# TRANSITIONS: THE SHEEPDOG NAVY GOES TO KOREA

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In the timeless traditions of international politics, "Send a gunboat" is a common response to crisis. The June 25th, 1950 invasion of South Korea from the North evoked a similar response. In a relatively short time, the ill-equipped, shrinking, post-war Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) deployed a force of three destroyers to Korea for operations under the auspices of the United Nations (UN); well in advance of any army or Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) commitments.

In the post-war euphoria, Canadian governments systematically scaled back defence budgets and demobilised the majority of all three services; resulting in the decommissioning the majority of the fleet. These cutbacks meant that the RCN was unable, in 1950, to deploy credible naval forces on both coasts. Nevertheless, the anaemic RCN managed to maintain three destroyers on station in Korea and meet the new North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) commitments, as well as begin an unprecedented period of "peacetime" expansion

This paper will review these events and will, in particular, look at the following:

1. How did the RCN involvement in Korea come about and what were the major political factors affecting this commitment;
2. What was the extent of the RCN involvement in Korea;
3. What effect did the Korean involvement have on Canadian participation in the fledgling NATO alliance; and

4. How did the RCN expansion come about and what influences did the NATO alliance and Korea have on this.

The RCN managed the nearly impossible. Faced with the obligation to carry out a creditable force projection without sufficient manpower, equipment, or budget; the Korean deployment was nevertheless a resounding success. Although the deployment of three destroyers to the Korean theatre stretched the RCN's resources to the maximum, additional funding was found to allow it to meet the NATO alliance commitments as well. The RCN also found funding to expand and develop an entirely new class of warship to meet its unique needs. The result; the RCN rose to the challenge of its motto of "Ready Aye Ready", performed and grew.

The Korean crisis, building since before the Second World War, boiled over with the invasion of South Korea by North Korean forces on 25 June, 1950. Prior to the actual invasion, the political situation was little short of an actual shooting war. Partitioned with no sign of unification in sight, the animosity between parties was palpable. Although the South had recently conducted "free" elections, there was no sign of similar activity in the North, making this one of the major hurdles separating the two halves of Korea. The various western governments began to recognise South Korea, viewed by some as an American protégé, as a sovereign nation; further alienating the North. The communist backed regime of the North pressed repeatedly for repudiation of the elections and reunification under communist leadership; a prospect that was intolerable to the western nations, particularly the US. This was, of course, reflected in domestic Canadian policies. Pressure for a *Canadian* response to the Korean situation continued to mount, including from domestic sources. Referring to the priority placed on NATO commitments, George Drew, Leader of the Opposition, stated that if the Far East (Asia)

fell under communist sway, of "What earthy use will the Atlantic pact be" [1]. Although the Pearson government counselled caution in dealing with the situation, events in Korea tended to follow their own time-line.

On 25 June, the North invaded. As South Korea was seen to be an American protégé, the attack was "both a serious challenge to the United States ... and a grave and direct threat to the continued existence of the United Nations as an organisation for the prevention of war".[2] In a brief time span, South Korean forces were sent into retreat and their American allies fared no better. The United States rapidly committed additional forces to the conflict and sought international legitimacy for this through the UN. UN backing and military assistance was seen as necessary, and desirable, due to the communist (Soviet) support provided to the North Korean invaders. Moreover, this was interpreted as a possible precursor to was in Europe, in effect a distraction from the fledgling NATO alliance. Additionally, the anti-Communist hysteria gripping the US, and other great western powers, also spilled over into domestic Canadian affairs; "American opinion, both official and popular, had as usual blanketed Canada".[3]

Aside from the American-Communist confrontation, the invasion triggered a crisis in the UN; this was the first serious test of the UN's Charter (Article 1) prohibiting armed aggression.[4] As such, the Korean conflict was regarded as a "police action", to enforce international law under Article 42 of the Charter.[5] This view of the conflict came about largely due to Canadian efforts in the UN; "In this way, Canada participated in support of the United Nations rather than as a response to the urgent demands of the United

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[1] Donald Creighton, ed, The Forked Road: Canada 1939-1957 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976), p. 197.
[2] Department of External Affairs, August, 1950, Canada and the Korean Crisis (Ottawa: External Affairs, 1950), p. 289.
[3] Creighton, 1976, p. 197.
[4] United Nations, Charter of the United Nations and Statute of the International Court of Justice, (New York: Department of Public Information, United Nations, 1997), p. 5.

States".[6] Furthermore, it was recognised that this could not be permitted to remain a purely American controlled matter. With that in mind, Canada co-sponsored the *Uniting for Peace* initiative that, while authorising intervention, made it a truly international affair. Although there were already other UN interventions (Palestine, Kashmir and Indonesia), Korea is important principally for the armed intervention by "forces placed at the disposal" of the UN for the purpose of the restoration of peace.[7] The intervention, itself, was only possible because the Soviet delegate was absent from the Security Council, thanks to the Soviet boycott of the Council over Chinese representation in the UN.

On the domestic political landscape, Pearson drew attention to the international ramifications of the Korean conflict, pointing out the threat to collective security it represented, and the need for individual members to act "within the terms of the [UN] Charter" to resist international aggression and preserve the peace.[8] However, the Korean conflict had a different character, thanks to the Cold War, from what might have been "anticipated for such cases by the founders of the UN Charter".[9] The Charter had been written with the intent of preventing wars of aggression between sovereign nations. The two Koreas, at the time of the outbreak of hostilities, were not truly (legally) sovereign states though the two were *defacto* sovereign due to the existing political situation. For the first time, the United Nations was directly involved in a "major

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[5] United Nations, 1997, p. 28.
[6] Arthur Andrew, The Rise and Fall of a Middle Power: Canadian Diplomacy from King to Mulroney (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1993), p. 33.
[7] Colonel C. R. Stacy, Canadian Participation in the Korean War, Part , Report #62 (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 1953), p. 4.
[8] Creighton, 1976, p. 200.
[9]Denis Stairs, The Diplomacy of Constraint: Canada, the Korean War, and the United States, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), p. x.

military conflict in which the Great Powers were vitally concerned".[10] This meant that Canada was "called upon to honour her obligations under the Charter".[11]

While the political leadership "vacillated and Parliament was prorogued" it was decided to utilise the Navy to provide the initial component of any military response to the Korean crisis.[12] The Pacific Fleet's three destroyers, originally tasked for Europe, were selected to meet the new commitment; as a naval contingent was expected to fulfill the obligation while limiting casualties, an anathema to the Liberal government. Parliament was so informed by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Lester B. Pearson, with the comment that "they might be of assistance to the United Nations in Korea".[13] The Canadian public was informed with the official announcement that Canadian destroyers were "hereby made available to the United Nations" and that they would be placed under the operational control of the UN commander in Korea".[14] This was the first time that "Canada had placed a military force at the disposal of an international organisation".[15] In an extremely short time, from the first intimation from the political leadership to the actual deployment; the selected destroyers were hastily fitted out, crewed from the scanty peacetime resources, and prepared for their forays back into potential wartime operations. Equipment and supplies were drawn, far in excess of the normal peacetime scales of issue, while HMC Dockyard in Esquimalt "turned to" with a will to prepare the squadron for deployment. With regard to

[10] Colonel C.P. Stacey, Canada and Peacekeeping, Report #4 (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 1965), p. 10.
[11] Historical Section, General Staff, Army Headquarters, Canada's Army in Korea: The United Nations Operations 1950-53 and the Their Aftermath (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1956), p. 103.
[12] John Bovey, "The Destroyers' War in Korea, 1952-53", in Boutilier, James A., ed., The RCN in Retrospect, 1910-1968 (Vancouver: The University of British Columbia Press, 1982), p. 252.
[13] Historical Section, 1956, p. 2.
[14] Department of External Affairs, 1950, p. 293.
[15] Thor Thorgrimsson, & E.C. Russell, Canadian Naval Operations in Korean Waters 1950-1955 (Ottawa: Naval Historical Section, Canadian Forces Headquarters, Department of National Defence, 1965), p.4.

manpower, these short-handed ships, previously operating with peacetime complements, now crewed at wartime strengths by drawing from the remainder of the fleet, while simultaneously conducting pre-deployment training and briefings. Additionally, authority was granted for the Navy to recommission additional ships and "recruit whatever additional men [were] needed".[16] There did, however, remain the question of the legality of placing the task group "under the [operational] command of a foreign national", General Douglas MacArthur.[17] This was worked out and finally, on July 12th, HMC Ships Cayuga, Athabaskan, and Sioux, now in Pearl Harbour, were formally "made available to the United Nations Unified Command for the restoration of peace in Korea".[18]

Naval authorities recognised in the hasty planning of the Korean deployment that the geography and oceanography of Korea, a peninsula, presented unusual difficulties as well as opportunities for unconventional naval operations. The RCN deployments were prepared to carry out a great variety of tasks, including carrier escort, blockade/interdiction operations, Naval Gunfire Support (NGS), and the provision of medical assistance and humanitarian aid to the indigenous populations. However, the question of replenishment was only settled long after sailing. The majority of supplies were obtainable, for cash, through the USN supply train but, available only through the RN, "ammunition for the main armament was a more difficult problem".[19] This was an area of particular concern since, although the ships were under the UN Supreme

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[16] Department of External Affairs, 1950, p. 295.
[17] Edward C. Meyers, Thunder in the Morning Calm: The Royal Canadian Navy in Korea 1950-1955 (St. Catharines, Ontario: Vanwell Publishing Limited, 1992), p. 33.
[18] Department of External Affairs, 1950, p. 343.
[19] Thorgrimsson, 1965, p. 135.

Commander's operational control, all other matters remained an RCN responsibility. During the initial months of the Korean deployment, ammunition supplies were in such short supply that rationing was imposed. This and other replenishment related difficulties, showed that the RCN of 1950 had a critical deficit in its ability to plan along logistic lines.

The Task Group entered the Korean theatre of Operations on 30 July 1950 and HMCS Athabaskan was tasked with escort duties less than twenty-four hours later.[20] The remainder were later tasked with patrol and miscellaneous escort duties to start. The patrols and escorts remained relatively routine during the first weeks; however, contact between the RCN and North Korean forces was inevitable. The first rounds fired "in anger" by the RCN, since the conclusion of the Second World War, were fired on August 15th by HMCS Cayuga on the port facilities at Yosu; "the first of 130,000 rounds hurled at the enemy ashore by Canadian ships over the next three years".[21]

One of the Korean War's most significant single naval operations was undoubtedly the evacuation of Chinnampo, led by the RCN. The entry of the Chinese forces into the conflict in November 1950 heralded a series of UN setbacks, including the threatened loss of Chinnampo, the port for Pyongyang; necessitating evacuation of the port. While awaiting further orders regarding the evacuation, the Task Group Commanding Officer, Captain Brock, received an emergency message from the USS Foss, alongside Chinnampo: "WE ARE UNCOVERED. TAKE NECESSARY ACTION IMMEDIATELY".[22] On the night of December 4th, Captain Brock led his task group, during darkness, up the

[20] Ministry of National Defense, The Republic of Korea, The History of the United Nations Forces in the Korean War, (1965), p. 379.
[21] Commander Tony German, The Sea Is At Our Gates: The History of the Canadian Navy (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Inc., 1990), p. 218.
[22] Thorgrimsson, 1965, p. 31.

Daido-ko estuary to evacuate UN personnel and destroy the port facilities and unrecoverable supplies. Although it was an extremely difficult and hazardous passage with mines as well as the natural obstacles of mudflats and sandbars, "waiting until morning could very well [have meant] that the destroyers would be too late.[23] Although the reports of an enemy breakthrough that precipitated this action proved false, a result of the badly confused situation ashore, the action remained "a fine feat of seamanship on the part of all concerned, and its bold execution was worthy of the finest traditions of the Naval Service.[24] Completing the operation with a bombardment that "lasted only one hour and fifteen minutes", the task group completely destroyed the port facilities, including the majority of the valuable supplies; finally withdrawing in escort of a number of South Korean minesweepers.[25]

Further RCN operations included the infamous "trainbusting" runs against enemy supply trains. The interdiction of these supply runs was considered crucial to the course of the war. While trainbusting was initially an American "game", the RCN entered into the spirit of it wholeheartedly and "by the end of hostilities had destroyed proportionately far and away more trains than had the ships of any other nation".[26] Although, the rail lines were always rapidly repaired, the loss of valuable supplies had its effect on the communist offensive. These interdiction missions were of such import that they "became the highlight of the last two years of the war for the navy", a task it accomplished with great proficiency.[27]

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[23] German, 1990, p. 221.
[24] German, 1990, p. 222.
[25] Meyers, 1992, p. 102.
[26] Thorgrimsson, 1965, p. 111.
[27] Marc Milner, Canada's Navy: The First Century (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), p. 203.

The fighting officially ended with the declared armistice on 27 July 1953, but the RCN remained active. Patrol followed patrol until, in September 1954, HMCS Sioux was the last RCN unit - the last Canadian unit - to return home. Although, in 1951 and 1953 proposals were made to employ HMCS Magnificent, the RCN's (RN loaned) carrier, in Korea, this was rejected on grounds that such employment "might have been interpreted … as a failure to meet Canada's NATO commitments".[28] The RCN commitment to Korea involved eight of the eleven ships in commission, a total equivalence of 4,269 men (including the men who served in multiple tours), and the ships themselves served a total of fifteen single tours; impressive statistics when considered against the 1950 strength of the RCN.[29] The official South Korean history of the war credits the RCN with making a disproportionately large naval contribution, "considering the scale of the United Nations naval forces".[30]

As the government of Canada was deciding how to respond to the American request for assistance placed before the UN, the new NATO military commitments were also becoming established. NATO, while putatively much more than a simple military alliance, was primarily intended to counter the spread of communism and Soviet influence through the creation of "an integrated military force".[31] Indeed, Pearson described NATO as "the best structure for collective defence in present conditions".[32] Although the forcible westward spread of communist influence had been contained,

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[28] Stuart Soward, "Canadian Naval Aviation", in Boutilier, James A., ed., The RCN in Retrospect, 1910-1985 (Vancouver: The University of British Columbia Press, 1982), p. 276.
[29] Meyers, 1992.
[30] The Republic of Korea, 1965, p. 439
[31] Dean Oliver, "Canada and NATO", Dispatches (9) [On Line Serial] (http://www.warmuseum.ca/disp/dis009_e.html).

[32] L.B. Pearson, Canada's Role as a Middle Power, Transcript of Prime Minister's Address to the Third Banff Conference on World Development, in Gordon, J. King, Canada's Role as a Middle Power (Papers given at the Third Banff Conference on World Development August 1965 (Toronto: The Canadian Institute of International Affairs, 1966), p. 199.

NATO remained a military alliance, "dominated by its most powerful members, Great Britain, France, and, above all, by the United States.[33] With the invasion of South Korea, a new variable was thrown into the equation. Opinion among diplomats and military leaders was that the Korean adventure was only a prelude to a general war in Europe, making Korea a Soviet-instigated distraction from the critical objectives in Western Europe. This left the government committing the nation to a course of action "which its defence establishment regarded as strategically unwise, given the current level of Canadian military capabilities".[34] In a speech on August 7th the Prime Minister enumerated several new points with respect to Canadian policy on international security. Most prominently these included: "in what way could we increase our ability to participate in other common efforts, either under the United Nations Charter or the North Atlantic Treaty", the announcement that recruiting for all three services was being increased; and "at the same time, we are stepping up our production program for naval vessels, armament, ammunition, radar, and other types of [naval] equipment" [35]

Under the NATO agreement, Canada was obligated to provide troops, aircraft, and naval assets in defence of the alliance in general; Western Europe in particular. Although the commitment of military resources to NATO could be viewed as token amounts, their presence can be perceived as a political commitment rather than merely a military one.[36] This commitment required the RCN to concentrate its assets in the Atlantic for Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW), a role previously familiar to the RCN (the

[33] Creighton, 1976, p. 237.
[34] Stairs, 1974, p. 81.
[35] Department of External Affairs, 1950, p. 324.

[36] James Eayrs, "Military Policy and Middle Power: The Canadian Experience" in Gordon, J. King, Canada's Role as a Middle Power (Papers given at the Third Annual Banff Conference on World Development August 1965 (Toronto: The Canadian Institute of International Affairs, 1966), pp. 67-85.

"Sheepdog Navy"). The NATO strategies "shape[d] the RCN in the Cold War".[37] In keeping with this, the RCN maintained an ASW dedicated carrier (HMCS Magnificent) and its screening destroyers in Halifax, Nova Scotia while retaining a token force of destroyers in Esquimalt, British Columbia. The avowed desire of the RCN was to create a balanced, multi-purpose fleet, which would operate in "co-operation with the United States Navy" [USN],[38] while retaining its traditional link to the Royal Navy (RN). It must be noted that "Canadian Naval policy and experience meshed into NATO strategy (based heavily on US policies) with an ease not present in other areas of defence activity".[39] This may be a reflection of the fact that the RCN's leadership saw NATO as the navy's salvation, providing a sound strategic objective and raison d' etre. It can also be argued that the combined NATO and Korean commitments were a "catalyst for building up the fleet beyond those allowed by the prevailing political caution".[40] Additionally, "from an economic perspective, ... the amounts provided for naval expenditures [remained] a cost effective means of achieving Canada's defence objectives" and fulfilling both the NATO and Korean commitments.[41]

The Atlantic fleet of 1950, however, was not capable of meeting all the requirements of NATO; necessitating plans to deploy three Pacific fleet destroyers to the North Atlantic and Western Europe on a "training" cruise. (These were the same three destroyers tasked to Korea.) In the words of Brooke Claxton, the Minister of

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[37] Joel Sokolsky, "Canada and the Cold War at Sea, 1945-68", in Douglas, W.A.B., ed., The RCN in Retrospect, 1910-1968 (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1988), p. 211.
[38] Sokolsky, 1988, p. 211.
[39] Sokolsky, 1988, p. 213.
[40] Commander Peter Haydon, "Canada's Naval Commitment to the Korean War: Prudent Employment of Opportunism?", in Canada's Pacific Naval Presence: Purposeful or Peripheral (Halifax, 1999), p. 111.
[41] Dan W. Middlemiss, "Economic Considerations in the Development of the Canadian Navy Since 1945", in Douglas, W.A.B., ed., The RCN in Retrospect, 1910-1968 (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1988), p. 260.

National Defence, to Parliament on 26 June 1950, it was intended to be a "demonstration of the capability of the ships and men [of the RCN] to operate" under wartime conditions.[42] However, the commitment to NATO, and later to Korea, brought the state of naval preparedness greater attention. By late 1950, the St. Laurent government had increased the navy's strength to 13,000 with further initiatives to follow. In January 1951, the RCN's requirements increased greatly to include 14 new ASW escorts, 14 minesweepers, and host of smaller vessels. The manpower ceiling, both regular and reserves, had likewise risen; by 1954 the target was over 20,000 men and one hundred ships; between Korea and NATO, "the climate was right and a good deal was already under way".[43] Determined to retain some independence from NATO (US) control, the RCN took on the demanding role of ASW. This role called for a new class of ASW warship and the newest escorts, dubbed the "Cadillac's", the St. Laurent class, came under construction; with the first being laid down in 1950. Even more telling, 23 April 1952, Cabinet authorised the purchase of the uncompleted HMS Powerful; destined to become HMCS Bonaventure, Canada's only wholly owned aircraft carrier[44]; continuing the honeymoon with aircraft carrier force projection.

As with all military matters, politics and economics were inextricably intertwined. Collective defence had become the latest buzzword in politics. Events in Europe, specifically in a divided and partially rearmed Germany, raised fears that Korea was only one aspect of a large-scale plan; "foreplay in a clever global strategy".[45] Before June 1950, the Canadian government had seen collective security as an intent that

[42] Haydon, 1999, p. 121.
[43] German, 1990, p. 233.
[44] Milner, 1999.
[45] Desmond Morton, A Military History of Canada (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1990), p. 236.

could be honoured with only token commitments to NATO and North American defence. In his speech of September 7th, Mr. Pearson stated, "The alarm rung in Korea has increased the urgency of this German problem. It has also led to an intensification of efforts among countries associated under the North Atlantic Treaty to strengthen their collective defence".[46]

Fears of communist inspired global war prompted a rearmament program throughout the Western nations. The NATO build-up was, additionally, precipitated as a result of the Korean war, as the "North Atlantic countries believed that North Korea would not have attacked South Korea without at least the blessing of the Soviet Union".[47] The logical conclusion was that this demonstrated a willingness on the part of the Soviet Union to risk general war in pursuit of its political aims. In November 1950, these fears caused the government to announce an Accelerated Defence Program (ADP). Although the navy's share was modest by comparison, it did eventually reach $340 million.[48] As part of the ADP effort, C.D. Howe was brought back to oversee the new economic requirements of the Cold War and Korea. "Fixed not only on the immediate needs of the Korean War, but on the long-term and the far more serious necessities of the Cold War", he drafted the 1951 Defence Production Bill to meet all eventualities.[49] Although this bill amounted to giving Howe virtual control of the economy, it passed into law easily, giving the government the power to begin the necessary RCN expansion. As a by-product of the rearmament and military expansion, through increased trade among NATO members, development of high tech industrial

[46] Department of External Affairs, 1950, p. 345.
[47] Escott Reid, "Canada and the Creation of the North Atlantic Alliance 1948-1949", in Granatstein, J.L., ed., Canadian Foreign Policy: Historical Reading (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman Ltd., 1993), p. 219.
[48] Milner, 1999.

capacity, and domestic purchases of supplies and equipment, a new economic boom came into being, the 1949-50 recession was banished, and an era of renewed prosperity inaugurated.[50] In the period from 1950 through 1953, inclusive, Canadian defence expenditures increased from $20 billion to $64 billion.[51]

RCN involvement in the Korean "police action" came about through the political requirements of western collective security and in direct support of the United Nations Charter. This was also influenced by the domestic political concerns and the prevailing anti-Communist sentiment, to the point of full support being provided to the government by the opposition parties in Parliament. An additional influence, and one of the major factors in shaping the Canadian response, was the earnest desire to temper the American reaction and maintain the international legalities under the Charter; as opposed to making Korea an exclusively American controlled operation.

In 1950, the post World War Two RCN was under-funded and consequently ill manned and equipped to undertake a foreign, war-footing, operation. Even so, the RCN prepared and deployed three destroyers to the Korean theatre of operations for duty with the UN. Over the next 3 years of battle, and for a total of 4 calendar years, the RCN maintained ships on station as well as honouring the NATO commitments despite economic handicaps. The destroyers served with distinction under the UN and successfully carried out many difficult operations to the credit of Canada.

Additionally, the new priorities of NATO and collective security ushered in a fresh period of prosperity for the RCN. Rearmament and rebuilding meant new, state-of-the-art, ships and a greater pool of manpower as well as new equipment. Economically,

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[49] Creighton, 1976, p. 223.
[50] Morton, 1990.

this trend had benefits for the country and the short 1949-50 depression was dispelled. The rearmament process also provided a number of technological spin-offs in Canadian industry as shipyards and factories tooled-up to meet the “high tech” needs of the cold war.

The use of naval forces to project national aims has a long tradition in international politics, due to its utility and effectiveness. While the Korean War was primarily a land war, there was a naval aspect to it, a product of geography and location. Naval patrols carried out a vast array of duties, including interdiction of hostile force re-supply by sea, NGS for the land forces, and, as required, carried out evacuations for the UN forces. In addition, according to Pearson, the RCN had the privilege of participating in a heretofore unique and dramatic achievement: “It meant for the first time … the defeat of aggression by the armed conscience of the world”.[52] As a result of the successes of the RCN in Korea and the new NATO commitments, the RCN grew at an unprecedented rate for what was nominally peacetime.

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[51] Reid, 1993, pp. 195-222.
[52] Historical Section, 1956, p. 100.

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