

# Making Waves

## *The Paradox of Universality of Service*

Ken Hansen

Imagine the following scenario. It is the 1800s. As the English fleet continues its long, and to this point fruitless, pursuit of the French fleet commanded by Admiral Villeneuve, a frigate arrives from England with a letter for Admiral Nelson:

*London*

*This fifteenth day of July 1805*

*From the Secretary to the Naval Board*

*To Admiral Lord Nelson,*

*On behalf of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty*

*Greetings,*

*Their Lordships have instructed that you should be recalled forthwith from the fleet to England and that your command be passed to Vice Admiral Collingwood, who will endeavour to accomplish the task of defeating the combined fleets of France and Spain.*

*Due to the dire threat of invasion by the armies of France and your inability to contain or defeat the enemy fleet that may place these forces upon our shores, a new policy of Universality of Service has been adopted that will provide the maximum number of combat capable men at arms wherever they may be required. In light of your personal infirmities suffered in the conduct of your naval duties, you will be pensioned at an appropriate rate reflective of your years of service and notable accomplishments....*

The point of using Admiral Nelson as an example is to show that naval history can illustrate the great disservice the current policy of Universality of Service is to the present-day Canadian Navy. Nelson would have been one of those caught up by this policy if it existed in his day. After joining the Royal Navy in 1771 at the age of 12, he lost the use of his right eye during joint operations at Calvi on Corsica in 1794, his right arm at the Battle of Santa Cruz de Tenerife in the Canary Islands in 1797, and suffered brain damage at the Battle of the Nile in 1798. Any of these conditions would most likely have resulted in his discharge from the navy of this era. Despite these injuries, history shows that Nelson remained completely capable of performing his duties and achieving brilliant successes.

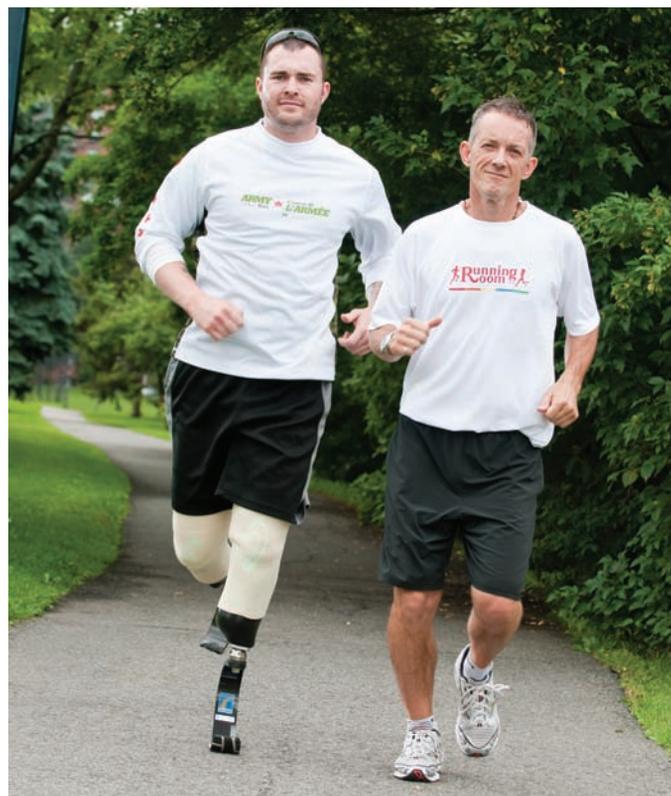


Photo: Army News

Master Corporal Jody Mitic, who lost both legs below the knee after stepping on a landmine while on duty in Afghanistan two-and-a-half years ago, trains alongside his coach, Phil Marsh for the 2009 Canada Army Run. Mitic completed the half marathon in 3:22:46.5 on 20 September in Ottawa.

In the past months, the Canadian Navy has been compelled to release hundreds of experienced and trained officers and enlisted personnel because they are unable to meet the medical standards prescribed under the policy of Universality of Service. Based on the concept that all service members should meet basic standards of fitness for operational duty, those who are unable to do so are released under Item 3B, a medical category, and are then pensioned off after a maximum three-year period of accommodation.

The problem with the Universality of Service policy is that the physical standards are written almost entirely from the perspective of the army. The fact that naval life and shipboard wartime duty are entirely different from the demands of land warfare is barely taken into account. The need for every 'able-bodied' person to 'fight on the beaches' to preserve the country from foreign occupation is a decidedly land-oriented combat scenario. But even this is flawed logic. With the survival of the country at stake, it is likely that every person able to hold a weapon of some sort would have been compelled to take up arms, not merely those who conformed to a universal standard



of fitness. Under those circumstances, Nelson would certainly have been among the first in line to do his duty.

The contradiction of a universal standard of fitness goes further. Again using the life of Nelson as an example, we know that his poor health and slight stature would have prevented his admission into the navy of today. Indeed, he only gained entry to the Royal Navy due to the influence of his maternal uncle, Captain Maurice Suckling. A recent research article by Keith Simonton and Anna Song concludes that among 282 historical geniuses in 10 achievement categories (including military commanders) superior intelligence and accomplishment were linked to inferior health during youth.<sup>1</sup> Nelson, who was included in the study, was a classic example of the inverse relationship between IQ and physical health in youth.

By adopting standards of fitness that are designed primarily to select and retain the best *physical* specimens for the *army*, the navy not only loses hundreds of entirely employable members, but potentially eliminates candidates who are brilliant or innovative thinkers and could go on to distinguished careers. Both history and modern research show that simplistic policies that are drawn from the notion that ‘one size fits all’ can be detrimental and have the potential to be destructive if they are not considered in the proper context.

The flaw in the Universality of Service policy is that it confuses the concept of *jointness* with *uniformity*. It is entirely possible to meet the requirements of joint operations without compelling the air and sea services to adopt standards that are foreign to their normal and traditional modes of operation. Somehow, the unification of the Canadian Forces has caused the senior leadership to think that this approach to jointness should be pursued to the ridiculous extreme of driving capable and willing members from the navy. This is both contrary to the history of the naval service and detrimental to the navy’s most pressing current need for skilled sailors.

The author was released from the Canadian Forces effective 17 June 2009 under Category 3B after 32 years and 70 days of service in the Canadian Navy. 🇨🇦

**Notes**

1. Keith Simonton and Anna Song, “Eminence, IQ, Physical and Mental Health and Achieved Domain: Cox’s 282 Geniuses,” *Psychological Science*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (April 2009), pp. 429-434.

***Drifting, Rudderless, or Just on the Wrong Course?***

Corrie Adolph

In the Spring 2009 issue (Vol. 5, No. 1) of the *Canadian Naval Review*, Dan Middlemiss (Editorial) and Sharon Hobson (“Off Course and Rudderless?”) articulated the navy’s need for “clear language” and a “determined outreach strategy.” From my perspective as the navy’s strategic communications advisor from July 2008 to July 2009, there are other reasons for the navy’s lack of communication success.

Most notable is the lack of communication expertise in key positions responsible for the navy’s strategic communications, resulting in the development of communications strategies that are not grounded in communication theory. The strategic communications team was stood up to counter the reactive public affairs approach with a proactive communication strategy and ongoing dialogue with policy-makers. Unfortunately, the lack of expertise means little has improved despite the navy’s commitment to the effort.

Communication in the 21<sup>st</sup> century presents many challenges. Political leaders address us in sound-bites and we are overwhelmed by volumes of information which demand instant judgements when the big picture is lacking. According to research, the news media are now the setters of the public agenda (what issues the public finds important) and a major influencer of public opinion. They have the ability to turn a complicated policy issue into a 30-second sound-bite, raising a minor issue into a major public outcry. The 24-hour news cycle puts horrendous pressure on journalists to produce new and provocative stories.

The Prime Minister’s Office (PMO) in Canada relies heavily on opinion polls – balancing policy decisions between what is good for the country and what will be palatable. Every policy must pass through the lens of public opinion. This, plus the media’s search for sensation, results in PMO management of information. In reaction to this, there has also been an increase in the number of access to information requests. All of this has had an immense influence on the control of communications.

The navy’s communications strategy must be designed to

address these challenges and attempt to influence policy decisions in a way that facilitates the political process in an apolitical way. The role of the naval leadership is to provide professional insight and operational details enabling political leaders to make informed decisions. Unfortunately, naval staff members often lack an understanding of the implications of policy choices on public opinion, and thus on what makes politicians tick. Furthermore, they are reluctant to take advice on how to adapt their communications strategies in order to communicate more effectively to decision-makers.

While the rebuilding of Canada's naval fleet and the regeneration of our maritime force is incredibly important, new ships full of sailors is not the end state. Maritime forces are only useful as a tool of government. A government that exercises the options a navy provides for the implementation of its foreign policy is one that appreciates and understands a navy's flexibility. A government that puts into place a long-term procurement plan and ensures that it is adequately funded and ensures that the means within industry are in place to implement it, is one that appreciates and understands the complexities of shipbuilding and its importance to national security. So if the desired end state of the navy's strategic communications efforts is to have government understand and appreciate what the navy does, and have that reflected in policy, decision-making and investment, then the end state effectively defines who the centre of gravity should be – the government of Canada.

Government decisions are influenced by a number of sources. Internally, the Chief of Maritime Staff (CMS), through the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), provides insight and details on potential naval deployments and on the maritime impact of policy decisions. The Deputy Minister provides advice on issues of policy as it relates to questions of resources, international defence relations and alternative methods of achieving government policies. Political advisors ensure policy choices are viewed through the ideological lens of the party they represent. Advice, however, is only as good as the information from which it is drawn, so there is also an important role for the broader naval community in providing information that more fully informs all sources of advice. External influencers of policy include the national media, because of their influence on public opinion, and industry lobbyists. It is critically important for the navy to engage each of these influencers to improve their understanding of what the navy does and what the navy needs.

In the long term, the solution is a much broader appreciation by the CF of communication as a strategic capability.

Globalization blurs the distinction between domestic and international communication, public affairs and information operations. A comprehensive communication strategy requires inter-cultural communication and an understanding of the impact of globalized communication on both domestic and foreign operations. The military's financial and human resources are connected to the problems in Afghanistan which have everything to do with globalized communication. Therefore, a strategic, comprehensive communications plan should include a broad audience both inside and outside Canada. Global attitudes and culture must be better understood so perceptions can be mapped and messages appropriately tailored and progress must be measured towards desired effects.



Photo: Cpl Dany Veillette, Canadian Forces Joint Imagery Centre, Ottawa

Prime Minister Stephen Harper, Minister of National Defence Peter Mackay and Chief of Defence Staff Walter Natynczyk with media embarked, in Frobisher Bay during *Operation Nanook*, 19 August 2009.

Competence in inter-cultural communication will also improve recruiting problems. Global migration has led to a diverse Canadian society with differing cultural and religious backgrounds and varied value sets. Communication requires greater social understanding and cultural sensitivity. In order to entice diverse young Canadians into the military workforce, meaning and value for them must be created. Currently, even though diversity is embraced within the Canadian Forces, they are failing at recruiting visible minorities; a needed focus in light of Canada's changing demographics.

Finally, the CDS needs to build a truly cohesive military that works together and does not just talk the integrated purple service talk. The reality is that the services are fighting for their lives to get the biggest piece of the defence spending pie, and they all do this by asserting their unique identity and value. Unfortunately, all this jostling slows down important procurements, mostly naval. 🙄



## ***Australia's Defence White Paper: Whither the Navy?***

**Doug Thomas**

In May 2009, the Australian government released its long-awaited Defence White Paper, *Defending Australia in the Asia Pacific Century: Force 2030*. This White Paper put forth a scenario of the strategic environment facing Australia over the next 20 years, juxtaposed against anticipated changes to other powers in the region. Principal among these powers is the United States, which should continue to be the main economic and military power in Asia. The United States, however, might be preoccupied elsewhere, and therefore Australia should possess strong defensive forces to respond to a regional military crisis.

The rise of China as a maritime power, the increasing capability of the Indian Navy, and the modernization of the militaries of other regional actors are noted as well. The Defence White Paper discusses a need for greater Australian involvement in the Indian Ocean. According to the White Paper, future Australian Defence Force (ADF) operations will extend across the entire Indian Ocean and into the Pacific as far as Polynesia, and from the Equator south to Antarctica. Within this huge geographical area, the first priority task for the ADF is “to deter and defeat armed attacks on Australia,” and the second is “contributing to the stability and security in the South Pacific and East Timor.” The third priority is “contributing to military contingencies in the Asia-Pacific region,” and the final priority is to “be prepared to contribute to military contingencies throughout the world.”

Commentators on defence issues have stated that the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) is the “big winner.” Is this really the case? Is there anything new here to indicate gains by the RAN in comparison with the other services?

There is a change from sea denial to sea control in recognition of the huge ocean areas which are expected to be the focus of future operations, and a renewal of interest in anti-submarine warfare. A significant item is the intention to build 12 larger and more capable submarines to replace the six *Collins*-class. This will be a very expensive project, and begs the question as to how they will be manned. At the moment only three of the *Collins*-class can be manned because many submariners as well as surface ship technicians have been lured away to lucrative jobs in mining and other industries.

The current surface combatant force is being modernized, and three new Aegis-equipped *Hobart*-class destroyers will join the fleet in the next decade. They will be equipped with the next-generation SM-6 missile with a range of up to 200 nautical miles, and the Cooperative Engagement Capability (CEC) which will permit missile engagement based on another ship's contact information. The White Paper also indicates that procurement of replacement anti-submarine warfare frigates will be on the future agenda.



*HMAS Rankin during Rimpac 2006.*

A major capability change is that the new destroyers – as well as future frigates and submarines – will be fitted with cruise missiles to provide a new strategic strike capability. (Until recently, the RAAF provided a strategic strike capability with its F-111 fighter-bombers.) The Fleet Air Arm currently comprises 16 Seahawk and six Sea King helicopters, and 24 naval combat helicopters will be purchased to provide at least eight deployed flights at sea. The amphibious capability will be rejuvenated with the addition of two Spanish-built 28,000 tonne *Canberra*-class LHDs and a large strategic lift ship.

If all of these plans, particularly the new submarines, come to fruition, it would seem that the RAN will truly have made gains. It certainly looks enviable from the perspective of a navalist in Canada. A big question remains, however. Will the money and the sailors be there to realize these new force levels, in some cases several elections into the future? 🍷

