



July 18, 2016

The Honourable Harjit Singh Sajjan, P.C., M.P.
Minister of National Defence
Major-General George R. Pearkes Building
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0K2

Sent Via E-Mail: harjit.singh@parl.gc.ca

Re : Northern Canada Focus on Canada's Defense Policy Review

Dear Honorable Minister;

The Northern Air Transport Association would like to thank the Minister for inviting NATA to comment **on** the development of a new defense policy for Canada.

Our membership is representative of all aspects of northern and remote air operations including scheduled passenger service, mainline cargo carriers, small operators, helicopters and specialized operations including internationally renowned medivac capabilities. Our operators are committed to the highest possible standards. We welcome this opportunity for input in order to increase overall system safety in the North as well as support Canada's sovereignty initiatives.

We have focused on three areas that we believe we have expertise that can be beneficial in the development of a Northern Canada Defense Policy and Program.

Search and Rescue

Regarding the questions are there enough SAR assets in the North and is there a role for commercial aviation in SAR operations, time is of the essence when a SAR operation is required. There seems to be an opportunity to better connect commercial air service providers with DND in regards to better support when assets are needed. There are examples in other parts of Canada where a civilian-military partnership has proven useful in the positioning of SAR assets. Potentially air assets staged out of Whitehorse, Yellowknife, Rankin Inlet, Iqaluit, Inuvik, Cambridge Bay, Hall Beach, and Resolute Bay- all are locations where there are commercial operators

NATA can assist with a cataloguing of potential civilian SARA assets that could be then leveraged through formal SAR contracting the air assets of local air transportation providers on an as needed basis.

Northern Security/Sovereignty

Activities that reinforce Canadian sovereignty across the North should continue in a visible fashion. Such activities should be promoted in a very public fashion to raise awareness to the Canadian public as well as to competing foreign interests.

Canada has successfully developed a civilian partnership in the offshore environmental and fishery patrols that are conducted by commercial air operators off Canada's Atlantic and Pacific coasts. In fact this partnership has been

so successful, this surveillance capability and Canadian developed technology has now been exported to many other countries for similar activities.

NATA suggests a similar program to patrol Canada's north would be very cost effective compared to present sovereignty initiatives.

Rangers

Should the number of Rangers be increased? Simple answer is yes but not to the detriment of local Hamlet operations and activities. In any of the Arctic communities the labour pool is quite a small number of people and typically those that are capable are already employed in a role critical to the day to day operation of the community. As a general example a Hamlet employee whose work/tasks goes uncompleted to the detriment of the Hamlet when the employee is engaged in Ranger activity or a more specific example from an aviation perspective of Observer/Communicator services providing the real-time aviation weather reporting and air-ground communications at the Community Aerodromes (CARS). Occasionally when an Observer/Communicator is also a Ranger and involved with Ranger activity then the services at the CARS can be disrupted to the detriment of vital air transportation services to the communities. I would suggest that Ranger activity be on a non-conflict basis with CARS and community operations.

It should be noted that the Observer/Communicators employed at the Community Aerodromes (CARS) across the North help assert Canadian Sovereignty with the real-time provision of weather reporting which is disseminated to users nationally and internationally. They "paint" the North with real-time Canadian flags (so to speak).

Northern Air Operators- DND Liaison

The time is right for a closer relationship between Northern operators and the Department of National Defense. At NATA's 40 Conference in Whitehorse this year, DND gave an excellent presentation on SAR efforts and perhaps this could be a permanent agenda item. Indeed, with Board approval, perhaps a senior officer could be assigned to act as "ex-officio" to the NATA Board to enhance communications.

In conclusion, NATA members are experts on northern and remote air operations and can be a crucial component to Canada's northern defense strategy.

I would be pleased to answer any questions you might have about our comments at your convenience.

Sincerely,



Glenn Priestley
Executive Director
Mobile 613-866-2374
glenn@nata-yzf.ca