

Commission of Inquiry  
into the Deployment of  
Canadian Forces to Somalia



Commission d'enquête  
sur le déploiement des  
Forces canadiennes en Somalie

# Violence and Racial Prejudice in the Context of Peacekeeping

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a study prepared for  
the Commission  
of Inquiry into  
the Deployment of  
Canadian Forces  
to Somalia

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Jean-Paul Brodeur



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Q - General:  
*"Yeah, did you ever hear anybody use the term nigger for example?"*

A - A Trooper deployed to Somalia:  
*"Oh, yes, I did hear that."*

Q - General:  
*"And in what context did you hear that term used?"*

A - Same Trooper:  
*"Only as a descriptive term."*

(Transcript from the hearings of the de Faye Board of Inquiry).

***When there is peace, the warlike man attacks himself.***

Friedrich Nietzsche

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## *Conclusion*

This report focussed on three topics: the concept of peacekeeping and its derivatives, racism and extremist right-wing penetration into the Canadian Forces (CF), and accountability. I briefly discussed other subjects, such as the relations between the military and the media. For all the topics that I just mentioned, I provided conclusions and recommendations and suggestions at the end of the relevant chapters. Hence, there is little to add at the end of a report which is twice as long as I originally envisaged. Nevertheless, to avoid ending my work too abruptly, I will provide a few general concluding comments on each of the main topics on which I focussed my analyses.

### PEACEKEEPING AND RELATED CONCEPTS

Peacekeeping, up until the last few years when the number of missions increased and their cost was multiplied by four, was a relatively piecemeal affair. The general wisdom was that forces with the normal soldiering skills were up to the job and that when they were not, then it was up to the military to improvise in the field.

This kind of thinking is no longer adequate. As the missions get more complex in terms of their mandate and the deployment of personnel and equipment, improvisation will no longer be enough to fill the gaps in training and military doctrine. There is, however, another reason, running much deeper, why this perspective on peacekeeping is too narrow. If I were to provide a structural or a systemic answer to what went wrong in Somalia, including all three phases of the operation, I would answer that now that the Cold War is over, we have yet to come to terms with the true proportions of and the considerable difficulties involved in maintaining an army in a state of readiness in times of peace. In his groundbreaking study on the psychological costs of learning how to kill, U.S. Lieutenant

Colonel Dave Grossman quotes studies undertaken from the U.S. Civil War up to the last two world conflicts that show that, contrary to what is generally believed, doing “the killing job” does not come naturally nor easily to soldiers. Even in times of war more than 50 percent of the troops do not fire at all or fire in a way that makes sure they will not hit an enemy.<sup>1</sup> Teaching human beings how to kill and, even more difficult, imparting in them the will to do so, is a tall endeavour. The lesson is not easily learned. What gets to be a nearly impossible task to perform is to nurture these killing skills and the will to use them in a time when the occasions to go into combat are getting fewer and when even the possibility of facing the situations, for which one has been undergoing a grueling kind of training, are dwindling. If the psychological cost of learning to kill in war is considerable, the resulting anxieties and role conflicts of not being able to apply what was learned at great cost must also be significant. It may well be that the best description of the “hell of peace” for professional soldiers is to be found in novels such as *Buffalo Soldiers* by Robert O’Connor (1992). This novel is about the plight of American soldiers who have very little to do at their stations in Germany. On the first page, O’Connor quotes Nietzsche: “When there is peace, the warlike man attacks himself.”

There is now some urgency to review the ethos according to which the “killing job” is the *raison d’être* of the CF. This review could examine whether it is possible to integrate peacekeeping in its diverse forms into a revised military ethos. I am not, at this point, advocating such an integration. What I am saying is that there may be a problem with the “killing job” ethos in times when there may not be a pressing need for professionals at this job. This then is the problem. One way of solving it is to find new missions, such as peacekeeping, for the CF and to draw the consequences of *formally* integrating this kind of mission into a redefined CF mandate. There are many groups, such as Canada 21, which advocate this solution. There may be better ones. What is certain is that training the Canadian military for the “killing job” when there is less and less killing to be done is self-defeating.

I have one last comment to make about getting serious about peacekeeping. There was not one discussion of peacekeeping among those I read that did not advocate the need for reforming the United Nations. In his latest report, the Auditor General takes a very firm stand on this question (Canada, Auditor General, 1996, Chapter 6, section 6.56 and ff.). I believe that he is fundamentally right.

RACISM AND EXTREME RIGHT-WING PENETRATION

One of the sound concepts which is currently used in the CF is that of the Total Force. This concept refers to the integration of the Regular Force and the Primary Reserve.

However, in contrast with this notion of integration I found that the thinking in the CF was often dichotomous. In addition to the current dichotomy in the military between officers and non-commissioned members (NCMs), I also noted dichotomies between mind and body, between time spent on duty and off duty and between words and deeds. These dichotomies allowed what seemed to us a fairly high level of tolerance for racism and membership in White supremacist and extremist right-wing groups. The official position, before the adoption of the policy against racist conduct, was that although the CF disapproved of racism, its members were entitled to their own political opinions and their right to free association guaranteed that they could belong to any group they wanted and attend whatever meetings they wished, as long as it did not break any law or interfere with the performance of their duties. In a similar way, the use of racial slurs was viewed as a fairly benign practice that could be found in most armies, although it was "most inappropriate." The Board of Inquiry (BOI) concluded that the use of racial slurs (euphemized in its report as "nicknames") appeared to be more prevalent at the soldier level and did not seem to indicate racism (BOI, Report, Phase I, Volume XI, Annex I, par. 16-18). Not being true behaviour, verbal behaviour could not, in principle, be conceived as racist behaviour per se.

Although the position that what CF members do with their time when they are not on duty is their own business may be formally correct, it falls short of what might be expected of professionals. Professions have a symbolic dimension in that they represent values in the eyes of their members and of the public. This fact has been recognized by many professions, including the police, which have voluntarily adopted codes of professional ethics. These codes actually limit the formal rights and freedoms possessed by Canadian citizens, but these limitations are viewed as reasonable and consistent with the values embedded in the profession. Doctors usually do not militate in favour of the rights of tobacco smokers, and police do not consort with skinheads. Whatever the CF might be otherwise, they surely belong to what David Bayley (1994) appropriately called "forces of order." And whatever they also may be, skinheads, right-

wing extremists and other groups of the same ilk are forces of disorder. Although it is theoretically and also perhaps legally possible to belong professionally to the forces of order and, when off duty, associate with the forces of disorder, there is a serious inconsistency in this double affiliation, both at the level of practice and at the level of public image. How is a CF member, working in a recruiting centre, to respond when one of his skinhead buddies wants to join up?

The CF has taken important and commendable steps against racist conduct within its ranks, and it will take some more. Screening mechanisms, training courses, exercises in cultural sensitization are all necessary instruments for eradicating racism. But they are no more than technical measures which have to be superseded by the development of an *ethos*, if they are to succeed at all.

A good illustration of this point would be the development of a set of technical measures to monitor language. For example, progressive sanctions could be applied against persons who use racial slurs. Such disciplinarian attempts to police language have generally failed: racial epithets crop back into the vocabulary as soon as those taking pleasure in using them think they are escaping notice and will not be caught. Yet there are professions, organizations and corporations where the use of such racist language has been successfully rooted out. In these institutions people do not abstain from using racial epithets because they fear individual sanctions. Rather they abstain mainly because they are wary of losing the respect of persons whom they themselves respect, by breaching the *ethos* that unites them.

I firmly believe that the development of a binding professional *ethos* with which racist conduct is felt to be absolutely incompatible is the only way that all the other measures taken by the CF will gain significance and be effective.

#### ACCOUNTABILITY

There is little to be said about accountability that I have not said before and that has not actually been acknowledged within the CF. I am in full agreement with the CF Deputy Minister who stated in a handwritten note that there was no framework of accountability in connection with screening out racist applicants from the CF and particularly from being involved in peacekeeping missions. I tried to argue that the gap in accountability was greater than simply not having good screening instruments. Account-

ability is confused with personal responsibility toward the Minister and the disciplinary process. Both have been shown to fall seriously short of providing an accountability framework, as it is now conceived.

There are two major challenges which the CF is facing with regard to accountability. Armed forces in general, and not only the CF, are among the few remaining institutions which can be properly described as closed and largely impervious to outside influence. Academics and lawyers are often derided for their use of jargon. I belong to the academic community and, working in the field of criminal law, I have frequently co-operated with lawyers and legal scholars. Never have I experienced jargon as impenetrable as that which is used in the CF. I say this partly in jest, but also because it is an apt indication of the separation between armed forces and civilian institutions. As I repeatedly emphasized, accountability is a process which is directed to the outside — one truly accounts to another who is not merely a clone of oneself. Recognizing this external dimension of accountability is one of the challenges facing the CF.

The other challenge is to confront the facts as they are instead of defensively playing down the problems. Clinging to the “can do” attitude in a working environment that has broken down is courting disaster. There are many illustrations of this in the events that surrounded the CAR’s deployment in Somalia. Illustrations are also to be found in relations with the media. But perhaps none is as convincing as the number of warnings that the officer in command of 2 Commando was unfit for this mission. These warnings were sounded at all levels throughout the pre-deployment phase and particularly during training; they continued to be issued in-theatre. Yet they were all ignored until the crisis exploded.

#### FAIRNESS

My last word is addressed to the Commission of Inquiry into the Deployment of the Canadian Forces to Somalia (CIDCFS) and to the CF. As I was at pains to show, not only the Canadian Airborne Regiment Battle Group (CARBG) blundered in Somalia; so did most of the other participants in the First United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM I), the United Nations Task Force (UNITAF) and the Second United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM II). Fairness requires that the behaviour of the Canadian troops be assessed in the context of what can only be described as a failed UN mission. This is how it is perceived, and I believe that this perception is essentially correct.

What is required in assessing the CARBG's performance is a sense of urgency which will negate any tendency to complacency *and* a sense of fairness which will take into account the difficulties posed by the context of the operation. A sense of urgency is precisely what was most wanting in the Hewson and BOI reports.

But what is finally at issue is the success or failure of the recommendations that will be made by the CIDCFS. If the final report is perceived to be unfair by those who are primarily concerned with it, only lip service will be paid to its recommendations, and the whole painful exercise will have been in vain. If, on the other hand, the report is unduly complacent, nothing will be done to prevent other crises like the Somali affair occurring in the future.

#### THE SCOPE AND DEPTH OF THE PROBLEMS

My admonition to be fair to the CF in taking into account the context in which Operation Deliverance was conducted rests in part on an assumption that misbehaviour such as that which occurred in Somalia is not current in the CF and that the explanation should therefore reach out for external factors. Although I believe that this assumption is still, on the whole, valid, the allegations about serious misconduct on the part of Canadian peacekeepers in Bosnia make it obvious that the whole explanation for the misconduct of Canadian peacekeepers cannot rest exclusively nor principally on the consideration of external factors and on the specific difficulties of a particular mission. Having restricted its investigations to the Somali case, the CIDCFS cannot fully appreciate the scope and the depth of the problems with which the CF are confronted. It thus falls on the CF itself to make this assessment and to apply the necessary remedies. It is to be hoped that its credibility has not been so damaged that the public will not be able to entrust it with this grave responsibility.

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## *Recommendations*

RECOMMENDATION I: I recommend that the CF collect data on its racial and ethnic composition in a much more systematic way.

RECOMMENDATION II: I recommend that the CF follow the example of some police forces and government agencies and use socio-psychological tests for screening purposes before personnel embark on a peacekeeping mission.

RECOMMENDATION III: I recommend that the disciplinary record of persons selected by their unit for participation in a peacekeeping mission should be thoroughly reviewed, particularly in connection with convictions under the *National Defence Act* (NDA) and the Criminal Code.

RECOMMENDATION IV: I recommend that the CF take the necessary steps to grant equality of access to all Canadian ethnic groups to the units that might be sent on peacekeeping missions.

RECOMMENDATION V: I recommend that the CF conduct a study on the presence and role of women in the military in the context of peacekeeping missions.

RECOMMENDATION VI: I recommend that a basic course on peacekeeping and related notions such as peacemaking, peace enforcing, peace and nation building be integrated in the general training of all members of the CF.

RECOMMENDATION VII: I recommend that cross-cultural training and contextual sensitization be much more elaborate than it was for Operation Cordon (later Deliverance).



**RECOMMENDATION VIII:** The CF should look beyond its own personnel resources and tap into the experience and knowledge of other agencies and of civilians.

**RECOMMENDATION IX:** A special unit should be established either in the CF or at DND whose mandate would be to extract systematically from every Canadian experience in peacekeeping those elements — lessons learned, best and worst practices — that could be used to develop a knowledge base for the preparation for future missions.

**RECOMMENDATION X:** All ranks should receive a refresher course on all legal and human rights matters pertaining to their peacekeeping mission.

**RECOMMENDATION XI:** When taking part in a mission that requires the formulation of rules of engagement, the CF should make sure that these rules are formulated early enough for their meaning to be carefully explained to all persons who will have to apply them.

**RECOMMENDATION XII:** All rituals of initiation allowed in the CF should be supervised by officers who would be accountable for any behaviour incompatible with military law and professional ethics.

**RECOMMENDATION XIII:** To the extent that CF authorities believe that initiation rites and similar activities are beneficial to the military esprit de corps and should therefore be allowed, they should write policy guidelines governing the conduct of such ceremonies.

**RECOMMENDATION XIV:** If the CF is to continue being involved in peacekeeping operations, it should develop an intelligence capacity which it completely lacked at the time of the intervention in Somalia. Let us remember in this regard that Captain Hope, the CAR's intelligence officer, rushed to the *Encyclopedia Britannica* when he learned that Canadians were to be deployed in Somalia under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. Such shortcomings must be remedied.

**RECOMMENDATION XV:** I recommend that the results of monitoring the implementation of the policy against racism be made public in annual reports tabled in Parliament and made accessible to the public.

**RECOMMENDATION XVI:** I recommend that the commanding officers in the CF be provided with guidelines on how to apply the policy against racist conduct and harassment.

**RECOMMENDATION XVII:** I recommend the creation of the office of Inspector General of the CF.

**RECOMMENDATION XVIII:** I recommend the creation of the office of the Registrar General of the CF.

**RECOMMENDATION XIX:** I recommend that the academic curriculum of the CF provide better education for the military on the workings of the media and relations with them.

**RECOMMENDATION XX:** There is an urgent need for a CF policy on the use by its personnel of all recording devices (cameras, videocams, film cameras, tape recorders, etc.).

(Canada, Senate, 1989, *Terrorisme, Rapport du deuxième Comité spécial du Sénat sur le terrorisme et la sécurité publique*). For a description of the various components of the Canadian intelligence community, also see Brodeur, 1990 and 1992.)

- 5 On this distinction between functional and institutional oversight, see Lustgarten (1995: 182).
- 6 Whether the RCMP keeps its “political masters” abreast of how it was circumventing the law is still a very controversial question. A former DG of the Security Service, M. John Starnes, testified repeatedly before the McDonald Commission to the effect that he asked the Cabinet for directives and guidelines on the issue of the legality of the Security Service operations, particularly in the field of counter-terrorism (see Canada, 1981a and b). He also clearly stated during the hearings of the Quebec Keable Commission that he intentionally refrained from advising the Minister of the theft of the list of all members of the Parti Québécois in 1973, the purpose of this omission being to protect the Minister’s plausible deniability of any knowledge of this illegal operation (it led to the criminal prosecution of several members of the RCMP).
- 7 The greatest press leak of the Vietnam War did not happen in Vietnam but in the United States. It was the publication of the Pentagon Papers by *The New York Times*.

#### CHAPTER SIX — CONCLUSION

- 1 Relying on Marshall’s studies of U.S. soldiers in the World War II, Grossman (1995: 25) puts this figure much higher at 80 to 85 percent, all factors for not shooting or aiming wildly being taken into account.

#### A POSTSCRIPTUM ON ACCOUNTABILITY

- 1 The phrase *logon didonai* (to provide a reason) was used in ancient Greek philosophy in much the same sense as the present notion of accountability.

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Jean-Paul Brodeur

This study examines the issues of peacekeeping, racism and accountability in relation to Operation Deliverance. They are first addressed from a theoretical perspective and then discussed in the context of the actual mission in Somalia, which is divided into three phases: preparation, in-theatre deployment and aftermath of the operation. Recommendations are made on training for peacekeeping, on developing policies against racial discrimination and, more particularly, on increasing accountability. The need for an external oversight at the top of the military structure is stressed.

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