdul Rashid Dostum. Dostum, the survivor, is a whole other story.

One meeting remains etched in my memory. On a simple concrete pad surrounded by rose bushes, Afghan carpets had been spread across the concrete, transforming it into a meeting place. We sat cross-legged on those carpets among the roses.

I was told this was where Massoud had met with his commanders. There were no polished conference tables, no headquarters, no PowerPoint presentations. There were just carpets, roses, mountains and men talking about the future of Afghanistan in a place where other men had once planned how to fight for it.

Eventually, we continued north to Badakhshan. Now, a week later, the General was flying home while Sawar and I pointed the G-Wagon south. We weren't completely alone. A second

G-Wagon travelled with us, driven by a German officer with a corporal beside him. Hours passed; heat, dust, villages, checkpoints—and more dust.

The G-Wagon hammered over the roads. By the time we reached the Kunduz area again, exhaustion had taken over. I pulled off the road. There was no meeting scheduled, no mission. I simply needed to stop driving. When I switched off the engine, the sudden silence felt almost unnatural.

“Sawar, see if you can find us some cold water.” He looked at the bottles rolling around the vehicle. After hours in the heat, the water was almost hot enough to make tea. It tasted like piss. He laughed and headed toward a nearby village.

I pushed the seat back as far as my body armour would allow and closed my eyes. On another trip, Sawar had told me about his father. During the Soviet occupation, his father had travelled to Kunduz to visit some land he owned. He never came home. There was no body, no message or no explanation; he simply disappeared. Sawar’s family never learned what had happened to him.

I must have fallen asleep, but I don’t know for how long. Then I heard someone running. “Mame! Mame!” I opened my eyes. Sawar was racing toward the G-Wagon. “Mame!” He reached the vehicle almost out of breath. “I have some very important news.”

I pushed myself upright. In Afghanistan in 2004, *very important news* could mean almost anything. “What is it?” “There is an old man in the next village.” He struggled to catch his breath, “He knows what happened to my father.”

I stared at him. Sawar had walked away looking for cold water but had returned with something he had been searching for most of his life: an answer; or at least someone who might have one.

I walked over to the German G-Wagon. “We’re going to make a little detour.” The German officer stared at me. “A detour? Where?” “Sawar has found someone who may know what happened to his father.”

His reaction was immediate. His face turned red. “No.” Then came the reasons: we didn’t know the village, we didn’t know who was there, the road wasn’t part of our authorized route, we had no reconnaissance or additional protection. We simply didn’t know what we were driving into.

His voice grew louder. “This is dangerous!” I knew that. “You could be court-martialled for disobeying orders!” Now he was yelling. Dust hung between us in the heat. The corporal beside him said nothing. I looked over at Sawar.

He had spent the week helping us understand his country. Translating our questions, explaining customs and helping us navigate a world that was completely foreign to us. His father had disappeared here decades earlier. And somewhere nearby there might finally be an answer.

I was the senior officer. “We’re going.” The German officer stared at me. “You can follow us, or you can stay here.”

I turned around and walked back to the G-Wagon. Sawar climbed in as I started the engine. For a moment, the German vehicle didn’t move. Then I looked in the mirror; the second G-Wagon pulled in behind us.

We drove a short distance into Kunduz before Sawar pointed toward a man standing beside the road. “There.” I stopped. The Afghan man who climbed into our vehicle was young; fighting age.

Suddenly, this felt a little more serious. I looked at him, then at Sawar. “I thought you said it was an old man?”

“Yes, Mame. This man will take us to the next village. He knows where to find the old man.” Now I had doubts. We had left our authorized route and I had ignored the German officer’s warnings. I was responsible for two vehicles and the people in them.

And now a fighting-age Afghan man none of us knew was sitting in my G-Wagon, directing us farther away from the road we were supposed to be on. I looked in the mirror. The Germans were still behind us. I was already committed.

“Okay. Let’s go.” We drove on. At the next village, the young man got out. Then another man approached. This one was old, very old. A long white beard fell almost to his waist. His clothes hung around him in layers and, for one completely inappropriate second, I thought he looked like Rumpelstiltskin.

He climbed into the G-Wagon. There were no introductions, he simply began pointing. We followed his directions as the road narrowed and then narrowed again. The buildings disappeared behind us.

Soon we were driving through woods on tracks barely wide enough for the G-Wagon. Branches scraped along the sides. The deeper we went, the more I wondered what the hell I had gotten us into.

Then Sawar suddenly shouted. “Stop!” I hit the brakes. The old man opened the door and climbed out. We had stopped beside what looked like nothing more than thick bush.

Sawar followed him. So did I. Behind us, the German G-Wagon stopped, but the Germans didn't get out. The old man disappeared into the trees as we followed. Branches caught against my clothes and equipment. There was barely a path beneath our feet.

We walked for perhaps five minutes. Then the trees opened into a small clearing. The old man stopped. At first, I didn't understand what I was looking at. There was only grass. Then I saw the shape beneath it; a long mound. The earth had settled and grass had grown over it, but the shape was unmistakable: a grave.

Sawar stopped walking. The old man spoke and although I didn't understand the words, I didn't need to. Sawar's face changed and his eyes filled with tears.

After all those years, after all the wondering, after a childhood and adulthood of not knowing, he was standing beside his father's grave. He had found him. There was no headstone, no marker, just a mound of earth covered in grass in a small clearing in the woods outside Kunduz.

Sawar reached for a small flip phone and called his mother, who was living in Toronto. He spoke to her in a language I couldn't understand. Then he turned the tiny phone toward the grave so she could see her husband's grave.

Thousands of kilometres away, a woman in Toronto was finally seeing where the husband who had disappeared during the Soviet occupation had been buried. Then I heard her cry. Her grief came through that tiny speaker and seemed to wash across the clearing on the wind, across the kilometres and across the decades. I stood silently. There was nothing I could say.

Then the old man reached out his hands. He motioned for us to join him. Sawar took one hand and I took another. And there, the three of us stood holding hands around the grave. The old man began to pray. I didn't understand a single word, but I understood everything. The relief, the gratitude, the pain, the grief of finally knowing. Perhaps it was more than either of them realized.

Because more than 15 years earlier, my own father had gone to work one day. And he never came home. For weeks, we didn't know where he was. I remembered the waiting, the questions, the confusion, the fear and the terrible uncertainty of someone you love simply disappearing. Was he alive, dead, coming home or gone forever? Eventually, my family received our answer.

Now Sawar and his mother had theirs. And standing there in that small wooded clearing outside Kunduz, beside the grave of a man I had never known, listening to prayers spoken in a language I couldn't understand, something became very clear to me.

There was almost nothing foreign about this moment. Not the love, the loss, the grief or the need to know.

I had travelled halfway around the world, wearing a Canadian uniform and carrying a weapon. I was serving a NATO mission in a country whose language, religion, customs and history were different from my own.

Beside me stood an Afghan son grieving his father as an old Muslim man prayed and a mother cried through a tiny phone from Toronto. I stood among them remembering my own father.

For those few minutes in the woods outside Kunduz, all the labels we use to separate ourselves seemed meaningless: Canadian/Afghan, Christian/Muslim, soldier/civilian, East/West. There was simply a son who had found his father, a mother who finally knew where her husband lay and an old man who had carried the answer.

And a daughter who understood something about what it meant when a father didn't come home. We stood together, holding hands over a grave. Different languages, religions, cultures and lives, but the same grief, love, need for answers and humanity.

That day, on an unauthorized detour down a dusty road outside Kunduz, Afghanistan, taught me something I have never forgotten. We spend so much time noticing what separates us, but beneath all of it, we are connected by far more than we realize.

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