

A New National Security Strategy

By William J. Cox

Overview

In my preceding article featured in the Institute, *Strategic Implications of Illegal Immigration*, I stated that “The Bahamas must develop a strategy to consistently and persistently patrol its entire territory and frontiers to deter illegal immigration. The sheer magnitude of the problem indicates that it won’t stop, and that it will most likely continue to grow. The government must develop a new approach to this situation.” This paper addresses that recommendation.

Strategically, the rational national security stance for The Bahamas is defensive: The Bahamas harbors no design or historical imperative that would drive its territorial expansion. The Bahamas does, however, have an intrinsic need to protect and defend its territory and those resources that lie within.

This protection requirement includes the nation’s fisheries, mineral and other natural resources, as well as the nation’s great beauty, which has a tangible value as one of the world’s finest tourist destinations. National security also involves safety. The Bahamas has sovereign legal requirements to protect property – both public and private; to defend the safety of its citizens and visitors; and, to enforce the laws of the land. Key safety requirements include the ability to perform search and rescue (SAR), respond to significant disasters (these could include a major hotel calamity, or a cruise ship fire or sinking); and, to respond to natural disasters – primarily hurricanes.

Defensive requirements include the ability to prevent illegal incursion into Bahamian territory, and the illegal activities that attend such incursions (illegal immigration, fishing, smuggling, and the illegal use – or appropriation – of Bahamian land.

Structuring an Appropriate Military Capability

To protect and defend The Bahamas, the nation requires suitable military capabilities that allow the projection of appropriate presence, and if required – force, throughout the territory of the nation. As an archipelago, the projection of a national sovereign presence is expensive, as the nation’s lands are compartmented into numerous islands, often separated by relatively significant expanses of water. This also means that the movement and massing of military capabilities inherently involves marine or air assets; and, both are expensive to acquire, maintain, and operate.

Fortunately, the defensive nature of The Bahamas’ strategic situation allows it to utilize a rational, and affordable, mix of military capabilities. Basic requirements, taken from the previous section, include the ability to perform the following functions (listed in priority; priority being a function of both likelihood and of value to the nation):

Protection

Search & Rescue

Sovereign Presence and Enforcement

Fire Fighting and Marine Salvage

Disaster Response

Defense

Interdiction of Vessels and Aircraft
Deterring Illegal Activities in Bahamian Territory
Use of Force
Prevention of Invasion

SAR is the most significant protection activity because the ability to ensure safety and respond to vessel and aircraft emergencies or disappearances: this is of significant value to the nation's tourist industry. This also further enhances The Bahamas' reputation as a safe and desirable destination for boaters, and for tourism in general. Genuine thought has to be given to preparing for a major emergency at a large hotel, or at sea – especially challenging would be a crisis involving a large passenger cruise ship. Prevention of loss of life, and a quick response, is absolutely critical to preserving the appeal – and thus, value – of these industries as significant contributors to the national economy. A major disaster that results in an ineffective response by government would create potentially huge losses to the nation's major income-earning industry, one that also employs a significant percentage of the Bahamian population. Such a disaster could be one that the nation never recovers from; so, preparing for such an eventuality should be a major objective of national security planning.

The major requirement embedded in defense activities involves sovereign presence: the ability to **know** what is going on, when and where, throughout Bahamian Territory. This is the function of a national reconnaissance and surveillance (i.e., a patrolling) capability that must be scaled to fit The Bahamas' financial and human resources. Reconnaissance involves patrolling the territory in a manner that allows for the rapid recognition of problems and events. Surveillance involves the ability to maintain both brief and long-term, effective, observation of a problem or event in a manner that allows local control while an appropriate national response is formulated and applied. Effective reconnaissance and surveillance must, therefore, be followed by an ability to respond to, and then, control the problem or event in a manner that ensures a successful outcome for the government.

Knowing by Patrolling → Response that Controls → to Provide a Winning Resolution

So, The Bahamas needs a patrol capability that provides mobility. Mobility ensures presence, and allows the ability to quickly marshal forces as needed that can then provide an effective military response sufficient to ensure a favorable outcome.

A Naval Capability

For an archipelago nation, the most rational patrol assets involve boats and airplanes. As previously pointed out, both are expensive to buy, operate, and maintain. This is especially true given the relatively modest national budget of The Bahamas. I believe that the most effective solution lies in a formula that balances presence with cost and personnel. I suggest that a Bahamian solution for the problem involves building a light force that utilizes local resources wherever possible. Specifically, this means creating military equipment that can be locally manufactured and therefore, locally maintained.

For a naval capability, this would involve using small fiberglass patrol hulls that could be manufactured in a Royal Bahamas Naval Dockyard. A good, proven design could be licensed from proven builders such as Spain's Rodman. This would create a local naval

construction capability that could also, in parallel, lead to a local cruiser-yacht construction and repair yard. Boats would have a five-man crew including a commander, chief engineer, assisting engineer/asst. gunner, helmsman-quartermaster, and boatswain/gunner. A 40-50 foot hull with water-jet propulsion should be seaworthy enough to handle blue water, fast enough for rescue or interdiction missions, and provide a shallow draft (4 ft or less) that would allow operations upon and across the banks.

Patrol boats would be formed into five-unit squadrons. Patrols would involve three-days out, plus one preparatory day prior to patrol and one maintenance/refit day post patrol (five days on, and three days off). This schedule would allow individual boat deployments to advance one day each succeeding week, permitting a rolling presence of multiple units underway within a patrol area, with at least two boats on patrol during any given day (and all five boats on others). Including shore staff for maintenance, supply, base security and operations, such a squadron would have 50 personnel. Eight such squadrons could be created. These would be located in Matthew Town, Duncan Town, the Acklins, Cat Island, South Andros, the Berry Islands, Abaco, and in Freeport. The Freeport unit could also make period deployments to Cay Sal Bank, to conduct sovereignty presence patrols.

The Navy's current corvette-class ships are especially needed for blue water capability into the Atlantic, for long-term patrols or picket duty in the Old Bahamas Channel, and for SAR response involving larger ships - especially cruise ships. The existing Nassau-class vessels are of sufficient size to take on large numbers of survivors, and to serve as an at-sea command and control platform for marine disasters. The ships' fire-fighting capabilities should be enhanced to perform this duty. The addition of an ATF-class seagoing tug to the fleet may be considered; one especially configured for fire-fighting, and for at-sea salvage and towing of large, disabled ships. These ships are critical given that The Bahamas sovereign responsibilities extend well into the Atlantic.

An Air Capability

In the interest of performing daily national reconnaissance in a manner that ensures rapid identification of problems and events, an effective maritime patrol capability must include an air component. I would suggest that a high-wing, float-equipped aircraft with a good loitering ability that affords the crew excellent visibility. This performance could be obtained with a Cessna-type 182-class airplane. Three-airplane flights would be needed, with two aircraft flying on any given day. Key patrol bases would be in Matthew Town, Duncan Town, and Mars Bay, giving overlapping patrol coverage to the nation's south and southwest frontier: this is the primary entry route for illegal immigration, fishing activity, and smuggling. For SAR and Atlantic surveillance, flights could also be stationed on San Salvador, Eleuthera, and in the Abacos.

For interdiction of smuggling aircraft, and for close air support, The Bahamas could look at a proven aircraft, such as the Embraer Tucano. Two three-plane intercept flights could be established, one each at Matthew Town and Mars Bay, to provide a rapid interdiction capability that covers the most likely entry routes into national airspace, and to support interdiction of go-fast boats.

For disaster response, movement of personnel and supplies, and repatriation of illegal immigrants, the air component could also include several twin-engine cargo aircraft.

A Ground Capability

The Bahamas territory includes at least seven hundred islands: most are remote and infrequently visited. Un-patrolled territory such as this provides fertile ground for establishment and operation of illegal fishing base camps, smuggling operations and caches, and for squatting and illegal appropriation of territory. Such operations are often well-concealed and difficult to find. The only solution to this is an ability to conduct constant, routine patrols that provide a sovereign presence, create an ability to capture and apprehend illegal aliens and criminal activities, and to provide a visible manifestation of sovereign control throughout The Bahamas.

A marine infantry force modeled on the Royal Marines would be an ideal model. Units would be scaled to fit the nation's resources, and would be ideally equipped for long-range, long-period, patrolling. Basic infantry units would be built around a 5-man squad, with three squads in a platoon. Platoons would be grouped into 50-man companies that would include a company commander, deputy commander, senior NCO, administration specialist, and supply specialist. Three companies would be supported at a base-level by a 180-man squadron, including a 30-man support company. This allows the battalion to deploy one company in the field, have one company in training in a pre-deployment status, and the third company in a post-deployment stand-down status. Deploying companies would field patrols at both squad and platoon levels. Patrolling could include insertion by patrol boat, as an integrated mobility capability using seagoing kayaks, or by truck on the larger islands. To be effective, units must be infantry, and remain primarily "in the bush" and on foot patrol. This provides stealth and ensures that out-of-the-way, off-road areas get inspected.

Three squadrons – two in the southern islands, and one in the central Bahamas, would be sufficient for ensuring that the country's more remote regions are afforded a routine presence. An elite, SBS-style, squadron could also be formed for high-risk or high-value operations involving raids, terrorists, or apprehension of heavily arms gangs. Such a squadron could have ten teams, each with ten personnel, supported by a fifty-man headquarters and training unit.

A National Defense Structure

So, the above recommendations yield the following organization:

| | | |
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| National Defense Staff Appr 100 Personnel | Command & Control / Operations Integrated National Communications Audit and Contracting Joint and External Training Programs | |
| Naval Appr. Personnel: 700 | Eight Squadrons (5 PBs each) 2 Corvettes Sea Going Tug | 40 patrol boats 2 1 |
| Air Appr. Personnel: 200 | Six Patrol Flights (3 planes each) Two Intercept Flights (3 ea.) Cargo Aircraft for national mobility | 18 light aircraft 6 Tucanos 2 utility aircraft |

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|----------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Ground | 3 Infantry Squadrons (180 men each) |
| Appr. Personnel: 800 | 1 SBS Squadron (150 men) |
| | Training, Supply, and Ordnance Units |

This structure would yield a thorough presence throughout Bahamian territory sufficient to deter most illegal activities. The law of certainty would prevail in that law breakers would realize that their likelihood of detection, apprehension, and punishment is high; therefore, there is too much risk involved in illegally entering or operating in The Bahamas.

There are other benefits as well. A military presence is required primarily in the Family Islands, and even more specifically, in the southern half of the archipelago. This fortunately moves people, money, and investment into exactly the right part of the national territory that would well benefit from it. It also promotes a better and comforting SAR capability, and thus encourages tourism – especially recreational cruising – into and throughout the southern Bahamas.

If aircraft kits are assembled – and boats are constructed – in The Bahamas, this promotes new industrial activity that has direct commercial applications and spin-offs.

Making it all Work

To man an increased military, the government should consider promoting the benefits of national service for all young men and women after graduation from high school. Most successful countries have a national service program, and it is an ideal forum for building patriotism and a vested interest in one's country. National service also prevents the creation of a large, standing force, which would be unaffordable for The Bahamas. National service also provides an effective screening tool for finding suitable career candidates for military service. This process helps create a leadership where all start out with the same introductory service experience: officers who know what it is like to be the most junior personnel. In the US military, officers with prior-enlisted military service usually make exemplary leaders who have exceptional compassion and empathy for the experience of entry-level service.

A national service program could also include non military dimensions, such as the creation of a national engineering corps. The Royal Bahamian Engineers could take on public-good projects such as construction or remediation of remote buildings, facilities, roads, and ports; surveying projects; and new base construction. The corps could have disaster response and reconstruction as a key responsibility. Such experience would create knowledgeable employees ideal for the nation's growing construction industry.

Other national corps could include an ambulance service that trains emergency medical technicians (EMTs), and duty with the RBPF and other law enforcement agencies. To be effective, such national service should last for at least eighteen months; and ideally, for two years. Payment during national service would involve a small stipend (maybe \$200/month), but would include educational vouchers for COB-bound veterans, or continuation of the stipend for two years while veterans enter the work force and begin their adult lives.

This paper promotes the idea of national sovereignty through the creation of a realistic sovereign presence throughout the territory of The Bahamas. Much of this capability

can be created right in The Bahamas, promoting further growth and diversification of the national economy. An expanded military would also serve to expose more Nassuvians to the Family Islands, and may encourage more growth of – by movement to – these under-populated regions. National service would support an expanded military, give Bahamians a greater sense of national pride, and serve to create basic professional and technical skills that would immediately benefit the greater society.

Switzerland is a small, neutral country surrounded by larger, and often more aggressive, neighbors. The Swiss have maintained their territorial integrity and national sovereignty through the mechanism of national service: to a man, the Swiss have stood ready to defend their territory. Instead of mountains, the Bahamas has a useful frontier barrier provided by the ocean. And like the Swiss, the Bahamians – to a person – must stand ready to defend their home. The price of national service is far-outweighed by the benefits that will accrue to both the country and individual.