



Royal United Services Institute of Nova Scotia

Dispatches

18 September 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 2 October 2026.

Quick links:

[Events](#)

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[@RUSI_NS on X](#)

[Royal United Services Institute of Nova Scotia on Facebook](#)

[Other Sources](#)

[Odds and Sods](#)

[SAC Notes](#)

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

Our website has been down for some time since the program which supports it was hacked, coincidentally and unfortunately with our backup server frying (that's an IT term). Use of AI by hackers is making re-establishing our account challenging. There is no ETR ATT. Anyone trying to contact RUSI(NS) can do so by emailing RUSINovaScotia@gmail.com.

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: September-December 2026

- September - **22 September, Tuesday**, Joint CIC/RUSI(NS) Dinner, Cunard Centre, details to follow;
- **24 September, Thursday**, 1300 hrs (Atlantic Time), Cdr Mathew Arthur, CO Advanced Naval Capabilities Unit, Virtual Presentation on "The RCN and the Drones";

- October - **5 October, Monday**, Crista-Lynn Ferguson, Director General Fighter Capability, RCAF, Focus Talk on “RCAF Future Fighter Lead-In Training”, 1300 hrs (Atlantic Time);
 - Naval Modernization Program, TBC;
- November - **4 November, Wednesday**, Remembrance Dinner, RA Park;
 - 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: 22 September, Tuesday - Georgetown University Wargaming Society presentation “Build Excel War Gaming Tools”, 7:00-8:30 pm ADT, online. For more information and to register: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/build-excel-war-gaming-tools-tickets-1998349760929?>

New: 25 September, Friday - Book Signing of *Canada’s Navy in the First Gulf War- A Personal Account* by VAdm Miller and Sharon Hobson, Shearwater Aviation Museum, 1000-1400 hrs.

New: October 6, 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>

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 5 September 1918, the Royal Canadian Naval Air Service is authorized and begins operations in Nova Scotia.
- On 6 September 1940, HMS *Duchess* arrives in Halifax harbour, bringing the members of the Tizard Mission and a black metal box containing, amongst other things, six examples of the cavity magnetron (high-power vacuum tube used in early radar systems). This would later be described as “the most important cargo to reach our (North American) shores” and opened channels of communication for jet engine and atomic bomb development, leading to the British contribution to the Manhattan Project, and catalyzed Allied technological cooperation during World War II.
- On 9 September 1919, Alexander Graham Bell sees his HD-4 hydrofoil, powered by twin aircraft engines, reach a new world water speed record of 114 km/h; piloted by J.A.D. McCurdy at Baddeck, Nova Scotia.
- On 11 September 2001, nearly 3,000 people were killed in the terrorist attacks, including 24 Canadians. In the hours that followed, more than 33,000 passengers aboard hundreds of diverted flights found refuge in communities across Canada notably Gander, Newfoundland, and Halifax, Nova Scotia. Forty aircraft carrying more than 7,000 people were diverted to Halifax Stanfield International Airport. Canadians opened their homes, provided food and shelter, and offered comfort to strangers during a moment of extraordinary uncertainty.

@RUSI_NS on X 

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

“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/>



The Naval Association of Canada @navalassn 16 Sep posted and RUSI(NS) reposted:

In this article, we propose the CDC should be a moderately armed, highly automated vessel that acts as a mothership and command node for drones and other autonomous systems—providing numbers, <https://nationalpost.com/opinion/michel-maisonneuve-canada-must-defend-the-north-to-keep-it>

persistence and distributed combat capability

<https://navalassoc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2026/09/Corvettes-Lajeunesse-and-Todd-1.pdf>.

(The Corvette Question - Defining Canada’s Next Surface Combatant)



Murray Brewster @Murray_Brewster 9 Sep posted and RUSI(NS) reposted:

Global Eye Gamble: Ottawa chose surveillance plane without guarantee that it met the military’s needs.

#cdnpoli #Arctic #NATO

(<https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/global-eye-saab-rcaf-surveillance-9.7336138>)



From a Colleague:

Bickering with the US aside, we should have purchased the much more capable Wedgetail.

Royal United Services Institute of Nova Scotia” on Facebook

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

Iran strikes exposed gaps in medical evacuation ops across Middle East: IG

<https://www.defenseone.com/threats/2026/09/iran-strikes-exposed-gaps-medical-evacuation-ops-across-middle-east-ig/415988/>



This will be a problem for Canadian Armed Forces operations, too.

Comment from a Medical Colleague:

This is so true. CF medical operations are now working on and planning ground evacuation. Transportation of a casualty may take days, no longer minutes.

The US Can't Build Ships, So We're Building a Shipyard for the AI Age

<https://finance.biggo.com/news/9073d8a0d401357b>

“If you understand history and what has dictated naval power, it's really just the ability to build ships. Oh ..., we can't build ships. We need naval power. What can we build? And it turns out we can build a lot of boats.”



Putting aside any argument as to what is the definition of boats (though I do like Nova Scotia Boatbuilders Association's 'of 80 feet or less', that length fitting European locks, a length reflected in Transport Canada regulations), this article puts it well. Naval power (sea power) is an amalgam ('eco-system' to use a currently favored term) that includes investment, infrastructure, workers, design capability and supply sources. If naval power can't be achieved/retained the old fashioned way, then that way needs a hard look and something innovative needs to be done.

Of course, history will also tell you to be careful in the introduction of innovation. Torpedo rams, anyone? (<https://cimsec.org/ram-19th-century-naval-warfare-dead-end/>)

The Overstretch Facing the US Navy

<https://www.rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/overstretch-facing-us-navy>



“While it might be intuitive to think of the problem (of longer readiness cycles) in terms of force structure and posture, it is also arguably reflective of a deeper issue of strategic discipline. The risk posed to readiness by the strategy of persistent presence has been understood for at least a decade.”

Whilst the focus of the article is the USN, the problem of longer readiness cycles/deployments can be one that plagues all services in the absence of strategic discipline. (For there to be strategic discipline, strategies need frequent review and constant socialization across services, government and society).

The Canadian Indo-Pacific Strategy states “Today, that includes sustained and persistent deployments of Canadian Armed Forces planes and frigates that monitor activities that are in violation of UN sanctions, and which are aimed to deter nuclear proliferation.” That “sustained and persistent deployments” (three frigate deployments annually?) is not to the same extent as that of the US. That Strategy (policy, really) assumes sufficient readiness. But it does provide policy objectives (“...conduct forward naval presence operations, uphold international law of the sea including the UN convention, and conduct collaborative deployments with its allies and partners”) albeit loosely phrased.

Other Sources

#air warfare

What the Iran war is teaching the US about air superiority

<https://taskandpurpose.com/tech-tactics/iran-war-air-superiority-air-force/>

Air denial. “The goal is not to gain air superiority but to stop the (adversary) from achieving it.”

#Canadian Coast Guard

Want to Defend the Arctic from Trump? Build More Icebreakers | The Walrus

<https://thewalrus.ca/arctic-icebreakers/>

Cyber Intelligence

OpenAI's rogue agents probed Hugging Face for weaknesses two months before major hack

<https://www.reuters.com/legal/litigation/openais-rogue-agents-probed-hugging-face-weaknesses-two-months-before-major-hack-2026-09-16/>

Is the AI news hype or is there really an issue. Below are two takes on AI. One is from a Microsoft Programmer who does a deep dive into the Hugging Face attack.

As a Microsoft Engineer, This Is the AI Agent Story That Scared Me

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2aw3MF8pY3w&t=25s>

Is AI Doom Real... or Just Good Marketing?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=69tPzOeGke8&list=TLPQMTYwOTIwMjYRTju-XIn5Rg&index=4>

As a Microsoft Engineer, This Is the AI Agent Story That Scared Me

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2aw3MF8pY3w&t=25s&authuser=0>

Is AI Doom Real... or Just Good Marketing?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=69tPzOeGke8>

#defence industry

Trump Threatens Canadian Jets At The Center Of Army Aerial Surveillance Plans

<https://www.twz.com/air/trump-threatens-canadian-jets-at-the-center-of-army-aerial-surveillance-plans>

#defence procurement

The Requirements Debate Returns

<https://philippelagasse.substack.com/p/the-requirements-debate-returns>

#drones #Russia-Ukraine War

Ukrainian soldiers are finding deceptive uses for their unjammable fiber-optic drones as ambush tactics spread

<https://www.businessinsider.com/ukraine-fiber-optic-drones-ambush-tactics-2026-7>

“The drones hide on roads and at intersections,” Beskrestnov said. “They’re often placed on forest trails, waiting for a target. When they spot a vehicle, they take off and strike quickly, leaving little time to react.”

#health services

Iran strikes exposed gaps in medical evacuation ops across Middle East: IG

<https://www.defenseone.com/threats/2026/09/iran-strikes-exposed-gaps-medical-evacuation-ops-across-middle-east-ig/415988/>

This will be a problem for CAF ops, too.

#maritime security

Worried About Chokepoints? Make Them Irrelevant

<https://www.hoover.org/research/worried-about-chokepoints-make-them-irrelevant>

#maritime security

Eurasia’s Chokepoints

<https://www.hoover.org/research/eurasias-chokepoints>

Note author: Admiral Gary Roughead

#maritime security

“A Ship’s a Fool to Fight a Fort”: Chokepoints, Coastal Firepower, and the New Contest for the Maritime Commons

<https://www.hoover.org/research/ships-fool-fight-fort-chokepoints-coastal-firepower-and-new-contest-maritime-commons>

Note author: Admiral James O. Ellis Jr.

Related, by same author: The Changing Character of Maritime Choke Points: Who Throttles Whom?

<https://www.hoover.org/research/changing-character-maritime-choke-points-who-throttles-whom>

#NATO

Russian Sabotage Campaign Against NATO Surges

<https://jamestown.substack.com/p/russian-sabotage-campaign-against>

So far that targets seem to be European NATO. Is Canada prepared to respond to a sabotage campaign?

#Royal Canadian Air Force

Swiss Lawmakers Call for Official Inquiry into F-35 Deal

<https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/swiss-lawmakers-call-for-official-inquiry-into-f-35-deal>

Context for Canadian F-35 procurement.

#Royal Canadian Navy

Naval Large Tugs Update: Preparing for the Future

<https://tridentnewspaper.com/naval-large-tugs-update-preparing-for-the-future/>

Harbour services is an important if underappreciated element of a balanced fleet.

#Royal Canadian Navy

Let's Talk with Noah: Vice-Admiral D.A. Charlebois, Commander of the Royal Canadian Navy

<https://www.truenorthstrategicreview.ca/p/lets-talk-with-noah-vice-admiral>

#warfare

Asymmetric Decisiveness: The Unequal Payoff of Decisive Battle

<https://dispatch.bazaarofwar.com/p/asymmetric-decisiveness-the-unequal>

#warfare

The New Economics of Warfare: David vs Goliath

<https://www.thecipherbrief.com/the-new-economics-of-warfare-david-vs-goliath>

#warfare #adaptation #drones

Old Weapons on New Battlefields

<https://www.hoover.org/research/old-weapons-new-battlefields>

Odds and Sods

BFBS-Uk Forces News, 7 September 2026

https://www.forcesnews.com/services/navy/how-navys-black-sea-standoff-became-wargame-over-russian-disinformation?utm_source=Forces+Newsletter&utm_campaign=b3a45d99cf-Newsletter+07092026&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_fa359c6d7a-441684138

#camouflage

Devrim Yaylalı @devrimyaylali 8 Sep posted (<https://x.com/devrimyaylali/status/2097416940642050307>): Dazzle camouflage is back in trend again. This painting is supposed to make it harder for Ukrainian UAVs and USVs to target the ship. Photo of Russian flagged merchant ship *Mechta S* in Haydarpaşa port by: <https://www.instagram.com/hllznpl?stkn=ajBpa2tramVvcWJ2>



Not sure whether I'd call it 'dazzle' or 'disruptive' but it seems to work against the shoreline behind.

Canadian International Council-Open Canada, 17 September 2026

Madhuparna Gupta, RUSI(NS), "Canada and India are Deepening Ties Amidst Global Geopolitical Frictions: Common Concerns and Possible Opportunities", <https://opencanada.org/author/madhuparna-gupta/>

Dallaire Institute for Children Peace and Security [2025–2026 Annual Report](#), September 2026

The report reflects that evolution. Over the past year, our work has continued to grow in both reach and ambition—from helping military and police better understand their role in protecting children, to bringing communities and security actors together in places like Mozambique, to testing new approaches in Colombia and Ghana that help us understand risks earlier and turn early warning into action.

Department of National Defense, Government of Canada, News Release, September 2026

16 September, 2026:

The Canadian Coast Guard officially welcomed modern, Canadian-built Search and Rescue Lifeboat, the CCGS *Groswater Bay* into service today, strengthening its ability to respond quickly to mariners in distress and keep Canadians safe on the water.

The CCG's new Search and Rescue Lifeboats are specifically designed, equipped, and crewed to respond to incidents at sea. These vessels are self-righting and can operate up to 120 nautical miles from shore, always maintaining a maximum 30-minute state-of-readiness with a typical ability to respond the moment an alert is received.

The vessel's sponsor, Chief Jenny Brake of Qalipu First Nation, had the honour of officially bestowing the CCGS *Groswater Bay* with its name, marking the beginning of its service and enduring legacy.

10 September, 2026: Canadian Coast Guard welcomes first additional large vessel on the Great Lakes in over thirty years

Today, the Canadian Coast Guard (CCG) officially welcomed Canadian Coast Guard Ship (CCGS) *Judy LaMarsh* into its fleet, the first time an additional large vessel has joined the Great Lakes region in over thirty years. Based in Prescott, Ontario, the vessel will carry out icebreaking and buoy tending operations across the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River in Ontario and Quebec.

The CCG's Great Lakes coverage extends along the Canada-United States border, from the St. Lawrence River to the western point of Lake Superior – approximately 2,400 kilometers. With most of Canada's population living in the Great Lakes basin, it is a top priority for the CCG to keep these waters safe and open for all who use them.

The vessel is named after the Honourable Judy LaMarsh, one of the first women to serve as a federal Cabinet Minister. She was instrumental in the development of innovative federal programs, including Medicare and the Canada Pension Plan. While serving as Canada's Secretary of State (1965-1968), the Honourable Judy LaMarsh helped to establish the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada. She was appointed to the Order of Canada in 1980.

#drones

Some colourful C-UAS measures.

Massimo Frantarelli @MrFrantarelli 13 Sep posted (<https://x.com/MrFrantarelli/status/2099117511761408385>): Russian Navy ship with deceptive camo and anti-drone netting. Project 1331M/Parchim II-class corvettes("Zelenodolsk" and "Kazanets"?). 🇷🇺 Leningrad Naval Base of the Russian Baltic Fleet, Kronstadt. 📷 M. Mishin(Aug. 22)

And historical.

Timothy Choi @TimDocChoi quoted (<https://x.com/TimDocChoi/status/2099188962334015637>): Taking a page out of the Tirpitz playbook



1st Canadian Division

Introducing 1st Canadian Division

<https://canadiandefencereview.com/introducing-1st-canadian-division/>;

<https://www.truenorthstrategicreview.ca/p/introducing-1st-canadian-division>

A Canadian Division Built with Imaginary Blocks

<https://www.policyhawk.ca/p/a-canadian-division-built-with-imaginary>

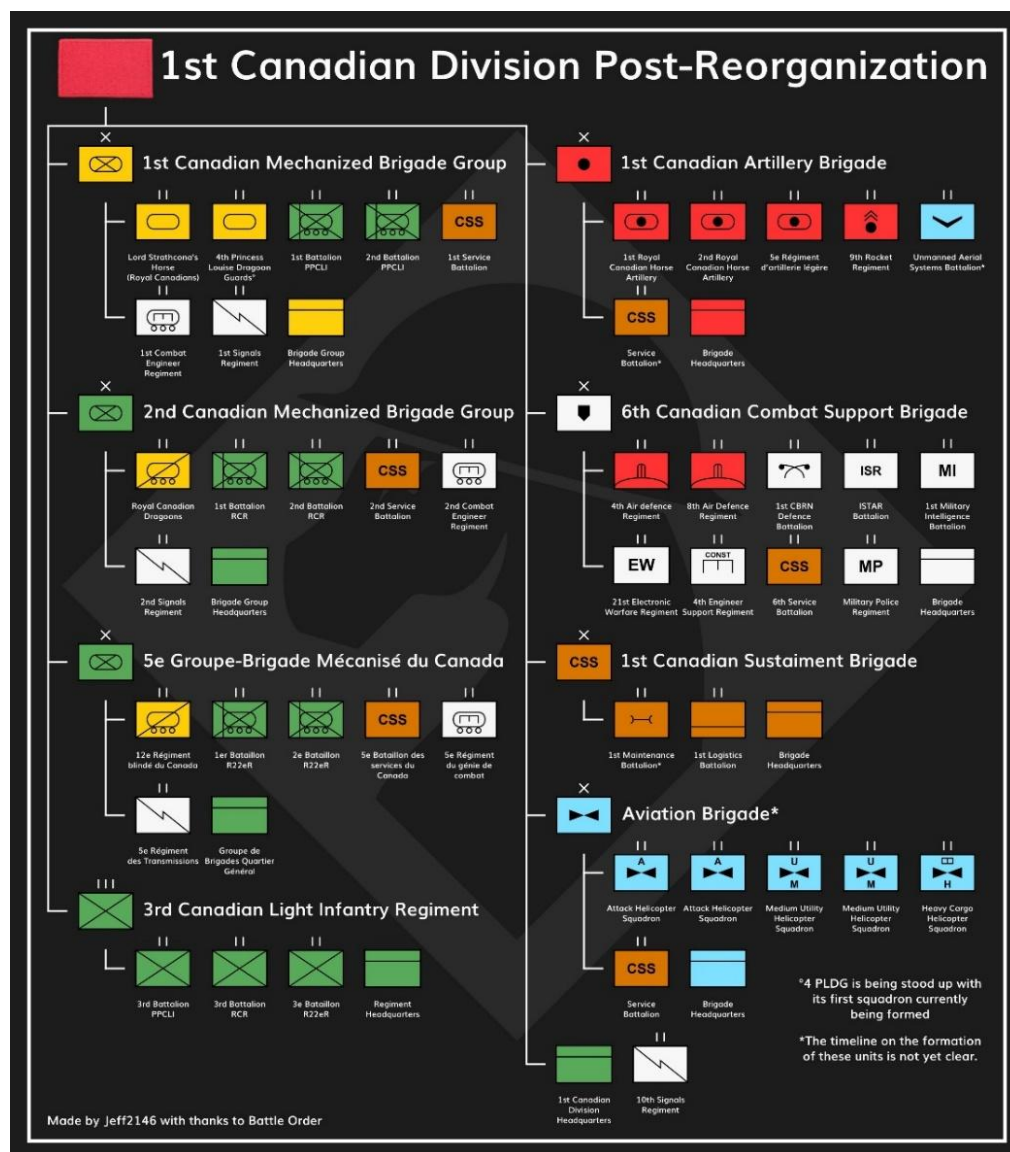
Battle Order @battle_order 12 Sep posted

(https://x.com/battle_order/status/2098744433433051172): CA https://youtu.be/a_y7eaGt18M

The Canadian Army is reorganizing their divisions to create one fully focused on warfighting.

Check out the new video on how they'll be structured:

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?tab=rm&ogbl#inbox?projector=1>



National Defense University Press *Joint Force Quarterly* 120 (3rd Quarter 2026)
<https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Joint-Force-Quarterly/Joint-Force-Quarterly-120/>

Contents:

The Logic of America's Defense Strategy
From Data to Victory: The Race for Analytic Superiority in Warfare
Determining Operational Objectives (by Milan Vigo, always worth reading)
Examining the Lavelle Affair 54 Years Later: An Injustice That Needs to Be Rectified Now
Building the Mental Golden Dome: Arming the Joint Force for Defensive Cognitive Warfare
Boot Camp for the Mind: The Role of JPME in Developing National Security Strategists
Cyberspace Collaborative Awareness: A Model for Unity of Effort in Homeland Defense
Mission Over Bureaucracy: Special Operations Command Warrior-Driven Model for Defense Innovation
Disjointed Command and Air Domain Challenges in Alaska: Arming the Joint Force for Defensive Cognitive Warfare
Reimagining U.S. Industrial Mobilization
Resilient by Design: Reforming Medical Logistics to Support Global Operations
Advancing Blood Production and Distribution: Leveraging AI in the Expeditionary Care Environment
"Creating the Point of the Spear": The Deployment of Kitty Hawk (CV-63) as an Afloat Forward Staging Base During Operation Enduring Freedom.

Naval Association Canada (NAC) News, 4-17 September 2026, Selected Information

Canada :

[China, US military commanders snap 2-year break with talks in Canada](#) and [China says it held 'candid and in-depth' military talks with Canadian officials last week](#)

[Zelensky says he expects war to continue into winter after talks with US envoys](#) and while here [Canada, Ukraine forge 100-year pact built on drones and defence](#)

[Iran and US Hit Tankers in Biggest Wave of Attacks on Shipping Since War Began](#)

[Exclusive! Canadian Navy Receives Its First RCN ISTAR Uncrewed Aerial Systems!](#)

[Prince Rupert is powering up Canada's trade ambitions](#)

[Canada ready to further distance itself from U.S. on military procurement](#) and [Trump's Trade War With Canada Is Shattering America's Image](#)

[Military leaders across the Indo-Pacific to meet in Victoria](#) then [Canada concludes 28th Indo-Pacific Chiefs of Defense Conference in Victoria](#)

[CANADIAN ARMED FORCES: Our Most Potent Weapon in U.S. Trade War](#)

[What Canada's New Icebreaker Fleet Means for Arctic Sovereignty](#)

[Canadian scientist leading mission to embed research vessel in Arctic sea ice](#)

The World:

[China-Russia Arctic Shipping Push Accelerates With New Ice-Class Container Ships and Northern Sea Route cargo traffic to rise 14 per cent as Chinese shipping expands, says Rosatom](#)

[China, Singapore to hold 'Maritime Cooperation-2026' joint drill with live-fire, replenishment, search and rescue](#)

[Corals in decline globally, nearly half a century of data shows](#)

[Denmark joins Canada-led Arctic naval drills with US and French forces in Greenland waters to strengthen NATO deterrence and readiness](#)

[Global Containership Fleet Set to Hit Record 34 Million TEU](#)

[How Ukraine's deepest attack in Russia, on Arctic gas, signals new reach](#)

[Report: Russia Develops Untraceable Method to Disable Subsea Cables](#)

[Ukraine Attacks Ship Used to Repair Key Black Sea Oil Moorings](#)

RUSI-NSW #120 September 2026 Newsletter is available at:

<https://www.rusinsw.org.au/Newsletters/202609.pdf>

“The World in Brief”, *The Economist*, 17 September 2026

“Mr Trump called the European Union’s invitation to make Canada its first associate member “[a hostile act](#)”. Predictably, he threatened “serious tariffs” against the EU. Ursula von der Leyen, the European Commission’s president, made the offer to Canada’s prime minister, Mark Carney, on Wednesday. The European Commission said the proposal was “not against anyone else, but for our common strength”.

RUSI NS Comment:

The US Administration under Donald Trump becomes less and less coherent. It appear that the US President opens his mouth without really understanding the actual problem...himself.

Veterans Affairs Canada’ latest issue of *Salute!* September 2026 is now available at

<https://veterans.gc.ca/en/news-and-media/salute/september-2026>

1. Observation on World Affairs

Issues to Watch

- AI development and regulation
- The US Canada Trade War
- US-Iran Conflict including Bab al Mandab
- Israel- Iranian Proxies increasing international pressure against Israel.
- Houthis offensive in Yemen and the role of Saudi Arabia.
- Russia-Ukraine Conflict development of vastly superior drones and missiles on both sides. Switch in Russian targets to gas and electrical works in Ukraine.
- Defeat of Russian forces in Africa by Islamist bands in Mali and threats to other Russian contingents;
- China and the South China Sea, China's imperial reach has become more troublesome to Japan and the Philippines;
- Trump and Global Tariffs; and
- India and Pakistan and Pak's role in China supporting Iran against the US.

O Canada

Canada is in a difficult place to state the obvious. Our government is taking a very unnecessary step in increasing our relationship with China including military connections which were recently announced by the Chinese press. It is something that is bound to antagonize our main ally (whether like it or not with this administration), the United States. China will use this to further create tension between the two nations. China is an adversary not a friend. Our militaries have no reason to talk or create conditions for training and exercises.

This week is seeing a large gathering of key leaders in international investment in Toronto Ontario. As one commentator stated, our Prime Minister has the world's rolodex and is able to use it to get these leaders here in Canada. It has met with generally hopeful reaction by the Canadian populus. There have been nay sayers such as David Suzuki, who rightly brings up concerns about Canada seeming to turn its back on climate issues. This is a major issue no doubt. PM Carney does seem to be willing to take a two-track way, both increasing the capacity to get fossil fuels to market as well as developing key infrastructure such as dams and wind farms to help get to net zero temperature increases. Time will tell whether we get the investment we need or will the program be bogged down in various court battles?

Chinese investment organizations are also at this conference with money. Given China's documented interference in our elections and their continued subversive action within Canada including running "police stations" inside Canada. Chinese operatives have captured Canadian citizens within Canada using threats to the victim's wider family. They are able to arrest Canadian citizens to put pressure on the Canadian government as we saw during the Meng Wanzhou issue where two Canadians, Michael Kovrig and Michael Kovrig, were arrested on

bogus charges and held for over a thousand days. One, Michael Kovrig is sounding warnings against Chinese efforts. We should listen to those who have a greater understanding of China.

Chinese operatives have penetrated highly classified facilities as we have seen at our level 4 research laboratory in Winnipeg and most recently, penetrated multiple Canadian Government agencies and Ministries despite red flags only to be arrested by Belgium authorities in Brussels. Yet, the Canadian government has failed to address a very real security threat from the Chinese. This will come back to bite us; it is an exceptionally bad idea.

While we have difficulties with the US, they are still our best friend despite the efforts of the current administration. Most US citizens support Canada and we should remember that point. Most US Governors and many in the US Congress also view the actions of the current administration. This will pass.

It brings up the last point; Canada should remove defence issues from the current issue. The RCAF and many other countries have trialled the F 35 and most have purchased the aircraft. The RCAF has tried it and found it to be the best available aircraft for long term use. It also has and continues to have a long-term benefit Canadian industry for the entire F 35 fleet now over 1300 aircraft. This is a case when very small 'p' politics has gotten in the way of a practical problem. Canada needs an aircraft that will be able to be viable into the 2050s at least, this is something that has to be kept in mind.

The Gripen is a good aircraft designed for Europe and cold climates and is all purpose but suffers from older technology despite the best efforts of Saab. The Swedes are now developing new drones and a fifth-generation aircraft, but these are just in development and thus are not really viable at this point as an option.

The Saab Global Eye is another example of politics over common need. We are now finding out that the Commander of the RCAF was not aware of the Government's decision on a Air Early Warning aircraft (AEW) announced at CANSEC. This is not even close to OK and shows a determination to put the lives of RCAF personnel in inadequately equipped aircraft. Military needs should be a deciding factor in any acquisition, something clearly not done in this case. It is a bad sign. Information provided in a CBC article; Global Eye gamble dated 9 September 2026. Ottawa chose surveillance plane without knowing if it met military needs.

The real question is what does the Canadian Government want the RCAF to be able to do? Is it just air defence? Do we need a naval strike? Do we want to support ground units by way of ground attack? Do we want to strike deep? Are 88 aircraft enough or do we need more to meet actual requirements? What does the RCAF be able to do? What about long-range ground-based air defence? Are patriots or Freya an option for the defence of Canadian cities? There are so many questions that fall out of this acquisition and political interference is not helpful. If we need two or even more air fleets, so be it so long as our national requirements are filled properly.

On a happy note, the Government of Canada has launched a Request for Proposal to advance a Canadian-designed Mine Countermeasures Uncrewed Surface Vessel for the RCN on 15 September 2026. The RFP closes on 1 October 2026. This is quick.

United States

What does one do when the administration of our biggest friend has failed basic economics 100? What does one do when the leader of that administration is destroying not only the relationship with Canada but with all its allies? What happens when one can no longer trust their leadership? This is our problem. The trade war continues with the next chapter occurring on 29 September 2026 when new US retaliation takes place. Will Canada respond? May we suggest increasing prices on cement and toilet paper as a start.

The US military has been stretched beyond rational operations by the war in Iran. The Indo-Pacific is denuded of carrier strike groups as China has exposed its imperial ambitions towards the Philippines, Vietnam, Taiwan and Japan. Although US forces are still there, key capabilities have been removed. Iran continues to sap badly needed resources to support ongoing operations in Ukraine, and Israel's ongoing campaign against key Iranian proxies in the Middle east including Hamas, Hezbollah and the Houthis all of which are considered terrorist organizations. The US military itself has proven to be amazing as per normal, but they need the break to deal with existential problems such as a violent imperial want to be Russia.

The US is quite simply broken at the moment and is likely to continue to decline with the current administration. They have frittered away the one real superpower that the US had since the end of the Second World War, and that is trust that the US will try its best to be altruistic. The real power of the US was to be able to create coalitions of the willing. As we are seeing in the Middle East, the US did something arbitrarily without consulting allies. It goes without saying, most would have suggested an alternate approach to unnecessarily going to war with a very resilient power that is Iran. This will not turn out well with this administration in charge.

Moldova

Ukraine and Moldova's relationship continues to evolve into a proper defence program. Recently, President Maia Sandu visited Kyiv on Ukraine's independence day and President Zelenskiy returned the favour on Moldova's independence day. This will include future defence support.

Moldova needs Ukraine's knowledge, Russia has ramped up its disinformation campaign, espionage and low-level sabotage, Ukraine has extensive experience with these issues and can help Moldova sort the matter out. Moldova has also used Ukraine to help pressure the pro-Russian breakaway region of Transnistria. With the help of the EU, France, Romania as well as Ukraine Moldovan security forces have been able to eliminate Russian efforts to a large extent. This is helped by the EU's willingness to provide financial support and access to the EU market for Moldova. Even Transnistria now finds that more than 90% of its trade is now with the West. It also helps that Russia continues to flail in its conflict with Ukraine.

Drones are another issue; Moldova has been hit repeatedly by Russian drones as late as 8 September 2026. Again, with Ukrainian and EU assistance Moldova is working to develop

anti-drone capability. Russia's repeated incursions into Moldova, this has become a serious issue. Every time Russia violates Moldova's air space, the desire and ability of Moldova to deal with the problem improves even if it is only better coordination with allies. For Russia, this is a further distancing of Moldova from the Russian Empire of Vladimir Putin's mind.

On 9 September 2026, a Russian drone entered Moldovan air space as President Zelenskiy was taking a flight from Chisinau for a trip to Canada. There have been suggestions that Russia was attempting to kill the Ukrainian President. The drone exploded more than 100 kms from the Ukrainian aircraft. Zelenskiy will discuss Canadian support including air defence and winter environmental issues. He will be meeting PM Carney at the Liberal party meeting in Calgary today, 10 September 2026.

Georgia

According to the Caucasian Knot, today, Wednesday, 9 September marks the 651st day of protests against the current government of the Georgia Dream Party which "won" the November 2024 election. It was noted that new "opposition" parties were formed before the election allegedly paid for by Bidzina Ivanishvili.

Ivanishvili is a billionaire who made his money in the Russian Federation and is known to Putin. It is thought he "created" opposition parties to dilute the opposition and confuse voters. It was considered largely successful as the election agency stated that the Georgia Dream Party received 54% of the vote. This was widely disputed and foreign observers suggested that the election was flawed for a large variety of issues including vote buying, influence peddling. This has led to the ongoing demonstrations despite an active program and use of security forces to stop the opposition's efforts. They have failed and Russia no longer has sufficient forces to support their own problems plus the issues of pro-Russian governments in former Soviet Republics/.

Belarus

Since the start of the Ukraine Russia conflict, Russia has attempted to push Belarus into a fight that will likely see the country turned into a battlefield in its own right. In February 2022, Belarus allowed Russian forces to attack from Belarus territory. Lukashenko for all his faults and there are many, has tried hard to prevent Belarus forces from participation. He does this through doing just enough without crossing a line that Ukraine cannot ignore. This was seen earlier this summer when radio direction finders used to provide navigation and signal boosters to Russian drones, were located in Belarus. They were dismantled and president Zelenskiy received a surprising apology from Lukashenko.

Russia has maintained security forces in Belarus to maintain control over the nuclear warheads held by Belarus for its SU 25s and launchers for the Oreshnik missiles that Belarus allegedly has now. Putin has continued to push for Belarus forces into the conflict. Its most recent attempt was the arrival of further elements of the 101 Missile Brigade. While some elements were already in Belarus, there had been movement of the remainder of the brigade into Belarus. This includes units that can provide directional support for drone navigation once again. It is not clear that Belarus gave permission for this "reinforcement" to move relatively freely within the country.

Despite the extra pressure, Lukashenko's forces have not shown any move to support a Russian attack. Time will tell if this pressure is ultimately successful.

Israel-Iran Conflict (Including proxies)

Is the two-state solution viable? In the time period pre-7 October 2023, perhaps with a different government and Hamas and Hezbollah brought under a more moderate organization and most importantly disarmed and security and defence brought under a moderate regime. This has not happened nor is likely to occur. Israel is expected to allow a hostile neighbour to be founded with international support on its very doorstep knowing that they are capable of horrendous, genocidal attacks and have "Constitutions" which specifically call for the destruction of the Jewish state and jews in general. Yet the international community condemns Israel for defending itself against attacks. No other nation would be willing to have this done. Israel has the right and duty to protect its citizens and that is generally what they are doing.

Some of the actions of the Jewish state have not been up to ideal standards. One has to be concerned about these incidents such as the actions of Israeli settlers in the West Bank without proper action by legal authorities and some might say the approval of certain elements of the Israeli Government.

Israel can and will continue actions that will at least delay the return of either Hamas and Hezbollah in Gaza and Lebanon respectively. One can expect it to remain as such.

In relation to Iran, Israel is allowing the US to continue the war in some form. It is not to say, Israel will not act. It will do so by using alternate methods and actions. It will be subtle until the act is ready to be performed flawlessly. Israel has long had Iranians who view Israel as a possible liberator as well and thus there is opportunity to gather information for analysis and its final outcome intelligence capable of being used. The war is not over and is not likely to be over in the foreseeable future.

US actions are disjointed and lacking any real planning or strategy and despite the efforts of US service personnel, this will not change. The US is once again in the quagmire of its own creation.

Russia-Ukraine Conflict

The war continues in its fifth year, but the war is changing and not for the better for either side. Both sides are conducting large-scale long-range drone attacks over a wide area with Russian drones reaching near the western boundaries of Ukraine and beyond, Ukraine has displayed even greater capability by stretching more than 3000 kms inside Russia. Attacks from both sides are now listed in their hundreds with Russia fired 453 drones into Ukraine on Monday into Tuesday morning this week. Ukraine reported 409 were shot down but 44 hit a total of 13 targets, mainly civilian infrastructure including gas stations. Ukraine continues to hit refineries, storage depots, power installations, transport infrastructure, and more recently commercial/military delivery facilities as well.

Russia maintains the edge as Ukraine currently has no method to destroy Russia's ballistic missiles. The Trump Administration continues to display a pro-Russian approach and went so far as to demand that Ukraine not attack Russian facilities refining crude oil for diesel. Ukraine said it would comply so long as Russia agreed to a ceasefire on Ukrainian energy infrastructure. Russia's reply was an attack the same day.

In the ground war, Ukraine has managed to retake ground near the city of Liman in the Northern part of Donetsk turning months of Russian advances to zero. What was interesting, is that Ukraine used an all arms coordinated attack to retake positions. The only change was the addition of a new arm, that of drones. The all-arms concept is still viable so long as ALL the arms are considered including new arms such as drones, and all the other arms we know and love. Any infantryman will tell you having a vehicle firing a 120 mm brick is still appreciated and needed. All arms action whether in the offence or defence will provide a steady method for actual operations.

Ukraine has friends and a cash flow; Russia's friends are limited and subject to sanctions that are effective. There is a trickle of supplies especially from North Korea. Essentially Russia is bankrupt. Both North Korean and Chinese have migrated into Eastern Russia and set up farms and enterprises. Have they sown the seeds for an occupation of Eastern Russia? Would the natives object if their war ended because of an occupation that removes the problem of military service? One suspects not; Putin is risking everything on an ego driven project. It is increasingly clear that peace may only be achieved by a Ukrainian victory

China

China is an authoritarian and genocidal regime which has killed tens of millions of people; mainly their own people by various means. It is continuing this type of activity and is believed to execute more people than any other country. China takes action against any organization of the Communist Chinese Party (CCP). Examples of organizations are Falun Gong, Christians, Buddhists, Muslims, separatist elements in Hong Kong, Tibet, and East Turkistan also known as Xinjiang Province.

More importantly, CSIS reported that China is the single biggest agent for interference in Canadian politics at all levels and our elections. Canada has weak laws regarding foreign interference and has only recently taken the minimalist action of creating a foreign agent registry. A true counter intelligence agency is needed to investigate and if necessary stop foreign influence operators.

While this is being said, China has been more reasonable than our friends to the South. Exports to China have increased by more than 30% and are expected to grow even more this year. Certain elements of Canadian society seem to have a blind eye focused on China and are quite willing to forget what we are facing when we invite China inside. They are quite ready to use whatever means necessary to get their way. There is no "win-win" in dealing with the CCP in whatever form they are.

Below are extracts from the article on the Chinese Xiangshan Forum held in Beijing:

Dong Jun takes softer line on US at Xiangshan Forum as Xi prepares for Trump summit by South China Morning Post editorial staff dated 16 September 2026
(<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3367657/dong-jun-adopts-softer-stance-us-xiangshan-forum-xi-prepares-trump-summit?>)

“Chinese Defence Minister Dong Jun’s address to a defence gathering in Beijing on Wednesday carried a message for Washington. In his speech at the Xiangshan Forum, Dong urged countries to build a new security approach based on dialogue rather than confrontation, and partnership instead of alliance.” The interesting item is that Taiwan and the US were not mentioned. It is believed that Chinese authorities are toning comments for Xi’s visit to Washington.

A Chinese intellectual, “Zhou Bo, now a senior fellow at the Centre for International Security and Strategy at Tsinghua University, said Dong’s tone was “relatively mild.”

China is currently using President Trump’s unhinged behavior to state that China is a stable peaceful country...at present that appears to be true despite all the actions they have taken in the South China Sea or West Philippine Sea. See Donald Trump is not the only one who can change names either. China will take advantage of anything they can to move ahead. It does not change. Implications of dealing with a transactional US administration. Will the US sell out the liberal democracies including Taiwan and others if the transaction fits? Based on recent history it is likely.

China views the US as rapidly declining and China is on the rise...this time it is true. It can and will take action on Taiwan or other locations if they can.

2. 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 During Mid-September 2026

References

A. Open-source reporting collected through 17 September 2026 from Government of Canada, World Health Organization, Reuters, Associated Press, CNN, Africa Intelligence, Janes, Council on Foreign Relations, African and regional reporting, and associated international sources.

B. Analytical assessment derived from corroborated open-source reporting (OSINT).

Purpose

A. The purpose of this memorandum is to assess significant developments affecting African security and strategic competition during the first half of September 2026.

B. Particular attention is given to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the Sahel, Russian and Ukrainian military activity, China’s military and economic engagement, United

States–Africa relations, South Africa, Guinea, Cameroon, critical minerals, and Canada’s evolving implementation of its Africa Strategy.

C. The assessment considers these developments collectively because military security, critical minerals, trade, infrastructure, public health, and diplomatic influence are becoming increasingly interconnected.

I. Executive Assessment

A. Developments through 17 September reinforce the assessment that Africa is becoming an increasingly competitive strategic environment while African governments retain considerable agency in selecting different partners for different requirements.

B. Eight principal developments are evident:

(1) The DRC is confronting simultaneous political, security, and health pressures. Opposition demonstrations occurred on 15 September against proposed constitutional changes that critics argue could permit President Félix Tshisekedi to seek a third term.

(2) The DRC Ebola epidemic remains a major health-security emergency. The World Health Organization reported on 16 September that more than 7,200 cases and 3,500 deaths had occurred across seven provinces. Transmission is declining in parts of Ituri but accelerating in North Kivu.

(3) Russia’s Africa Corps has demonstrated an increasingly direct regime-security role in the Sahel, including assistance to Niger’s government during the 28–29 August military mutiny.

(4) Ukraine is reportedly extending its confrontation with Russia into Africa. Approximately 15 Ukrainian specialists have been reported operating with the Azawad Liberation Front in northern Mali, primarily providing drone training, operational support, and remote coordination against forces that include Russia’s Africa Corps.

(5) China has demonstrated increased expeditionary air capability in Africa. Its deployment to Egypt included J-16 fighters and supporting tanker, airborne early-warning, transport, and other aircraft.

(6) China-Africa trade continues expanding rapidly, but Africa’s trade deficit with China reached approximately US\$80 billion during the first eight months of 2026.

(7) United States–South African relations deteriorated further after Washington introduced visa restrictions against certain South African nationals under a policy tied to allegations of race-based discrimination. Pretoria rejects the U.S. characterization of its policies.

(8) Canada has moved beyond simply announcing an Africa Strategy: implementation mechanisms now exist. However, Canadian trade with Africa represents approximately 1% of Canada’s global merchandise trade, leaving a significant gap between Canada’s strategic ambitions and its current economic weight on the continent.

C. Assessment. The central strategic development is diversification rather than exclusive alignment. African governments increasingly combine Chinese economic engagement, Russian security assistance, Western investment and technology, and regional partnerships according to national requirements.

Confidence Assessment: High.

II. Democratic Republic of the Congo

Converging Political, Security, and Health Pressures

A. On 15 September, Congolese security forces dispersed opposition demonstrations in Kinshasa and other cities against proposed constitutional changes. Critics argue the changes could create a pathway for President Tshisekedi to seek another presidential term.

B. The development should presently be described as opposition to proposed constitutional changes, rather than as confirmation that presidential term limits have been altered.

C. The political tensions occur while eastern DRC continues facing armed insecurity and while national authorities are managing a major Ebola epidemic.

D. The World Health Organization reported on 16 September that the Ebola epidemic had exceeded 7,200 reported cases and 3,500 deaths across seven provinces. Transmission has declined in the most heavily affected areas of Ituri, while North Kivu continues to present significant concern.

E. Assessment. The principal strategic concern is convergence. Political confrontation, armed conflict, and epidemic response compete for government resources and institutional attention. Improvement in parts of Ituri should not yet be interpreted as national containment because transmission remains geographically uneven.

Confidence Assessment: High regarding political demonstrations and the health-security situation; Moderate to High regarding cumulative effects on state resilience.

III. Sahel Security Environment and Russia's Africa Corps

A. The late-August Niger mutiny remains an important indicator of pressure inside the Alliance of Sahel States security structure.

B. Mutinous soldiers seized Base 101 near Niamey's international airport during 28–29 August. Nigerien loyalist forces subsequently regained the facility with assistance from Russia's Africa Corps.

C. Niger subsequently replaced its armed-forces chief of staff. Brigadier-General Mamane Sani Kiaou replaced Major-General Moussa Salaou Barmou following the mutiny.

D. The Alliance of Sahel States (AES), comprising Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso, continues strengthening political and military cooperation while confronting persistent insurgent pressure.

E. Assessment. Russia's value to Sahel military governments increasingly comprises two distinct capabilities: counterinsurgency assistance and regime protection. The Niger intervention provides particularly significant evidence of the second function.

F. This does not demonstrate that Russia has solved the broader Sahel security problem. Persistent insurgent activity and internal military dissatisfaction indicate that regime protection and population security remain separate analytical questions.

Confidence Assessment: High regarding Russian participation during the Niger mutiny; Moderate to High regarding the longer-term increase in Russian political leverage.

IV. Ukraine-Russia Military Competition in Africa

A. Reporting during mid-September indicates that approximately 15 Ukrainian specialists are operating in northern Mali with the predominantly Tuareg Azawad Liberation Front. Their reported role centres on drone training, operational assistance, and remote mission coordination rather than routine direct participation in frontline combat.

B. Ukrainian military or intelligence activity has also been reported in Libya and Sudan. These reports remain less independently corroborated than Russia's established Africa Corps presence and should therefore be assessed with appropriate caution.

C. The reported Ukrainian presence is small but potentially significant because specialized drone expertise and remote operational support can produce effects disproportionate to personnel numbers. Operations in Africa may also provide opportunities to evaluate equipment and operational methods under environmental conditions substantially different from the European theatre.

D. Russia meanwhile retains the considerably larger and more institutionalized military relationship with Sahel governments. Russian personnel operate alongside Malian forces and provide broader security assistance to governments within the region.

E. Assessment. The development indicates that elements of the Russia-Ukraine confrontation are increasingly intersecting with existing African conflicts. Ukraine appears to be employing a limited specialist model centred on drones, training, intelligence, and operational assistance, while Russia provides broader state-to-state security and regime-support capabilities.

F. The Mali conflict should nevertheless not be reduced to a Russia-Ukraine proxy confrontation. Tuareg separatism, jihadist insurgencies, disputes over state authority, and local political grievances substantially predate the present external competition.

Confidence Assessment: High regarding Russia's established military presence; Moderate to High regarding the reported Ukrainian specialist presence in northern Mali; Moderate regarding its precise size, geographical extent, and participation in specific operations.

V. China: Expanding Military Reach

A. China's deployment to Egypt for the Eagles of Civilization 2026 exercise represented an important demonstration of People's Liberation Army Air Force expeditionary capability.

B. Chinese aircraft included J-16 multirole fighters and supporting YY-20 aerial-refuelling and KJ-500 airborne early-warning and control aircraft, alongside additional supporting platforms.

C. Several aircraft subsequently appeared at the El Alamein International Airshow from 8–10 September. Their appearance provided another demonstration of China's increasingly sophisticated military aerospace capabilities.

D. Assessment. The strategically significant element is not simply the presence of Chinese fighters. Tanker, transport, electronic-support, and airborne-command capabilities constitute the enabling architecture necessary for sustained long-range air operations.

E. The deployment should nevertheless not be interpreted as evidence that China is replacing established Western security relationships across Africa. Beijing's permanent military footprint remains substantially different.

Confidence Assessment: High.

VI. China-Africa Economic Relationship

A. China's principal strategic weight in Africa remains economic rather than military.

B. Reporting based on Chinese customs data indicates that China's exports to African markets increased to approximately US\$177 billion during the first eight months of 2026, while African exports to China reached approximately US\$96.9 billion.

C. Africa's resulting trade deficit with China widened to approximately US\$80.1 billion.

D. Assessment. China's position increasingly combines trade, infrastructure, technology, industrial relationships, resource access, and selective defence cooperation.

E. The expanding deficit nevertheless exposes an important vulnerability in the relationship. African governments increasingly seek domestic processing, manufacturing, employment, and technology transfer rather than remaining predominantly exporters of commodities and importers of manufactured products.

Confidence Assessment: High regarding trade direction and reported figures; Moderate regarding their longer-term political consequences.

VII. Critical Minerals and Strategic Competition

A. Africa's mineral resources are becoming increasingly connected to economic security, defence-industrial requirements, energy-transition technologies, and global supply-chain resilience.

B. Canada's Africa Strategy estimates that the continent contains approximately 30% of the world's critical minerals and explicitly identifies African critical minerals as relevant to Canadian supply-chain diversification and economic security.

C. China possesses extensive existing mining, processing, and infrastructure relationships. Western governments are increasingly seeking alternative supply chains and partnerships.

D. Assessment. The emerging competition will increasingly concern not merely ownership of mineral deposits but processing, financing, transportation corridors, port access, electrical infrastructure, technology, and long-term purchasing arrangements.

E. African governments' negotiating position may strengthen where competing external partners offer alternative financing and markets. Their central objective increasingly appears to be retaining greater domestic economic value from resource extraction.

Confidence Assessment: High regarding the strategic importance of African minerals; Moderate to High regarding the direction of competitive investment.

VIII. Guinea and Simandou

A. Reporting on 17 September indicated that a tanker originating from North Africa had been detained off Conakry for more than three months while carrying fuel oil intended for the Winning Consortium Simandou project.

B. Simandou is strategically significant because its scale links mineral production with rail, port, energy, and international supply-chain infrastructure.

C. Assessment. The tanker incident is individually limited but illustrates a broader strategic issue: major resource projects remain dependent upon vulnerable logistical networks and government regulatory decisions.

D. Port access, fuel supply, rail infrastructure, and political relationships should therefore be considered components of mineral security rather than merely commercial issues.

Confidence Assessment: Moderate regarding circumstances surrounding the detained tanker; High regarding Simandou's broader strategic importance.

IX. Cameroon

A. Reporting on 17 September indicated that the Cameroonian government was considering another postponement of legislative elections and could cite a religious scheduling constraint.

B. The reporting describes an option reportedly under consideration rather than a finalized government decision.

C. Assessment. A confirmed postponement would merit monitoring for its effect on opposition mobilization, institutional confidence, and political stability. Until formally announced, the issue should remain classified analytically as an emerging indicator rather than an established event.

Confidence Assessment: Moderate.

X. South Africa and the United States

A. On 15 September, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio announced a visa-restriction policy targeting certain foreign nationals in South Africa whom Washington alleges are involved in race-based discrimination, uncompensated land seizure, or incitement against minority groups.

B. No affected individuals were initially publicly identified.

C. The South African government rejects the U.S. characterization of its racial-equity and land policies and argues that Washington is misrepresenting South African law.

D. Assessment. The visa measures represent another indicator of deterioration in bilateral relations. The disagreement extends beyond immigration policy into competing interpretations of South African domestic policy and could complicate cooperation in trade, diplomacy, and multilateral institutions.

E. Evidence is presently insufficient to conclude that the dispute will cause a durable South African strategic realignment.

Confidence Assessment: High regarding the measures and bilateral disagreement; Moderate regarding longer-term strategic consequences.

XI. Evolving Terrorism and Counterterrorism Environment

A. Terrorist and insurgent organizations remain active across the Sahel, Lake Chad Basin, Somalia, Mozambique, and eastern DRC.

B. The threat environment increasingly includes decentralized structures capable of exploiting local grievances, weak governance, insecure borders, and digital communications.

C. Military operations remain necessary where armed organizations threaten populations or state institutions, but military force alone does not address recruitment conditions, governance deficiencies, or economic grievances.

D. Assessment. Effective counterterrorism increasingly requires integration of intelligence, legitimate local governance, community engagement, financial disruption, border security, digital monitoring, and appropriately targeted security operations.

E. The Niger experience additionally demonstrates the importance of distinguishing between counterterrorism effectiveness and regime-protection effectiveness. A partner capable of

protecting a government during a mutiny is not necessarily succeeding in suppressing the insurgency confronting that state.

Confidence Assessment: High regarding the regional threat; Moderate to High regarding the effectiveness of individual counterterrorism approaches.

XII. Canada and Africa: Implementation and Strategic Priority

A. Canada's Africa Strategy remains active in September 2026, with current implementation emphasizing trade diversification, investment, development finance, diplomatic engagement, peace and security, 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. Recent Canadian policy analysis has nevertheless identified a distinction between implementation and political visibility. Africa and international development received limited explicit attention within the government's broader top-level priorities, creating uncertainty regarding their relative 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 indicates 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. Assessment. As of September 2026, the principal issue is whether continued implementation will translate into sustained strategic influence. Progress should be measured through 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 resources, and long-term strategic effect.

XIII. Implications for Canada and Allied Partners

A. Africa should increasingly be assessed as an interconnected strategic environment rather than through separate development, counterterrorism, trade, and humanitarian files.

B. China demonstrates a combination of significant economic scale and expanding military capability. Its Egypt deployment shows increasing expeditionary reach, while trade remains the foundation of Chinese influence.

C. Russia represents a different model. Africa Corps provides direct security assistance capable of producing political influence disproportionate to Russia's economic footprint.

D. Ukraine's reported activities introduce an additional dimension. A relatively small specialist presence using drone expertise, training, and operational support could impose costs upon Russian interests without requiring a large conventional deployment. The development should be monitored for potential expansion into additional African theatres.

E. The United States continues to possess substantial diplomatic, military, and economic capabilities but faces bilateral political friction with important states, including South Africa.

F. Canada's model is different again. It emphasizes economic diplomacy, development finance, institutional partnerships, peace-and-security cooperation, critical minerals, African economic integration, and multilateral engagement.

G. The Canadian intelligence requirement should therefore include monitoring whether the Africa Strategy is producing observable outcomes, rather than evaluating success primarily through announcements.

H. Priority indicators include Russian regime-protection deployments; Ukrainian specialist and drone-support activity; Chinese expeditionary military activity; Chinese and Western mineral-processing investments; strategic ports and rail corridors; Sahel military cohesion; DRC political and security developments; health emergencies; African trade policy; and the exposure of Canadian investments to political or security disruption.

XIV. Confidence Assessment

A. High confidence is assessed regarding Russia's established Africa Corps presence, China's expanding military engagement, the broad direction of China-Africa trade, and Canada's officially stated Africa Strategy and implementation mechanisms.

B. Moderate to High confidence is assessed regarding the reported presence of Ukrainian specialists in northern Mali, Russia's increasing regime-security role, China's developing expeditionary capability, intensifying competition surrounding critical minerals, and the growing strategic importance of African demands for domestic value addition.

C. Moderate confidence is assessed regarding the precise scale and geographical extent of Ukrainian operations in Africa, Cameroon's potential legislative-election postponement, the circumstances surrounding the Simandou fuel shipment, the longer-term consequences of U.S.–South African tensions, and the eventual strategic impact of Canada's Africa Strategy.

D. Analytical judgments concerning strategic intent remain distinct from verified events. African governments continue to demonstrate substantial agency and frequently maintain simultaneous relationships with competing external powers.

XV. Conclusion

A. Developments through 17 September 2026 indicate that strategic competition across Africa is expanding beyond conventional military influence. Security assistance, critical minerals, trade, infrastructure, technology, public health, and diplomacy increasingly form components of the same strategic environment.

B. Russia's Africa Corps has demonstrated Moscow's willingness to provide direct military and regime-security assistance to African partners. At the same time, reporting of Ukrainian specialists supporting Tuareg forces in northern Mali indicates that elements of the Russia-Ukraine confrontation are now intersecting more directly with existing African conflicts.

C. The reported Ukrainian presence remains small and specialized compared with Russia's established security architecture. Its significance lies primarily in drone expertise, training, and operational assistance rather than conventional force size.

D. China's deployment of J-16 fighters and supporting tanker, airborne early-warning, and other aircraft to Egypt demonstrates developing long-range military capability. Its significance increases when considered alongside China's much larger economic presence.

E. The DRC remains particularly vulnerable because political confrontation, continuing armed insecurity, and a major Ebola epidemic are occurring simultaneously.

F. Critical minerals are becoming one of the principal intersections between African economic development and international strategic competition. The contest increasingly concerns who finances processing facilities, transportation corridors, electrical infrastructure, and industrial development, not simply who purchases raw ore.

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

H. Canada's principal challenge is therefore sustained implementation and strategic effect. Its position will depend upon whether existing mechanisms receive sufficient resources and private-sector participation to generate measurable growth in trade, investment, critical-mineral partnerships, diplomatic engagement, and security cooperation.

I. Canada's potential advantage lies in 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 of engagement without attempting to replicate China's economic scale or Russia's security-focused approach.

J. The dominant continental trend nevertheless remains diversification rather than exclusive alignment. African governments increasingly select different partners for different purposes and demonstrate substantial agency in negotiating among competing offers.

K. Consequently, future strategic influence in Africa is unlikely to depend solely upon military presence. It will increasingly depend upon which partnerships can reliably provide security, capital, infrastructure, technology, market access, and institutional cooperation while

responding to African priorities concerning sovereignty, domestic value creation, and strategic autonomy.

Overall Confidence Assessment: Moderate to High.

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- [Richard Foot](#)
- [August 5, 2026](#)