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AIRPower in Formation: RCAF Commander brings his message to Halifax
by Ryan Melanson, Trident Staff

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When LGen Michael Hood thinks about his most important duties as Commander of the Royal Canadian Air Force, it isn't current fighting power or operational capabilities he worries about.

"I don't lose sleep over the tactical ability of any of our constituent components. They're world class," LGen Hood said during a recent visit to Halifax.

"My most important job is building the air force of 2030, because that has to be done now."

LGen Hood was a distinguished speaker to a monthly meeting of the Royal United Services Institute of Nova Scotia on January 13, during a trip to the region that also brought him to Dalhousie University and the University of New Brunswick, along with visits to 12 Wing Shearwater and 14 Wing Greenwood. The speech was well attended by RUSI(NS) members, including His Honour Brigadier-General The Honourable J.J. Grant, CMM, ONS, CD (Ret'd), along with others from the local RCAF community and guests.



LGen Michael Hood, Commander of the RCAF, is greeted by the Honourable BGen (Ret'd) J.J. Grant, Lieutenant Government of Nova Scotia, during a RUSI(NS) event at Royal Artillery Park. photo: Captain Lisa Evong, National Defence Public Affairs Office Atlantic

After assuming his role in July of 2015, LGen Hood said he wants to direct his energy toward future challenges, and create a crop of officers and NCMs who can help the force conceive of what's

required to meet those challenges. Specifically, he mentioned building intellectual capacity through air power theory and war studies, creating a culture where opinion and debate is welcomed from all ranks, and ensuring that all components of the RCAF are working together as a unified piece, flying in formation.

Combining that vision of a unified force with the existing official RCAF vision: an Agile and Integrated air force with the Reach and Power (AIRPower) essential to CAF operations, LGen Hood said the motto “AIRPower - In Formation” encapsulates his priorities as the RCAF moves forward.

He also spoke of acquisitions in looking toward the future, touching on the eventual replacement of the CF-188s, investments in the CP-140 fleet, and the new fleet of fixed wing SAR aircrafts, for which the bidding process has recently begun.

Discussions inevitably turned toward the Cyclone helicopters and the continuing transition, and while LGen Hood admitted some of the complexities of the development process weren't foreseen back in 2004, he commended local leadership for managing the transition away from the Sea King while keeping up a key operational element within the RCAF.

“And in the Sea King's place, we will have a world-class capability in the Cyclone. But in the meantime, that transition is going to continue to be difficult and there is work ahead,” he said.

LGen Hood also spoke of current and recent RCAF operations during what he described as an extremely busy period, with the former government taking advantage of the force for its operational capabilities and as a foreign policy tool.

“The speed with which we are able to deploy and get into theatres with assets is impressive, and important when international narratives and commitments are at play,” he said.

In terms of the mission to stop and blunt the advance of ISIS in the Levant region, he described the RCAF role in Operation IMPACT as a combination of CF-188 air strikes, air to air refueling capability with the CC-150 Polaris, and overland intelligence surveillance from the CP-140 Aurora.

“Our contribution, while modest, is an exceptionally effective one,” LGen Hood said, adding his confidence the RCAF role will be carried out effectively regardless of how that contribution may be reshaped in the future.

He also commended the personnel who worked over the holidays in Turkey and Jordan in support of Operation PROVISION, with the air mobility fleet also being utilized early in the process.

In speaking on what RUSI(NS) can do to help the RCAF get its message out to the wider military community and the public, LGen Hood remarked that having the diverse crowd of defence and security practitioners in attendance hear his speech was a benefit in its own right.

“Part of the reason I'm here in Halifax is because I need to get the air power story out more broadly,” he said.

He told the crowd that both RCN shipbuilding and RCAF procurements need to be priorities, and encouraged members to contribute by offering that balanced narrative in the region.

RUSI(NS), a defence association at CFB Halifax, serves as a discussion and education forum on Canadian defence and security issues, with membership open to anyone interested. More information is available at RUSI.ca

Ryan Melanson is a reporter of The Trident. The Royal United Services Institute of Nova Scotia is pleased to have The Trident report on the Institute's Distinguished Speaker events. This work is the sole opinion of the author and does not necessarily represent the views of the Canadian Department of National Defence, the Canadian Armed Forces, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police or the Royal United Services Institute of Nova Scotia. The author may be contacted by email at: reporter@tridentnews.ca or RUSINovaScotia@gmail.com.

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