Over There, From Here: Expeditionary Forces and the Canadian Air Force

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In 1999, the concept of the Expeditionary Air Force (EAF) emerged. Alongside it, ten separate Aerospace Expeditionary Forces (AEF) were created within the United States Air Force (USAF). The concept and attendant force structure was largely the product of the relationship between the high operational tempo faced by the USAF and the decline in available resources. This tempo, arguably, has been best illustrated in the Gulf. Following the successful air and ground campaigns, which drove Iraq out of Kuwait in 1991, US air units remained to enforce the no-fly zones in Northern and Southern Iraq, and when called upon undertook additional missions in an attempt to force the Hussein regime to comply with UN resolutions. At the same, the USAF faced a range of other overseas commitments, including the major effort required in Kosovo in 1999. Alongside these and other missions, the USAF had to meet its commitments to "organize, train, and equip" its forces, during a period of not just constrained budgets, but also growing concerns about recruitment and the retention of highly skilled personnel.

The EAF concept is a framework designed to transform the USAF. The AEF is its operational component created to provide regional commands with holistic and organic aerospace capabilities. Both reflect lagged responses to the new security environment that emerged after the Cold War. In addition, the importance of new emerging technologies, encapsulated by the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) idea, should not be ignored, nor the attendant issues surrounding capital (money) and labour availability. Regardless, a key, especially for the AEF force structure, was the general draw down of forward deployed forces that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union at a time when the demand for international intervention, and the requirement for the US to be involved, if not lead, grew dramatically. Not only were there fewer "permanently" deployed forces and bases overseas which regional commands could exploit, but also these interventions and conflicts were in areas in which US bases or basing rights had not existed, and existing infrastructure varied greatly in terms of its ability to support US and allied or coalition forces. Thus, the AEF structure was designed to bring into theatre a fully capable "mission" package, including all the support and infrastructure requirements, and the emergence of ten such forces reflected existing capabilities and sustainment requirements. Finally, the AEF structure also reflected the switch from threat to capability-based planning as a central component of overall US force transformation.

Of course, the idea of expeditionary forces is not new, although it has largely been forgotten. One would be hard pressed to find any analytical references to the concept whatsoever over the past many decades. At best, historical references are available, but these simply represent the label applied at the time to forces deployed overseas: the American Expeditionary Force (1918), the British Expeditionary Force (1914, 1939), and the Canadian Expeditionary Force (1914, 1940). In these and other prominent examples, the term appears to have been exclusively applied to insular states, and their land forces. Naval forces for all intents and purposes have escaped the label of expeditionary, and up
to now the label has never been applied to air forces. Moreover, the concept is noticeably absent from discussions concerning armed force during the Cold War. None of the significant deployments or employments of armed forces overseas by either Superpower and/or its allies have been described or referred to as expeditionary, even if permanent forward deployed forces in Germany are excluded. Even Canada's CAST commitment to Norway was never conceptualized as an expeditionary force.

Not surprisingly, the adoption of an expeditionary force structure by the USAF has led to its consideration by others, even though thinking in this regard may not be well advanced. In fact, it can be predicted that nations such as Canada would not only begin to pay more attention to the expeditionary idea, but are also likely to adopt at least some of its components. First, such nations are most likely to employ armed force in combat only with the United States. The requirement to ensure interoperability with the USAF in this case, dictates that force planners look closely at US structures and procedures. Second the US armed forces in general, and the USAF in particular are the military exemplar of the world today and for the foreseeable future. As in the past, states copy the military exemplar of their time, and today, regardless of a state's political disposition towards the US, they will also copy the current exemplar in terms of capabilities, structures, strategies, and doctrines. Third, the scale of US investment in technology, analysis, planning, and training dwarfs the combined investment of nearly the entire world. Innovation will likely only come out of the US, and tracking, copying, and exploiting such innovation is a cost effective strategy for every other state. Fourth, many states face the same dilemma as the USAF of an operational tempo and limited resources.

Finally, in the case of Canada in particular, geography, history, culture and decades of close cooperation between the Canadian Air Force and USAF predispose the Canadian Air Force to adopt the USAF mode of behaviour. Of course, Canada, like most nations, is significantly constrained by a lack of resources, such that the creation of even a single US style AEF is problematic. Certainly, the AEF model may prove useful in terms of new ways to think about force structure and sustainment, and provide value on the margins. But, it remains to be seen whether it is of much utility in providing either a means to manage and resolve the commitment-capability gap confronting the Canadian Forces (CF) in general, and the Canadian Air Force in particular, or a rationale for a greater claim on resources nationally or departmentally. In fact, these are the lens through which the AEF model should be examined in Canada, and an initial, albeit somewhat cursory, examination appears to indicate little utility.

A Canadian Perspective on "Expeditionary"

Notwithstanding the above points, it is somewhat surprising that the concept of expeditionary is absent from military, security and defence discussions in Canada. As a concept embedded in the idea of moving forces to locations far away from national territory, one would expect the opposite. In this sense, geopolitics dictates expeditionary as the force model for Canada; a nation separated by three oceans from the politically and strategically central landmass of Eurasia. Canadian decision-makers at least since the Second World War have come to define Canadian security as synonymous with
international security. As a product of the Second World War, the Cold War and above all else a peaceful neighbourhood, Canada has continuously participated in overseas operations, which in effect are expeditions. Also, overseas as distinct from North America, came to have increasing domestic political value in employing the CF as a symbolic means to differentiate Canada from the US, especially through peacekeeping.

In light of these factors, the CF was largely optimized for overseas or expeditionary options. National, or today homeland, defence was largely a residual requirement for the CF, with the notable exception of the Canadian Air Force relative to NORAD and the Soviet bomber threat to North America. Even then, it can be argued that the forward deployed Canadian Air Force in Germany was of relative more importance in Canadian Air Force thinking.

The rationale for combat-capable forces also largely resided overseas or "over there". If the CF, and each of the three services were structured solely for national or domestic needs, they would look significantly different than they do today or at any time since the Second World War. In fact, unless one expects the relationship with the US to become fundamentally hostile, there is little rationale for any significant combat-capable force. In this regard, a national lens also tends to privilege in rank order the Air Force over the Navy, and the Navy over the Army, such that an “inside-outside” force structure model or perspective had significant implications for the politics of resource allocation among the services.

It is hard to image extra-continental forces storming the beaches of Cape Breton or Victoria, and large fleets menacing the three coasts of Canada. Certainly, some residual capability would still be needed for the sea lines of communication (SLOC), but again most of the SLOC rationale is to support Canadian and allied forces overseas. In contrast, the most realistic threats to Canada are either air or space borne, or can be countered most effectively by air assets, and to a lesser degree surface-to-air assets. This encompasses almost the full range of Cold and post-Cold War era threats, and the new threats of post-911, as least with regard to a combat role. For example, the threat posed by a cruise missile launched from an offshore freighter can be most cost-effectively countered by aerospace assets. In contrast, all the services could make a relatively equal case for resources from an “over there” model.

In addition, the attractiveness of the CF adopting an expeditionary force structure model follows the logic of the USAF decision - a means to reconcile overseas operational demands within an environment of constrained resources. In this sense, it would be the natural fallout of the 1990s experiences of the CF and the lingering ideas of developing some form a Canadian Rapid Reaction capability relative to Canada's 1995 UN Proposal and more recently the Brahimi report, Kosovo and Afghanistan. In addition, the expeditionary concept as intimated above fits well into the vision articulated in Strategy 2020, especially with regard to inter-operability, jointness, and capability-based planning. By virtue of its freshness, it can also be seen as candidate for the transformation agenda that has been emphasized by the current Minister of National Defence. Finally, as also recognized above, expeditionary is a means to rationalize combat-capable forces,
especially with lingering concerns about a repeat of the pre-1994 Defence White Paper debate on constabulary forces in the forthcoming Foreign and Defence Policy review.\textsuperscript{6}

Unfortunately, the expeditionary model has not been well articulated, except within the USAF and it is not easily or readily transferable to the Canadian case. The joint forces concept and structures that have been reasonably well developed in Canada could provide the basis for a made-in-Canada expeditionary model. Certainly, it is one potential avenue for investigation. Regardless, any investigation or model will have to be grounded in fundamental Canadian truths about defence and armed force.

First, a Canadian expeditionary force structure must be able to integrate into international coalitions. Canada has neither the will nor the capability to act alone, even in relatively benign peacekeeping operations. Second, the structure must be optimized for political purposes. The willingness of Canadian decision-makers to engage overseas is driven by the inter-relationship of several political motives: influence, prestige, ethics, domestic politics, and an unchallenged national image of Canada's "good-guy" role on the international stage.

Third, the structure or model will have to be zero-costed. It can contain no requirements for new funds. The last two budgets, arguably in the best political and fiscal environment for significant increases, provided baseline increases that enable the CF at best to maintain existing capabilities, alongside a modest modernization programme which will be insufficient to replace aging capabilities on a one-to-one ratio. In addition, other costs will continue to rise as a product of technology and the labour market, which further restrain investments. Fourth, the model will have to confront the related legacy dilemma. This entails the trade-off between maintaining and incrementally modernizing existing capabilities as outlined in \textit{Defence Planning Guidance 2001}, and investing in radical transformative technologies of the distant future.\textsuperscript{7}

Finally, American military superiority will remain unchallenged, and any Canadian expeditionary model will have to take this into account. In addition, the US transformation agenda, which is likely to increase the current technological and operational gap with its allies and partners, cannot be ignored.

All these factors create the Canadian expeditionary challenge. The need to develop a force structure that is politically functional and capable of providing forces to intervene with the US in high intensity combat missions and into operations other than war where US engagement is unlikely. Simply, Canada will only choose only to go to war with the US, but it will also choose to participate in as many low intensity combat operations as possible. The former will be very rare, but dangerous. The latter will be relatively frequent, if history is our guide, but somewhat less dangerous. An expeditionary force structure model must be able to provide the government with both capabilities. It must also provide the capacity for Canada to lead in the latter, which has long been an element of Canadian political "hubris," even if more imagined that real, despite the fact that it will never lead in the former.
Conceptualizing “Expeditionary” Options

Unless some form of revolution occurs, CF and Canadian Air Force force planners will be unable to transfer the AEF model in its entirety to Canada. As a holistic, organic force structure, the Canadian Air Force simply does not possess the full range of capabilities to perform all the functions undertaken by a USAF AEF. As a result, the Canadian Air Force in thinking about some form of a limited organic, holistic and sustainable structure faces three distinct considerations or dimensions of choice: the level of force, the role of force, and the type of force. Each of these dimensions, in turn, has applicability for the CF as a whole, each of the individual services, and the idea of joint expeditionary operations. Additionally, they have value for understanding within a coalition or combined expeditionary context. The dimensions also represent a means to conceptualize CF and Canadian Air Force options regarding force structure and capabilities. Although these are presented in general, either/or terms below, their utility, when further developed, should be towards a more detailed, interactive conceptual gradient of options amongst all the dimensions.

The level of force refers to the vertical location in which forces are engaged relative to the whole in an order of battle, and is somewhat related to both the amount and nature of the forces engaged in operations. While the level of force can be conceptualized on a variety of levels on a vertical axis, it is perhaps best understood relative to the distinction between the strategic and tactical level relative to leadership or command and control. Basically, expeditionary forces are strategic to the extent to which they can operate under national command as an independent organic force within an order of battle, sustained by national assets. Empirically, this has long been the Canadian preference stretching back to the First World War and the desire to ensure that Canadian forces operated together under Canadian command rather than being distributed amongst British units. Of course, this did not translate into a Canadian role in strategic decision-making in either World War.

Nonetheless, it is of strategic value to have one's forces operating together within a minimum force structure commitment as defined by the type of operation. This may be understood with reference to the 1994 White Paper structure of the minimum requirement of an all-arms brigade sustained by national capabilities. Given the current lack of resources to sustain such a force today, let alone field it, a strategic commitment may also be understood strictly at the command and control (C^2) level; the ability to field a C^2 capability even though the units under its command may be from another nation, or the national component is supported by others. For example, the Canadian deployment of a command structure into Afghanistan would still represent a strategic level commitment, even though the Canadian force beneath it will likely be dependent upon others.

In contrast, a tactical level refers to forces, which operate within, and are dependent upon, other partners in a coalition or combined operation. This could entail, for example, dependency upon another nation for Combat Air Patrol (CAP), as one's units are employed in an interdiction or close ground support role. It could also mean an ally providing base security or other support elements. Regardless, tactical forces neither
operate independently nor are sustained by national capabilities. They are dependent upon other members of the coalition, who in turn may also simply operate at the tactical, or strategic. In fact, a cursory examination tends to indicate that the Canadian Air Force has largely been tactical in the above sense of the term in most experiences, notwithstanding the apparent limited organic, independent nature of the air commitment in Operation Apollo. Even then, as part of the US led effort, this commitment has been dependent on the US.

The second dimension, the role of force, simply distinguishes between combat and non-combat roles. The former are forces capable of engaging directly in combat roles, whether in a combined or joint setting. The latter are forces capable only of supporting combat forces, which again may be joint or combined. For example, in Kosovo, the Canadian Air Force committed combat forces, whereas in Afghanistan only support forces were provided. Support for the Canadian Air Force in Kosovo was largely provided by others.

Finally, the type of force concerns the relationship between one service and the other services in terms of capabilities committed to the operation and/or amongst nations in combined operations. Services or nations may choose to provide forces which augment existing capabilities or they may choose to provide unique or "gap-filler" forces to the operation. In the either case, the forces must be inter-operable, even though the nature of interoperability changes from augmentation to gap-filler. In addition, other services or nations may possess the same capabilities, but not choose to commit them to an operation. Thus, for example, all nations possess some form of signals capability, but Canada repeatedly was sought for this capability in many peacekeeping operations. This was a gap-filler contribution. At the most basic level, the ability to provide French-speaking forces enables Canada to fill a gap in certain operations.

It should be recognized that all three dimensions in general, and the idea of a gap-filler in particular reflect the notion of an emerging international or Western military division of labour. With the exception of the US, most states do not possess the full range of capabilities from strategic to tactical, support to combat functions, and augmentation to gap-filler for the full spectrum of contemporary peace operations. In the US case, choices across these dimensions are almost exclusively an issue of national political will. For most other nations it is also a question of extant capabilities, relative to demand and constrained resources.

This, then, is the core issue for Canada and others. Certain US capabilities are stretched fairly thin, what are known as low density/high demand (LD/HD)assets. In these areas, coalition partners could provide gap-filler capabilities with potentially high political payoff. Beyond these, however, coalition partners are largely restricted to augmentation forces, with the option of combat or combat support, and a strategic versus tactical commitment left open. Overall, the US has left the door open for partners to make choices, as most clearly noted by US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld in a speech to the National Defense University: “our policy in this war [against terrorism] [is one] of accepting help from any country on a basis that is comfortable for them and allowing
them to characterize what it is they [are] doing to help us, instead of our characterizing it for them or saying that we won’t have a country participate unless they could participate in every single respect of this effort…”

Outside of major war, there will likely be many potential roles for Canada in operations, because the US is unlikely to be fully engaged. The US is likely to provide some limited gap-filler capabilities in these circumstances, such as the provision of intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR), as well as potentially combat forces for contingency purposes. For example, the US would have provided extraction capabilities for Canada’s UNPROFOR commitment in Srebrenica, if they had been required. Otherwise, the expeditionary forces for these types of operations are open to national decisions relative to the relationship between political value and existing capabilities.

**Canadian Air Force Options**

The logic appears to indicate that Canada and the Canadian Air Force should look to operations short of major war as the defining parameter for structuring a national expeditionary capability. It is these types of missions, which successive governments believe translate into significant political payoffs, if the empirical record over the past many years is any guide. These missions are also undertaken without a major overt US presence, thereby opening up both command possibilities and political distance. They also require combat forces, especially given the dangerous environment of these peace operations over the past decade, even though Canada would not necessarily need to commit combat forces to reap political value. Finally, the resulting expeditionary force structure should also be applicable for US-led operations, whether for war or not.

In other words, from this perspective, the CF will continue to be defined and/or rationalized by "over there". All that will have changed is the nature of “over there” as compared to the past. The “heavy” environment of preparing for war on the Central Front in Europe will be replaced by the “medium to light” environment of peace operations short of major war, which has been recognized as a requirement for quite awhile. The limited combat and support capabilities for this latter environment can then be readily applied to major war, or at least this is the expectation.

Of course, these changes are already underway, even though they have been dictated as much by resource constraints as the new military-security environment. These constraints also must be factored into Canadian options as well. For example, a strategic command role for Canada in Afghanistan appears beyond the reach of army resources. Thus, options or choices may well be dictated not by a calculation of political benefits and costs, but simply by available resources. From this perspective, the expeditionary model, at least in its general form, appears to have little value as a yardstick for fundamental change. It also may lead to a CF optimized for peace operations short of war. Certainly, the case to maintain combat forces can be made for these types of operations, but the type of combat capability necessary for these operations is not multi-purpose in the true sense of the term.
In addition, it should also be recognized that the very concept of expeditionary is biased towards the army in calling up past images of the AEF, BEF and CEF. In this sense, the Canadian Air Force is unconsciously relegated to a support function that fills an important gap for the Army at the tactical level. In contrast, the domestic or North American mission, as noted above, is primarily an Air Force one.

The expeditionary model or idea serves to reinforce the longstanding dominance of discretionary international commitments over non-discretionary national or domestic ones. In part, this is a function of these discretionary commitments serving as the rationale for the maintenance of modern combat-capable forces. Neither the Army nor the Navy truly requires such forces for their national roles.

Of course, this rationale is also consistent with most of the history of the Canadian Air Force. It also explains why the Canadian Air Force did comparatively poorly in the politics surrounding the 1994 Joint Parliamentary Committee and White Paper. Nonetheless, it is possible to conceptualize a Canadian Air Force-based "expeditionary" model using, for example, the Kosovo experience, even though Canada's contribution was embedded in a US-led operation, supported by NATO/US forces, in which the actual political benefits obtained do not appear to be great.14 The CF-18 is a multi-function platform capable of performing the full range of combat missions, albeit limited to some degree strategically. An expanded fleet, beyond current modernization plans, would be necessary to sustain a major contribution overseas, alongside the likely need to expand the existing air-refueling fleet and the other necessary support elements.

Of course, to envision such an expeditionary force would require a significant redirection of resources from the other two services, which is highly unlikely to occur not least of all because it would require forced change from the political level. Moreover, the case for the political payoffs of such investment has not been made, and arguably is difficult to make not least of all because of the association of Canadian engagement overseas with peacekeeping, which means the army.

However, the Air Force case is much stronger when one begins with the largely non-discretionary national or domestic roles, because most threats to Canada/North America that require a military defence response are in the aerospace world, despite how they are launched. From this perspective, one can suggest that more consideration should be given to prioritizing investments for North America, which then would serve as the foundation for going “over there.” Such a case reflects, for example, the impact of 911 on defence and security thinking. It is also sensitive to domestic political considerations in ensuring that Canada takes more responsibility for its own territorial surveillance, control and defence, rather than overtly relying upon the US as a means to release resources for overseas commitments.

Finally, optimizing national or domestic roles, relative to the above three dimensional matrix, also leads to a re-thinking of the meaning of expeditionary relative to the future of warfare. Regardless of one’s view of the Revolution in Military Affairs, the nature of warfare, or perhaps the Western/American way of war, has witnessed the growing
distance between individuals and the actual battlefield. This is most pronounced with the
development of first air power, and then ballistic missile technology. The original
strategic promise of airpower was to achieve rapid victory and avoid the carnage of
trench warfare. This promise, in turn, materialized with the development of ballistic
missiles and nuclear weapons, even though it became manifested in deterrent or war
prevention, not warfighting terms.

Regardless, the growing distance as a function of technology of the individual from the
battlefield, reinforced by presumed western sensitivity to casualties, leads one to rethink
expeditionary capability requirements. Certainly, there will always be a need for troops
on the ground. But increasingly, as witnessed in Afghanistan and Iraq, precision strikes,
near real time battlefield awareness and information dominance is undertaken from long
distances, sometimes thousands of miles away. These very capabilities are aerospace, and
are also the very capabilities in most instances for national missions.

In other words, the meaning and nature of expeditionary can be understood differently
than in the past with its bias towards land forces. The political payoffs of this new
understanding of expeditionary forces, even if conceptualized, have not yet been
assessed. Nonetheless, these forces are also the very LD/HD assets that affect the US
AEF, and most other Western air forces and their armed forces as a whole. Thus,
investment in these types of capabilities, which have national and international value,
should produce significant political benefits. They could, in effect, have that strategic,
gap-filler value, regardless of whether they are warfighting or not. Above all else, these
capabilities largely reside in the aerospace sector.

Conclusion

The ability of the Canadian Air Force to adopt the idea of an EAF, and with it the US
AEF model is clearly problematic. While going “over there,” and hence expeditionary,
has a long lineage in Canada, the CF and Canadian Air Force simply lack the resources to
adopt the AEF model, except in pieces. One key issue is which of the many EAF/AEF
pieces should be adopted, and conceptualizing options in this regard relative to political
considerations is important. Of course, these options relative to the three dimensional
matrix provided above can be understood as independent of the EAF idea. They have
been present, albeit never specified, for a long time in Canadian thinking about the role of
armed force and investment demands in a constrained resource world.

Perhaps then, the greatest value the idea of expeditionary forces can play is to open up
the debate between “over there” and “from here” in Canadian thinking. In the past, “over
there” for reasons outlined above have dominated the way in which options are
formulated and decisions are made, consciously or not. Today, it may be necessary to
begin from a national basis – “from here.” In many ways, this should be the preference
for the Canadian Air Force. Not only does the Canadian Air Force, even with space
assigned to the joint structure within the CF, play the primary national role, it also is
where new technologies and capabilities are emerging that are likely to have great
political value “over there.” The Canadian Air Force could become the leading
An expeditionary force of the future for Canada, providing strategic value, and acting as a gap-filler when necessary, regardless of the role of force adopted, in commitments with or without US engagement. In so doing, the Canadian Air Force could go “over there” without ever leaving “from here.”

1 Following the expulsion of the United Nations Special Commission inspectors in 1999, the US and Great Britain began Operation Desert Fox.

2 The above quote refers to Title 10 responsibilities, and is drawn from a valuable overview from senior USAF officials. See Donald Cook, Robert Allardice and Raymond Michael Jr., "Strategic Implications of the Expeditionary Aerospace Force" Aerospace Power Journal 14, no. 4 (Winter 2000), 6-14.

3 This includes the full range of interventions that now are encapsulated by the concept of Peace Operations, and situations in which US forces may not have been formally or overtly engaged, but present and committed under various arrangements.


6 It is generally predicted that a review will follow the new leader of the Liberal Party and a quick spring election sometime in the fall of 2005.


10 There is a limit at the strategic level, as it has been repeatedly stated that US forces will not come under the operational command of others. This sets the conceptual ceiling for understanding strategic within this approach.


12 For example, the Canadian battalion in UNPROFOR protecting Srebrenica had an arrangement with the US to extract them if necessary and such an arrangement was also offered to the Dutch replacement battalion. See Alex Moens, "Lessons for Peacekeepers: Srebrenica and the NIOD Report," Canadian Foreign Policy (Fall 2003).

13 Perhaps most indicative is the recent statement by the Prime Minister that Canada would send peacekeepers to the Middle East as part of the “road map” settlement, if it occurs, even though the CF is stretched to the breaking point with existing long-term commitments and Afghanistan.

14 Neither the Canadian Air Force nor Canadian political elites have made much, if any case, around the political value of the Kosovo air campaign (perhaps due to CF-18 technical limitations), despite the references made to Canadian pilots leading a disproportionate share of missions. For example, General Wesley Clark's (Supreme Allied Commander Europe at the time) book provides only one reference to Canada in a list of contributing countries. Wesley K. Clark, Waging Modern War (New York: Public Affairs, 2001).
The Air Force became so small that balanced force rotations were no longer possible, and the AEF concept was shifted to meet ground-force demands. This shift would become one of the principal drivers behind the current pilot crisis and result in reduced readiness to respond to major regional conflicts. Specifically, there are two tenets of American national security strategy over the last quarter century that have endured through presidential administrations of both political parties. Part One: Canadian Training and Air Policy. England without Cabinet authorization and without informing his colleagues. ‘There had been troubles with Canadians here,’ he observed gloomily, ‘it would be worse over there.’ The following day Brancker began to apply pressure to Henderson, pointing out that ‘increased establishments are being demanded from the Expeditionary Force, and we must start a training establishment in Canada at which the full benefit of the Canadian and American training machines can be reaped.’ By early December Curzon bad won over the Treasury by stressing the size of the project and the military emergency which rendered it necessary. The Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) was the designation of the field force created by Canada for service overseas in the First World War. The force fielded several combat formations on the Western Front in France and Belgium, the largest of which was the Canadian Corps, consisting of four divisions. The Canadian Cavalry Brigade and the Canadian Independent Force, which were independent of the Canadian Corps, also fought on the Western Front. The CEF also had a large reserve and training