

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Green is the New Black: The Royal Canadian Mounted Police and Militarisation of Policing in Canada

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The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) is an iconic law enforcement brand. Canada's federal police force has roots in a colonial paramilitary tradition, taming a wild frontier and opening vast parts of the country to settlement. Its professional development since that time has broadened to include the fields of national security, public order crimes, and contract policing in certain provinces and municipalities. In response to the growing militarisation of policing in North America and police actions against indigenous peoples and protesters in Canada, it is recognised that the RCMP protects the political, economic, and bureaucratic nation state interests of government. The RCMP has a distinct identity and roles, matched by dedicated resources and expectations. Indications of militarisation may be discernible in upgraded weaponry, organisation and operational planning, specialised tactical units, and participation in external peace support operations. Performance of federal policing functions necessitates capable and suitably equipped police adapted to current and emerging security and criminal challenges. The RCMP still predominantly retains a law enforcement rather than a military character, thus occupying a space in Canada where the established military fears to tread.

Keywords: Royal Canadian Mounted Police; militarisation; Emergency Response Team; riot control; international peacekeeping

Introduction

In the early morning hours of 6 February 2020, a column of armoured tactical police vehicles and flatbed trucks belonging to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) advanced into the unceded traditional territory of the Wet'suwet'en First Nation in northern British Columbia (Palmater, 2019) to enforce a court injunction against indigenous people protesting the construction of a natural gas pipeline without their consent (Supreme Court of British Columbia, 2019). The police, described by one hereditary chief as an invading army, were fully armed and equipped with tactical gear. Over the next week, the RCMP cleared and dismantled winter encampments and obstructions along a sixty-kilometre long logging road and made arrests even though the indigenous protestors were peaceful, unarmed, and offered no resistance to the overwhelming show of force by the state. An exclusion zone imposed by the police denied the indigenous people access to and use of their own land, despite longstanding grievances about unwanted resource development (Toledano, 2019; Canning, 2018). Police helicopters and aircraft equipped with sensors and cameras flew overhead, and dog service teams joined RCMP patrols. The police operation, ostensibly on behalf of the provincial court and government, seriously undermined the federal government's attempts at reconciliation with indigenous peoples and triggered charges of settler colonialism and coercive application of the law with militarised police (Dafnos, 2013). Indigenous peoples across Canada responded with protests in the streets of major Canadian cities and blockades of critical transportation important to national and regional economies, such as ports and railways, again in a peaceful manner (Bland, 2014). They demanded the stand-down and withdrawal of the RCMP occupying unceded Wet'suwet'en territory.

Such controversial police actions highlight the RCMP's operational capabilities and have added to the debate over the militarisation of policing in Canada. Criminologists Walby and Roziere (2018) point to the prevalence of well-armed tactical units within provincial and municipal police forces and the increasing

propensity to use them as part of routine police work, based on careful empirical research. In Canadian cities like Ottawa, Winnipeg, Vancouver, and Halifax, police forces have been acquiring specialised equipment and, proportionately, the frequency of usage is higher than in many parts of the United States, where militarisation of the police has been a concern since police responses during the 2014 demonstrations in Ferguson, Missouri and renewed again in 2020 with the large-scale protests against the killing of George Floyd during a police take-down in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Kraska (2007) and Balko (2014) argue that police in the United States increasingly look and act like the military in interactions with populaces during civic unrest or confrontation and also in daily law enforcement at local levels (Kraska & Kappeler, 1997). Like Canada, the proliferation and growth of special weapons and tactics (SWAT) teams reinforce the view that American police forces are becoming more like the military (Fisher, 2010; Cyr, Ricciardeli & Spencer, 2020). In the wake of 'wars' against drugs and terrorism, presidential executive orders put aside restrictions on the transfer of surplus military equipment and weapons in significant quantities to domestic law enforcement agencies (Pereira, 2015; Delehanty, Mewhirter & Welch, 2017). Police regularly deploy with armoured vehicles, heavier armament and personal protection, and military pattern camouflage dress (Klein, 2019). Unlike Canada and Mexico, the United States has no uniformed federal police force above state and municipal levels, except for the investigative capacity of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). The Mexican *Policía Federal* is a result of a merger of federal police, intelligence, and military police units to counter violent drug cartels, including creation in 2014 of a *gendarmerie* division armed with heavy weaponry and keeping military discipline and police transferred into a new National Guard (Ellis, 2018). Mexico's defence forces are deployed domestically to ensure internal security and work closely with police forces to maintain peace and order in relation to criminal and insurgent elements within society and to control large influxes of migrants streaming in from Central and South America. Compared to the United States and Mexico, the RCMP fulfils a similar function coming from a paramilitary tradition as a constabulary in Canada, and any argument about militarisation must be seen through what the organisation has been, what it has become, and where it might be going (Shantz, 2016).

The constabulary inhabits a middle ground that combines military and police characteristics, defined rather vaguely as paramilitary (Rantatalo, 2012), but it is neither in their truest forms (Beede, 2008). In most western democratic states, the demarcation between police and military rests on enduring constitutional, legal, organisational, and cultural understandings within society and government (Heiduk, 2014). Both groups are uniformed, armed, and prepared to use violence on behalf of the state for preservation of peace and order. Militaries are typically deployed externally or as defence against military invasion and aggression (Weiss, 2011). Canada's military contributes to the continental defence with the United States and conducts discretionary external operations at the behest of the government in coalition, alliance, and collective security contexts. Given the limited formalised roles for the military inside the country, the Canadian government relies on the RCMP as a primary law enforcement agency to perform clearly delineated roles in regard to border integrity, drug enforcement, internal security, terrorism, and countering organised criminal activities of a transnational and domestic flavour (Kirley, 2012). The RCMP today is a modern police force attuned to the latest developments in community and intelligence led policing across federal, provincial, and municipal levels as well as in international contexts (Deukmedjian & de Lint, 2007).

In numbers, Canada's federal police force at slightly above 30,000 personnel (19,000 uniformed) is larger than the navy, air force, and special operations forces individually and roughly two thirds the size of the Canadian army's regular forces (23,000) and reserves (17,000 primary and 5,000 Canadian Rangers). Approximately thirty percent of all police in Canada belong under the RCMP. In terms of capabilities and outlook, the police force represents another armed service outside the military in the Canadian context (Lepage, 1996). The RCMP retains a distinct institutional culture tied to a Canadian national identity and liberal ideals of peace, order, and good government. It is deployed geographically in all regions of Canada and its members fulfil specific tasks and roles assigned to the police force by federal and provincial governments. The organisation is hierarchical with a clear chain of command and leadership. Planning and conduct of operations follow policing and emergency management models of critical incident response, as opposed to military contingency. Relations with the Canadian Armed Forces occur through liaison and requests for assistance through formal structures and channels. These requests may involve capabilities that the RCMP does not possess or transfer and loan of equipment from the military on a temporary or permanent basis. The RCMP has procured armoured vehicles, helicopters, military-grade weapons, body armour and personal protection as well as uniforms of different colours. Formed tactical units train and prepare for high risk and public order policing situations (Jefferson, 1990). Use of emergency response teams and tactical troops against indigenous and other persons protesting legal injunctions, government policies,

and economic development put the military-like capabilities of the RCMP at the forefront (Williams, Rossi, Jacobson, & Pritchard, 2017; Monaghan & Walby, 2017). Alongside Canadian and foreign militaries, individual RCMP members also have international experience with peace support and stability operations outside Canada through programmes to bolster police and security capacity in developing countries (Gould, 2014). The RCMP already operates in preserves that belong to militaries in other countries, notwithstanding its predominantly law enforcement character.

According to which prevailing measures can the RCMP then be considered either as a militarising or militarised police force? Turner II and Fox (2019) present three primary criteria: distorted delineation between police and military; procurement of military-type equipment, weapons, and vehicles by law enforcement (White, 2015); and, increasing employment of advanced technology by law enforcement typically found in militaries (Davis, 2019). Those are capabilities over and above what is required for routine community police work and criminal investigation (Simckes, Hajat, Revere, Rowhani-Rahbar, & Willits, 2019). Central to the debates over police militarisation in North America is the idea or impression that the police are becoming more like the military and the military more like the police in a converging manner (Campbell & Campbell, 2010; McMichael, 2017). That assessment can be either narrowly or broadly construed.

This article provides a brief descriptive overview of selected areas where elements of militarisation might be said to exist in the RCMP, in order to frame the issue and address heightened public concerns about the use of armed and operationalised police during protests and similar confrontations in contemporary Canada. The topic still awaits more detailed research and empirical study. Available information about the RCMP is remarkably hard to come by (Roziere & Walby, 2019) because the Canadian police force is extremely protective of its reputation and brand. Persons inside and outside the RCMP are even unwilling to admit the existence of militarisation (Kappeler & Kraska, 2015).

In its outlook, capabilities, and ability to mount major operations, the RCMP exemplifies more than just a regular police force focused on local needs. The paramilitary nature of Canada's federal police force may be questioned, but cannot be denied. The RCMP started as a constabulary, in French *gendarmarie*, that combined military and police characteristics in opening the frontiers of the country and has since evolved into a modern police organisation, deployed nationwide to perform criminal, national security, public order, and contract policing. The RCMP's paramilitary tradition exists alongside policing models that put emphasis on domestic law enforcement and measured international engagement. The RCMP possesses some capabilities and equipment that are approaching military norms. Military-grade weaponry has been issued across the police force to offer better response and personal protection. Purpose-built armoured vehicles, helicopters, and green-coloured fatigues add visually to the perception of greater militarisation. Emergency Response Teams (ERT) in the operational divisions have developed specific specialisations to meet and apply force when necessary. Employment of tactical troops during protests and other major events, at times outfitted in full riot gear, likewise demonstrates the power of organised, disciplined, and formed police in numbers over a crowd of individuals. The presence of the RCMP means that the regular armed forces are used infrequently operationally on the domestic scene in Canada.

Paramilitary Tradition Meets Operational Requirements

As a national police force, the RCMP draws upon a long and cultivated paramilitary tradition central to the historical development of Canada. Established in 1873, the Northwest Mounted Police, as it was originally known, copied the Royal Irish Constabulary, another organisation that combined police and military features in order to maintain order amongst sometimes restive and hostile populations (Kelly & Kelly, 1973). The presence of the constabulary exerted the authority of the national government over far-flung lands (Fanning, 2012), facilitating railway expansion, immigration of white settlers, and displacement of indigenous peoples into a reserve system (Monaghan, 2013; Bell & Schreiner, 2018). The new country's police force upheld the rule of law, in contrast to the policies of expulsion, expropriation, and extermination practiced in the United States. Based on the work of enforcing wartime regulations, investigating real and imagined espionage activities, apprehending military deserters, and opposing significant labour unrest in major western Canadian cities, the RCMP absorbed the existing Dominion Police in 1919 to become Canada's federal police force (Kealey, 2017). Evolving responsibilities encompassed drug enforcement and border security beyond ports of entry after a scandal involving the customs department that gave rise to a commission of inquiry in 1926. Supposed subversive influences of Communism, either organised political party or individuals, were a particular focus for the RCMP and governments of the time, as working relationships with the FBI in the United States and Scotland Yard in the United Kingdom broadened. The defection and interrogation of Soviet cypher clerk Igor Gouzenko in 1945 increased the RCMP's stature nationally and internationally in

matters of national security and counter-intelligence, a reputation further groomed during the Cold War (Marquis, 2016). The RCMP's evolution from nation-building constabulary to a modern federal police force that was resolutely facing internal and external threats to the existing political and economic structure followed a narrative filled with military aspects.

Within Canada, the RCMP adopted an expanding range of policing duties and niche specialities. In addition to existing federal roles and responsibilities, the RCMP signed contracts for provision of policing in provinces and municipalities, thereby negating the need for numerous separate police forces (Hewitt, 2006; Hataley & Leuprecht, 2014). Subsidy formulas from the federal government encouraged the practice in the name of efficiency, standardisation, and cost-savings. By 1950, the RCMP policed all provinces and territories in Canada except the two largest, Ontario and Quebec, which kept their own provincial police forces (Macleod, 1994). Over time, provincial contract policing became a lucrative source of funding for the RCMP and justified elevated recruitment and training levels above that required for federal policing alone. More importantly, the arrangement gave the RCMP presence and reach in virtually all parts of the country (Lunney, 2012). As **Figure 1** shows, the RCMP comprises fifteen lettered divisions corresponding to provinces and territories, with the national headquarters in the country's capital of Ottawa and a training depot in Regina, considered to be the heritage centre of the RCMP.

A commissioner, the highest ranked member, leads the organisation and commands through deputy and assistant commissioners at headquarters and in the divisions. Within the parliamentary and bureaucratic system, the RCMP came under purview of the Solicitor General of Canada, now the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness. Each division has subordinate headquarters and detachments that at times have performed overlapping functions of federal, provincial, and municipal policing. In 1966, at the invitation of Prime Minister Lester Pearson, provincial attorney generals met to discuss measures to check the growth and spread of organised crime (Beare, 2015). Subsequently, forensic laboratory, centralised information sharing, intelligence collection, and training and educational support services were developed within the RCMP and made available to other police forces and law enforcement in Canada. The RCMP lent assistance during the Quebec separatist FLQ crisis (Whitaker, Kealey, & Parnaby, 2012) and led the security planning and operations during major international sporting events, such as the Olympic, Commonwealth, and Pan-American games, and transnational political summits and gatherings hosted in Canada (Pue, Diab, & Jackson, 2015). Before and after the 9/11 attacks the RCMP has been occupied with terrorism (Forcese & Roach, 2015), just as tracking the departure and return of Canadians fighting on behalf of extremist Islamic groups (Kozolanka, 2015) and meeting inflows of refugee claimants across Canada's southern land border have emerged as recent concerns.

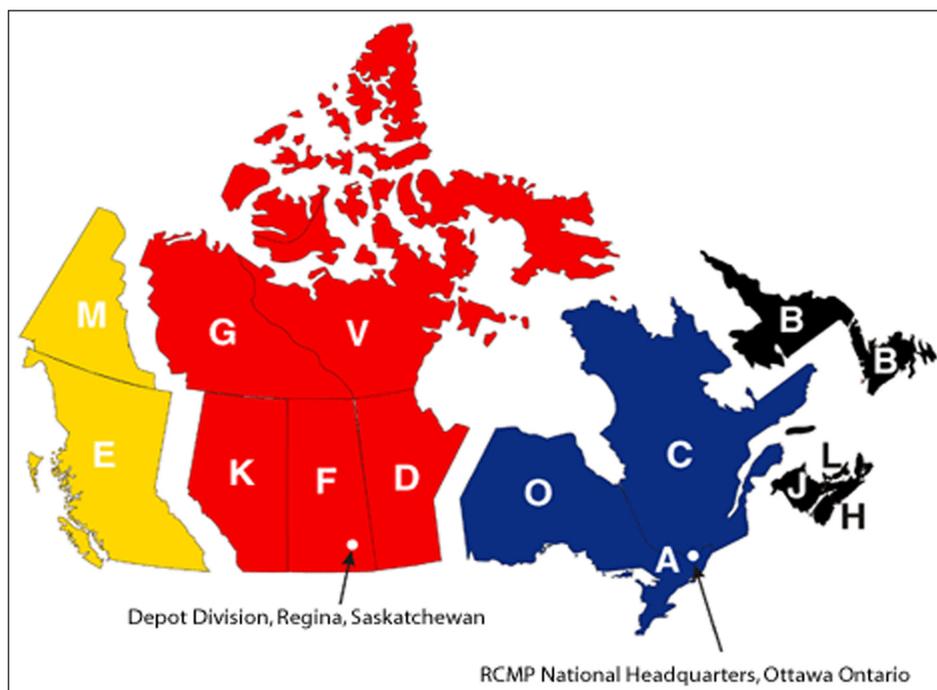


Figure 1: Royal Canadian Mounted Police, lettered divisions (Source: RCMP).

The RCMP, in its domestic and national security roles, constitutes a full-service police force providing multiple service lines far beyond the original constabulary model, to the point where some critics claim that it tries to do too much and be all things to all people with available resources. Public support for the RCMP has generally remained high despite troubling and disquieting revelations from public inquiries (McDonald, O'Connor, and Braidwood) into the force's conduct, leadership, and professionalism (Leuprecht, 2017; Petrovich, 2019). Allegations about endemic sexual harassment against female members within the ranks have only recently been addressed in a serious manner (Merlo, 2013; McKay, 2014), with an announced settlement for affected individuals (Public Safety Canada, 2016) and appointment of a female commissioner to lead a still predominantly male-dominated institution (Department of Justice, 2018). The Canadian Armed Forces have faced similar criticism about inappropriate sexual behaviour and the same institutional response to such incidents. The lines between strictly federal policing roles and contracted provincial and municipal policing in the divisions are blurred even for senior leaders who maintain that practical experience with frontline policing enables the RCMP to engage in higher policing activities (Brodeur 2010). Any suggestion that the RCMP should give up the lower policing that justifies and pays for a much larger footprint than otherwise possible has been muted. Other recommendations have included civilianising parts of the RCMP's higher echelons to address outstanding issues (Public Safety Canada, 2018b). Nonetheless, the Canadian government maintains confidence in the RCMP as a reliable and loyal professional police force, available to exert the authority of the state throughout the country. The organisational structures and the equipping of the RCMP reflect operational requirements and elements of militarisation.

Focus on Specialised Units

Given its paramilitary tradition and constabulary roots, the RCMP is unlike most police forces in Canada (Leichtman, 2008). The federal police force's members are subject to posting anywhere in the country, usually do not come from the locales in which they serve, and move regularly from one function and position to the next. In this way, they very much resemble the military (Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, 2014). Recruitment and training at the Regina depot follow a basic common professional standard irrespective of subsequent employment. Salaries in the RCMP are on average lower than most other unionised larger city and provincial police forces, being ranked fifty-seven out of eighty-two across the country in terms of pay and compensation (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2015a). Recognition of professional associations with the right to collectively bargain with the federal government (Smart, 2017), like other public servants, was achieved through class action lawsuits and the court system after a prolonged and determined effort by higher leadership to block formal unions in the RCMP. Along with the military, the RCMP was one of the few groups exempted from unionisation based on the nature of their work and their terms of service. Allowances and overtime pay compensate for deployment in remote locations and outside regular work shifts. In contrast to the police, soldiers are not currently eligible for overtime pay. Career progression in the RCMP rests on general service and specialised qualification and employment for officers and non-commissioned ranks.

Member safety and personal protection came to the fore when shooters with high-powered rifles caused multiple deaths amongst police at Mayerthorpe, Alberta, in 2005 and Moncton, New Brunswick, in 2014. In the latter incident, Justin Bourke killed three general service members and injured two more 'hunting' for police officers (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2015b). Former RCMP Commissioner Bob Paulson told the Senate Committee on National Security and Defence that 'the police may lose public trust when they look more like an army' (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2017) and testified in June 2017, during a legal trial concerning breaches of the labour code by the police force, that worries about militarisation was one reason why responding police lacked body armour and range weapons beyond standard issue shotguns and service pistols (Provincial Court of New Brunswick, 2017; Marquis, 2019). Distribution of the very military-looking Colt C8 carbine was expedited to meet the gap (Kaminska, Verga, & Lawrence, 2011; Auditor General of Canada, 2019). Phillips (2016) asks whether adoption of the assault rifle is a function of police militarisation or a justified response to the external environment in which criminals with weapons have become common. Regardless, military-grade weapons, obtained by direct purchase from manufacturers under tendered procurement, and transfers from the Canadian Armed Forces have now added significant firepower to the RCMP.

Military assistance to the RCMP takes several forms. Provision of service agreements and memoranda of understanding govern normal transactions on a cost recovery basis, such as use of facilities and allotted sailing days or flight hours (Canadian Joint Operations Command, 2014). Under exceptional circumstances, the loan or employment of Canadian Armed Forces equipment and personnel to law enforcement require formal written request to the Minister of National Defence or the Chief of Defence Staff and must be approved as going beyond the existing capabilities of the RCMP (Department of National Defence, 2004). The RCMP

maintains its own marine and air fleets, both fixed wing and rotary. Airbus AS350B3 single engine helicopters and newer twin engine H145 flown by the RCMP are in service with many police forces and constabularies. The Canadian Armed Forces operate defence helicopters from Bell Helicopter Textron, Boeing, and other suppliers. In the last decade, the Department of National Defence provided gas masks, night vision goggles as well as wheeled armoured carriers as an interim measure until the RCMP obtained its own police armoured vehicles from Navistar Defence Industries (Department of National Defence, 2017). Designed to withstand at least .50 calibre fire, these vehicles are lightly armoured according to military specifications, though sufficient for most hostage-taking and forced entry situations. In 2016, surplus military C8 carbines and spare parts were transferred free of charge to non-federal police forces, including eight to the Organized Crime Agency of British Columbia, tied to an RCMP-led Combined Forces Special Enforcement Unit (Department of National Defence, 2016). The Department of National Defence transferred to the RCMP 2,500 gas masks worth \$265,355 CAD in May 2018 and 210,560 rounds of ammunition worth \$142,391 CAD in June 2019 (Department of National Defence, 2019).

In Canada, transfers and sale of equipment and weapons from the military to the police has certainly not matched the scale of widespread distribution in the United States in the name of counter-terrorism (Radil, Dezzani, & McAden, 2017). For police forces, maintenance associated with second-hand and often worn-out military equipment comes with many hidden costs (Phillips, 2018). Consequently, in most cases, the RCMP prefers to procure its own weapons and new equipment through government tendering and supply channels. Law enforcement is a growing business amongst commercial companies and suppliers catering to military and security clientele (Roziere & Walby, 2017). The needs of the Canadian Armed Forces and RCMP are sufficiently different to hinder major standardisation and shared contracts across government departments and agencies. The closest convergence is seen amongst special forces and tactical units within the Canadian military and RCMP that have the potential to apply deadly force in a precise manner.

The RCMP's Emergency Response Team (ERT) provides a specialised capability in the domestic context against criminal gangs and potentially violent situations. Akin to the military, members are selected based on rigorous standards and qualifications from within the police force and trained to high levels of proficiency, and they employ a variety of weapons, tools, and vehicles in aggressive law enforcement. The Los Angeles Police Department first introduced the SWAT concept in 1967 based on United States Marine Corps training and Vietnam war veterans recruited into the police force after the Watts riots (Alvaro, 2000; Schrader, 2019). The RCMP's tactical weapons unit comprised of expert marksmen with rifles, assaulters using cast-off military equipment, and designated trained negotiators came together in the mid-1970s for the United Nations Habitat conference in Vancouver and the Olympic summer games in Montreal, working closely with the Canadian military. The focus was predominantly major event security, hostage-taking, and counter-terrorism. Several major RCMP divisions organised and experimented with ERT to meet their requirements, though direction and common standards from Ottawa for the police force as a whole were lacking. A scratch group was formed for a 1981 leaders' summit in Montebello, Quebec (Department of National Defence, 1987), which subsequently led to the creation of the Special Emergency Response Team (SERT) located at Dwyer Hill outside Ottawa. Kept at high-readiness notice, the SERT spent lots of time exercising and was only occasionally deployed operationally during six years of existence. In 1993, the Canadian Armed Forces took over the domestic counter-terrorism function from the RCMP with the establishment of Joint Task Force 2 (JTF2). Determining factors for the change were the cost of overtime pay for police and the potential application of deadly force. RCMP members returned to regional ERT in the divisions or stayed on as trainers for the military, which used the same facilities. The RCMP leadership concluded that redirecting personnel and resources into ERT was a better return on investment. The Canadian Armed Forces have recently tried to give back the counter-terrorism role to the RCMP, without much success (Canadian Special Operations Forces Command, 2020).

Although some cross-training takes place between the military and RCMP, the ERT has developed independently and performs an ever-larger range of activities at local and regional levels where armed force might be encountered or when required in the criminal and national security spheres, right down to simple execution of warrants (Roziere & Walby, 2018). In recent years, the RCMP has enforced common standards for training and organisation of ERT nationally. The ERT falls under the RCMP deputy commissioner responsible for contract and aboriginal policing. After three decades of using black for daily wear, Ranger green was adopted for ERT based on the recommendations of a study comparing uniform colours (RCMP National ERT Kit and Clothing Committee, 2013) and formally approved on 17 June 2015. Some attention was given to the fact that the FBI used green fatigues for tactical operations. Police Dog Services (PDS) and Emergency Medical Response Team (EMRT) members working directly with ERT were also authorised to wear green and

disruptive patterns in the same way as Containment Teams (CT) that established control over scenes prior to the arrival of the ERT. Other supporting units wear approved RCMP dark blue uniforms and a certain degree of elitism has emerged: 'ERT members have dedicated years of training to earn the privilege to wear green' (Brosseau, 2017). Green distinguishes them from the rest of the police force during operations. Despite RCMP insignia and markings, the military look of such specialised tactical units can be easily misconstrued by politicians and the general public because green uniforms are typically associated with soldiers (Marijan, 2014). The ERT figures prominently in public order policing within Canada.

Protest Policing

In democratic societies like Canada, people have the recognised right to challenge and demonstrate against government policies and decisions in a peaceful manner (De Lint & Hall, 2009). In most cases, police are present to observe and make sure no laws are broken, whatever the rhetoric and inflammatory speech. Security arrangements for key leader summits and other major events in some of Canada's largest urban cities have involved the RCMP in lead and supporting positions (Burke, 2012). In 2010, this resulted in violence and a strong police response at the G20 meeting in Toronto, though years later heavier police presence in Montreal meant G7 meetings and protests took place without significant incidents (Monaghan & Walby, 2012). In other situations, police protect political and economic interests by enforcing legal injunctions issued by judges and courts (Boyle & Dafnos, 2019). Protests against shale gas exploration in New Brunswick and the oil pipeline expansion in British Columbia involved the RCMP in key flashpoints with persons opposed to the development (Crosby & Monaghan, 2018; Quigley, Bisset, & Mills, 2017). The RCMP arrested protesters defying injunctions outside the Kinder Morgan refinery in Burnaby, including several members of parliament – Green Party leader Elizabeth May and New Democrat Kennedy Stewart who was subsequently elected mayor of western Canada's largest city, Vancouver. In January 2019, the RCMP conducted a major operation using green-fatigued ERT against indigenous protesters who were blocking access to private companies on the lands of the Wet'suwet'en First Nation, a pre-cursor to the present troubles in British Columbia (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2019b; Dhillon & Parrish, 2019) at a cost of \$1,464,691 CAD in the first three months of that year (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2019c). The heavy-handed approach recalled another police enforcement of a legal injunction to end a long stand-off by the Elsipogtog First Nation in eastern Canada six years earlier (Dafnos, 2014; Canadian Security Intelligence Service, 2016; Howe & Monaghan, 2018). On such occasions, the RCMP fulfils its constabulary role with an array of weaponry, equipment, and force structure suited for likely confrontation, apart from the usual role of community policing. The RCMP trains and prepares for this eventuality on the domestic scene, with formed units called tactical troops.

Inside the RCMP, the tactical troop is a public order policing formation trained and equipped to handle large crowds, unlawful assemblies, riots, and potentially violent confrontations. Troop is a military term associated with cavalry or mounted infantry, nested in the historical constabulary model of the police force. According to the RCMP's tactical operations manual (King, 2009), each division is required to maintain at least one or more tactical troops, consisting of minimum forty-three members, organised into sections of eight and a command team (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2019d). Members of the tactical troop are drawn from volunteers in detachments and must qualify through courses, group training, and exercises on a yearly basis. The tactical troop can deploy lightly, that is in regular uniform with gloves, coloured vests, and personal weapons, or heavily, replete with helmets, padded body protection and reinforced boots, plastic shields, thick batons, and means to deliver non-lethal force options such as pepper spray, water projection, and tear gas. In Canada, the military is legally restricted with respect to the use of chemical agents for riot control (Department of National Defence, 2011). The same does not apply to the RCMP and police forces. Depending on the local situation and level of threat, the ERT may support or give direction to the tactical troop and its movements. The presence of a fully formed tactical troop is intimidating and remains ready to clash with unruly protesters, if necessary, should verbal warnings to disperse be ignored or matters change suddenly (Wood, 2014). According to its training and doctrine, the tactical troop is 'committed to resolving potentially violent situations using a measured response in accordance with the RCMP intervention model and incident management while ensuring that the rights of lawful demonstrators are respected and the security of all individuals is assured' (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2019d). For the RCMP, use of force is a last resort and to be avoided as much as possible. After initial reconnaissance and assessment, the tactical troop and ERT always act in a disciplined manner and under orders from higher authority and a critical incident commander.

Police responses and actions during protests and other tactical operations follow a clear chain of command, inherent in the RCMP's critical incident management system. Different from the military, the RCMP

generally does not develop plans in advance and uses a less structured operational planning process that may vary from division to division (Cowper, 2000). The Criminal Operations Branch (CROPS) retains overall responsibility for coordination and reporting. Police typically operate in a crisis-management mode that puts greater weight on quick action and ground-level knowledge (Cartier, 2012). In other words, the approach is bottom up rather than top down. Operational plans, actually tactical appreciations, are submitted for approval by the designated critical incident commander, a person qualified and trained to exercise decision-making or report upward for further determination. Since 2002, the RCMP has generally borrowed from the emergency planning and critical incident management methodology of the American Department of Homeland Security, customised to Canadian circumstances (Murphy, 2007). More recently, RCMP divisions in several provinces have adopted the Gold-Silver-Bronze (GSB) professional standard, an emergency planning and management style used by police forces in the United Kingdom (College of Policing, 2013). Individuals acting at levels of command are trained and qualified to certain standards, roughly equivalent to strategic, operational, and tactical – with gold being the highest and bronze the lowest. Though a comparison to military thinking might be tempting, the actual basis rests on law enforcement and emergency planning within an overall government structure. Deployment of formed tactical units during protests conveys the impression of incremental police militarisation because the sight of police forces acting together in larger numbers, under command and forcefully, remains rare in Canada.

Certain groups in Canadian society have been disproportionately singled out by police actions and surveillance, as one protest placard on Parliament Hill read: 'The RCMP Proudly Suppressing Indigenous Peoples Since the 1900s' (Proulx, 2014; Crosby & Monaghan, 2016). The RCMP retains that capability so that the military does not have to become involved. Memories from the domestic military deployment against Mohawk warriors at Oka, Quebec, three decades ago are still fresh (Winegard, 2008). The liaison and international work performed by the RCMP add further dimensions to the roles beyond community policing.

International Deployments and Liaisons

Although domestic law enforcement remains the predominant focus, the federal policing of the RCMP includes a growing variety of international activities outside Canada.

The instability of conflict and the uneven economic and social development in other countries and regions demand strong governmental institutions, such as police forces and judiciary to maintain rule of law (Last, 2009; Goldstein, 2011). The professionalism, high level of training, and bilingualism within the RCMP are generally well regarded. Canada also has a good reputation for peacekeeping and participation in peace support operations under the auspices of the United Nations. Although provincial and municipal police services account for the majority of deployed personnel under the Canadian Police Arrangement (CPA) covering these types of peace support and stabilisation efforts, the RCMP contributes members and provides administration and leadership (Niven, 2011, 53–54) and has a senior police advisor attached to the Canadian permanent mission at the United Nations' headquarters in New York. Unlike the military, the RCMP does not compel participation on international missions and the hardships are generally known, irrespective of pre-mission training and preparation (Maure, 2020). Individual police members volunteer for duty internationally based on general calls for participants in the divisions and headquarters. The RCMP's contributions to Canadian contingents of missions in the former Yugoslavia, Africa, and on the Caribbean island of Haiti were dogged by problems concerning funding, provision of personnel, and host nation support (Donais, 2004; Walby & Monaghan, 2011; Global Affairs Canada, 2012).

Sometimes, working with or alongside the Canadian Armed Forces and foreign militaries, police involvement was intended to build up national and local civilian police capacity through training and mentoring efforts. Always hard to measure, the results have been short-lived or lacking the more permanent effect intended (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2010). The RCMP has continued to deploy members in Haiti since 2004 (Operation *Horae*) and in Mali since March 2018 (Operation *Moerae*), in designated special duty operations (Public Safety Canada, 2018a). The number of deployed Canadian police dropped from a high of 106 in December 2016 to a low of 52 in March 2018, see breakdown in **Table 1** (Public Safety Canada, 2018c).

For the most part, peace support operations are not considered a core RCMP function, but rather correspond with key Canadian foreign policy and development objectives set forth by governments in power, which may vary in scope and tone. In the American case, Coyne and Hall (2018) assert that techniques ingrained from military interventions overseas have influenced the tone and conduct of domestic policing on the American scene in a boomerang fashion (American Civil Liberties Union, 2014; Plowden, 2016). Evidence of such a blowback phenomenon amongst returning Canadian police members is less clear-cut. Individual RCMP members might find experiences rewarding in attaining a wider appreciation of the world

Table 1: Canadian police assigned to international missions as of March 2018.

	Authorised	Actual Number	Expiry Date
Haiti	35	25	31 March 2021
UN Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH); United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)			
Columbia	10	0	31 March 2021
UN Verification Mission in Columbia (UNVMC)			
Mali	20	0	31 March 2021
UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA)			
West Bank	5	4	31 March 2019
European Union Coordinating Office for Palestinian Police Support (EUPOL COPPS); Operation <i>Proteus</i> through United States Security Coordinator (USSC)			
Iraq	20	5	31 March 2019
Global Coalition against ISIL/Daesh			
Ukraine	20	16	31 March 2019
European Union Advisory Mission (EUAM) Ukraine			
Multi-training	10	0	31 March 2019
Pre-Selection Assistance and Assessment Team (SAAT) training			
New York	1	0	one-year deployment
UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations Headquarters			
The Hague	1	0	six-month deployment
International Criminal Court (ICC), Central African Republic investigations			
New York	1	1	on-going, no expiry
Senior Police Advisor Canadian Permanent Mission at the United Nations			
Total	103	52	

and its challenges, though there are also many negative aspects, including injury, infectious disease, post-traumatic stress disorder, and transition back into normal life in Canada. Those issues are also prevalent amongst the military, active service and veterans, and like them, the government and RCMP have been slow to recognise special and hazardous duty. At least one RCMP member is amongst six reported cases of sexual exploitation and relations, repatriated from the mission in Haiti, disciplined, and barred from subsequent peacekeeping service (Global Affairs Canada, 2018; Lee & Bartels, 2019). About 4,000 police from Canada have served on international missions since 1989, including the present RCMP commissioner. Many of those members simply returned to the routine of detachments or left the RCMP altogether. Other avenues of advancement and career progression in federal policing are far more rewarding within the RCMP, since the majority of members never get an opportunity to leave Canada. The truly attractive jobs and postings in other countries lie in the fields of liaison and criminal intelligence.

Given the nature of transnational crime and globalised integrated networks, the RCMP has put increased emphasis on consolidating and strengthening international connections through its deployed personnel. As part of a federal policing reengineering initiative started in 2011, the One International pilot project reviewed and adjusted the RCMP's international efforts (Kepes, 2014). Liaison officers stationed in selected countries to provide contact with foreign law enforcement agencies and governments confronted greater workloads (Dunton & Kitchen, 2014). Deployed analysts sent from Canada took over and expanded intelligence gathering and analysis functions (Seiden, 2015). To better coordinate, a National Intelligence Coordination Centre (NICC) in Ottawa acts as a clearing house for collected information on organised crime and international developments. The RCMP partnered in capacity building and security initiatives in Asian, South American, and Caribbean countries, funded through other federal government departments and agencies (Monaghan, 2017). Anti-crime and counter-terrorism capacity building programmes, managed by Canada's foreign relations department since 2005 and December 2009, respectively, supported multi-year projects with police

forces (Global Affairs Canada, 2016). For the 2018–19 fiscal year, 178 full-time equivalent positions and a budget of \$51 million CAD were devoted to international efforts within the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2018). The RCMP primarily brought expertise to build confidence and trust during training (Coates & Last 2005). Those relationships in turn led to more effective and reliable criminal and national security intelligence of immediate need to Canada. In police work, investigations leading to big busts and high-profile arrests are critical paths to career advancement within the top ranks of the RCMP.

The ability to scale up or scale down the attention paid to any country or area has been far more productive than contributing numbers of personnel, never enough, to peace support operations in one country under distress. Just like the foreign police forces it liaises with, the RCMP has come to understand the value of engaging law enforcement and civilian police in many countries (Nussbaum, 2012), as one recent international operation 'demonstrates clearly the need for and utility of the RCMP's forward deployed strategy to disrupt criminality as far from Canada as possible with key overseas partners' (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2019a). The RCMP works closely with Canadian security agencies, such as the Communications Security Establishment (CSE) and the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) in keeping Canadians safe at home (Hamilton, 2011; Walby & Anais, 2012; Communications Security Establishment, 2016). Less attention has been devoted to cooperating with the Department of National Defence and Canadian Armed Forces (National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, 2020). In its international efforts, the RCMP has actually moved away from militarisation in favour of a pro-active law enforcement and intelligence direction. Neither the RCMP nor the Canadian military really work well together because the institutional cultures are different and each side shares reservedly (Gravel, 2009).

Conclusion

Public confidence in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police has been seriously shaken by a series of events (Perrott & Kelloway, 2011), the latest being the armed intervention against indigenous protesters in northern British Columbia and reluctant acknowledgement of systemic racism within the national police institution. The display of armoured vehicles, green-uniformed tactical units, and military-type assault weapons reinforces the perception of increased militarisation amongst Canada's national police force. This trend appears consistent with developments south of the border in the United States and Mexico (Williams, 2015), where police are increasingly organised and equipped along military lines, and in some of Canada's leading city police forces. The vestiges of a paramilitary tradition within the RCMP, as a constabulary created to control and oppress indigenous peoples in the first place, remain alongside more modern national security and community policing roles. Many of the operations undertaken by specialised tactical units within the RCMP are part of contracted provincial and municipal policing. Those roles necessitate capabilities beyond the routine of normal police work and have been called upon with increasing frequency. Walby argues that the mere existence of militarised police forces means that they will be used and often inappropriately (Banerjee, 2019). That may be so, but the process of militarisation within the RCMP is uneven and hesitant. Previous senior leaders in the police force have warned against the perception of militarisation and possible erosion of public confidence in the RCMP that would undermine the model of community-based policing and call into question the continued purpose of contract policing. Provinces like British Columbia might even go so far as to end the relationship with the RCMP and establish their own provincial police forces, in the wake of disquiet about police conduct and accountability during the Wet'suwet'en protests. Refocusing on federal policing, consistent with government and public expectations (Bronskill, 2020), might very well be a consequence of heightened public perceptions about militarisation in the RCMP. RCMP participation in international peace support operations and capacity building of foreign police and security forces in other countries of interest is one area where Canada could certainly do far more than what is being done at present. While outwardly military-like, the duties are predominantly law enforcement and training by nature, and the opportunities for working with the Canadian Armed Forces are limited. The RCMP possesses its own institutional culture and way of operating that rest on a paramilitary tradition and national law enforcement imperative. Neither of those have much to do with contract and aboriginal policing, where the loudest criticism against increased militarisation is heard. Quelling indigenous protests in a coercive manner with armed force plainly tarnishes the RCMP brand as a prominent law enforcement agency.

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