

Speaking Notes for

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Minister of National Defence**

“Canada and Australia: Building on the Ties that Bind Us”

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Introduction

Thank you very much for your kind introduction.

Before I begin, I want to thank the Lowy Institute for inviting me to speak with you today.

This is a very accomplished institute, tackling topics ranging from Australian defence policy to conflict in the Middle East to the Joint Strike Fighter.

This is an institute that encourages informed public debate on defence and security issues – both domestic and international.

So I'm honoured to contribute to your discussions.

In my talk today, I want to tell you that the new government of Canada is determined to play a more proactive and influential role on the world stage.

But I also want to introduce you to Canada's new defence strategy and try to highlight the ties that bind our two great nations.

As Canada's Minister of National Defence, I'm here to promote a strong and productive future for our bilateral defence relationship.

Canada First

Let me begin with the events of last January, when Canadians voted for a new government, and a new vision for Canada.

Since taking office in February, we've been delivering on a number of key domestic priorities.

But we've also committed to strengthening Canada's independent capacity to defend our national sovereignty and security, and to increasing Canada's leadership and influence in world affairs.

To help achieve those goals, we've adopted a new defence strategy.

It's called "Canada First," and it emphasizes that Canada is our number one priority.

It means strengthening Canada's Arctic presence, to assert our sovereignty over that huge part of our country and to better serve the people of our northern communities.

It means ensuring effective surveillance capabilities to cover all of our territory and its approaches.

And, it means ensuring that our Canadian Forces are ready to assist civilian authorities in the case of major emergencies.

Canada First also means focusing attention south of our border.

Our location in North America – as a neighbour to the United States – is a fact of Canadian life.

Almost \$2 billion worth of goods and services crosses the Canada-US border daily, and 200 million border crossings take place every year.

Canadian and American security are inseparable, and together we share a responsibility to secure our continent.

Now, I don't want you to have the impression that this "Canada First" strategy means that we're only focusing inward. We know we must also be outward looking.

Or, to use a sporting analogy, we need to have both a "home game" and an "away game."

To protect Canadians from threats before they reach us at home, the "away game" must reinforce reliable partnerships with our allies and contribute to global stability.

But, as you know, a good defence strategy - by itself - is really only a good intention.

I'm proud to say that Canada's new government has gone beyond good intentions to action in less than seven months in office.

We're significantly increasing our defence budget over the next five years.

We're in the early stages of hiring an additional 13,000 members for our Regular Force and another 10,000 Reservists.

We've announced plans to buy 2,300 medium-sized logistics trucks, 16 medium- to heavy-lift helicopters, three Joint Support Ships, 17 tactical airlift aircraft, and four strategic airlift aircraft.

These extra forces and new equipment will better serve Canada both at home and abroad – just as the strategy calls for.

Moreover, we've renewed and enhanced the North American Aerospace Defence Agreement – or NORAD agreement – with the United States, to better protect our own territory.

And we announced in June that we'd be extending our mission in Afghanistan by another two years, to February 2009.

Today, we have over 2,200 troops in Afghanistan.

As we speak, Canadian forces are leading some 6,000 coalition troops in the Multinational Brigade for Regional Command South, which has just successfully transitioned to NATO control.

There's a Canadian battle group helping the Afghan National Security Forces improve security in Kandahar province.

We have a Strategic Advisory Team in Kabul giving advice to President Karzai's government.

And we have Canadian Forces personnel working at the Kabul Military Training Centre, the coalition hospital at Kandahar airfield, and in ISAF headquarters.

But the Afghanistan mission is not a military mission alone. It requires a "whole of government" approach.

So we have a Provincial Reconstruction Team stationed in Kandahar City, comprised not only of Canadian Forces members, but also of specialists from the Canadian International Development Agency, the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

In addition, Canada's diplomatic service has established an embassy in Kabul. And by 2010-2011, the Canadian International Development Agency will have directed almost \$1 billion to the country's reconstruction and development, making Afghanistan our largest recipient of bilateral aid.

Overall, we're playing a leading role in Afghanistan, and – make no mistake – we're committed to seeing this mission through. Both for the sake of the Afghans, and for the security of Canadians.

By being in Afghanistan, we're protecting Canadians from the threat of terrorism.

I can tell you that the new defence strategy, the procurement projects, the NORAD renewal, and the mission in Afghanistan will not be the total sum of this government's defence achievements.

In the coming months, my Department will be presenting our new Defence Capabilities Plan to Cabinet for approval.

This plan - similar to the one recently approved by the Australian government - will outline the Canadian Forces' investments for the next 10 to 15 years.

We're committed to building a stronger future for Canada's military, and we're committed to making Canada a more reliable and capable international partner.

Common Interests

More specifically, we'd like to enhance our partnership with Australia.

Although it may be an overused term, it's true that we're "like-minded nations."

Canada and Australia are both members of the Commonwealth, and we share a heritage of freedom, democracy, and respect for human rights and the rule of law.

We're both export-oriented countries that seek a fair, open and non-discriminatory world trading system.

We're both faced with the challenge of ensuring sovereignty over a large land mass and territorial sea given a relatively small population base.

In many ways, we're both geographically isolated countries that have been coming to terms with the realities of globalization.

And, despite being in opposite hemispheres and on opposite sides of the equator, our two countries border the same ocean.

Canada identifies itself as a Pacific Rim democracy too.

While it's true that we traditionally focused our attention eastward, towards Europe and our NATO allies, our attention has been turning westward in recent years, to the Pacific arena.

Vancouver – on Canada's west coast – is our largest port, and 52% of Canada's immigrants today come from the Asia-Pacific region.

We also recognize that your part of the world bears increasing strategic significance.

It's a region characterized by:

Huge populations;

Expanding economic activity with world-wide reach;

Growing energy demands;

Disputed territories;

And tensions surrounding North Korea.

Today we live in an era when distance is less and less relevant.

The security threats we face transcend borders and oceans like never before.

Not surprisingly, both of our governments have identified global terrorism, weapons of mass destruction and failed and failing states as our primary security concerns.

These threats are global in nature and they can reach us in Canada and Australia equally.

Canadians and Australians were both left to grieve the loss of loved ones after the attacks in New York on September 11th, 2001.

Australia was harshly reminded of the global terrorist threat just over a year later in the nightclub bombing in Bali.

Since the attacks of 2001, Australia has stood at the forefront of the international campaign against terrorism.

And I can tell you that Canadians are proud to stand shoulder to shoulder with Australians in Afghanistan today.

Canadian and Australian forces are working together in the Multinational Headquarters for Regional Command South, and your Reconstruction Task Force will be operating in the southern region under the headquarter's command, so Canadians are familiar with the good work that your men and women are doing.

And we'd like to look at ways to get more directly involved with the Australians.

For example, by formalizing Australia's contributions to the coalition hospital in Kandahar.

Or by bringing Australians into the Strategic Advisory Team that's advising the central government in Kabul.

Canada-Australia Defence Partnership

Terrorist attacks – among other events – have raised awareness of the ties that bind Canada and Australia, and of the benefits we can reap if we pursue deeper collaboration.

Cooperation has a long history between our two countries, dating back to the South African War. That history continued in the First and Second World Wars, in Korea, the Gulf, East Timor, and now in Afghanistan.

But this should not be a backward-looking partnership – simply extending cooperative initiatives that began many years ago.

We must drive this relationship forward.

We must make it relevant to the issues we face today and prepare it for the issues we expect to face tomorrow.

We must take advantage of the opportunity that our common ties present us.

As it stands, Canada has more regular, extensive defence contacts with Australia than with any other nation in the Asia-Pacific region.

This year, for the first time, we'll be holding military staff talks, which I hope will become a regular occurrence.

In addition, our Chief of the Defence Staff and your Chief of the Defence Force plan to meet in the coming months.

Our senior officials in defence materiel met just this past July and will meet twice more before the year's end.

Canada's Deputy Minister will also be attending one of those meetings.

In addition, Australia has recently established a Liaison Officer at NATO Headquarters – an alliance in which Canada has been a dedicated member since its founding.

So, while we have a long history of cooperation at the operational level, we're now moving to cement the partnership at the strategic level.

Conclusion

Only four months ago, I sat in our House of Commons listening to Prime Minister Howard address the Canadian Parliament.

On that day, he said, “[Canada and Australia] have much in common, but not as much to do with each other as we should.”

He then went on to say “that the challenges of the 21st century are really going to change that.”

I couldn't agree more.

The Government of Canada is ready and willing to build bigger, better, stronger, and more numerous bridges between our two countries – to serve Canadian and Australian interests, and to be leading partners on the world stage.

Our two countries are far apart. It's true.

But go to Korea. There you'll see a Canadian war memorial standing tall, just below the hills which were defended by Canadian forces in the Battle of Kapyong in 1951.

Not too far away is a similar memorial, but this one stands for the Australians.

Unlike the almost 15,000 kilometre distance that divides our two countries, Hill 677 and Hill 504 – the Canadian and Australian positions in the Battle of Kapyong – are not very far apart at all.

Canadians and Australians – together – showed outstanding bravery in April of 1951.

And Canadians and Australians are again showing outstanding bravery in Afghanistan today.

Our forces have once again travelled great distances to consolidate their efforts in a mission deemed important by both of our governments.

Clearly, the 15,000 kilometres that lie between us are no barrier to partnership.

Let's keep bridging that divide.