Western Canada ‘Wexit’ Party Supports U.S. Access to Arctic Northwest Passage

ARLINGTON, Va. – A political movement to break Canada in two because of political and economic grievances between the eastern and western regions of the nation is addressing several domestic issues, but also supports the access of U.S. military ships to the Northwest Passage, which Canada claims as territorial waters.

In a Sept. 19 release, Wexit Canada, the voice for the separation of the Western Canadian Province – British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba – from the Government of Canada, protested some of Eastern Canada’s agricultural, industrial regulation, taxation and social policies.

“In addition, the Government of Canada continues to agitate our southern neighbor through weak law enforcement, compromised intelligence and border security, unsustainable unvetted immigration, susceptibility to espionage, and most importantly – geopolitical opposition to America’s legitimate claims to the Northwest Passage situated in the Arctic,” the release said. “Western Canadians do not share the same hostility, as Eastern Canadians do, towards our No. 1 military and economic partner. A confederation of Western Canadian Provinces would be a better partner to the United States of America than they currently enjoy in Ottawa.”

The United States does not recognize Canada’s claim to the Northwest Passage. In a May meeting of the Arctic Council, U.S. State Secretary Mike Pompeo termed the Canadian claim as “illegitimate,” according to a June 27 article in Quartz by Zoe Schlanger. The conflicting positions are a rarity in the

usually close U.S.-Canadian military and diplomatic relations.

Canada considers the Northwest Passage as internal waters because the passage is within the waters of the 20,000 islands of Canada's northern archipelago. The United States regards the passage as an international strait, with the freedom of navigation standard for such a strait.

Schlanger wrote that under a 1988 treaty, the United States worked out a compromise to the dispute: "the U.S. doesn't officially recognize the Northwest Passage as Canada's, but it agrees to ask for permission to pass through it. Canada, in turn, agrees in advance to always grant permission."

If the coverage of Arctic ice continues to lessen, the increased shipping in and exploration of Arctic waters may result in an increase in international tensions in the region.

U.S. Navy Secretary Richard V. Spencer has focused increased attention of U.S. interests in the Arctic region and sponsored an exercise this month in the Aleutian Islands.

Navy Considering Marine CAC2S System for Amphibs to Exploit Strike Fighter's Capabilities

F-35Bs conduct flight operations aboard the amphibious assault ship USS Wasp. Navy officials say the service is considering installing a modern Marine Corps command and control system on amphibs to take advantage of the F-35's capabilities. U.S.

Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Daniel Barker
QUANTICO, Va. — Navy officials said the service is considering installing a modern Marine Corps command and control system on large-deck amphibious assault ships.

“The Navy is looking to purchase CAC2S [Common Aviation Command and Control System] and put those on L-class ships so that they can do some of the same things we do on L-class ships the CAC2S can pull down off an F-35. It will help build situational awareness for the SWOs [surface warfare officers] on the ship,” said Col. Kurt Schiller, director, Air Combat Element/Maritime Expeditionary Warfare Division in the Capabilities Development Directorate, speaking at a panel discussion sponsored by the Amphibious Warfare Industrial Base Coalition at the Modern Day Marine expo at Marine Corps Base Quantico, Virginia.

CAC2S, built by General Dynamics Mission Systems, provides a complete and coordinated modernization of Marine Air Command and Control System (MACCS) equipment.

CAC2S provides the MAGTF Aviation Combat Element with the hardware, software and facilities to effectively command, control and coordinate air operations integrated with naval, joint and/or combined C2 units.

CAC2S is made up of standardized modular and scalable tactical facilities, hardware and software to significantly increase battlefield mobility and reduce the physical size and logistical footprint of the MACCS.

“The F-35B brings extraordinary situational awareness capability,” Frank DiGiovanni, deputy director, Expeditionary Warfare, said during the panel discussion. “The CAC2S that the colonel was talking about brings the ground common operational picture to the ship and to the rest of the Navy.”

Virginia-Based Sailors, Marines Return After Supporting Bahamas Relief Missions

A U.S. Navy Sailor surveys the terrain following Hurricane Dorian in the Bahamas. U.S. Northern Command provided military capabilities in support of USAID-led relief efforts for the Bahamian people. U.S Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Katie Cox

NORFOLK, Va. – Sailors and Marines returned to Norfolk this week after providing military capabilities supporting relief to the Bahamas following Hurricane Dorian, U.S. Fleet Forces Command Public Affairs said in a release.

The service members came from the Bataan Amphibious Ready Group (ARG); Helicopter Mine Countermeasure Squadron (HM)-14 and HM-15; and Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 9 and HSC-26.

Under the direction of U.S. Northern Command, the Bataan ARG provided support to the U.S. Agency for International Development that enabled the broader effort to address the acute humanitarian needs of the Bahamian people.

The Bataan ARG, made up of the amphibious assault ship USS Bataan (LHD 5), San Antonio-class amphibious transport dock ship USS New York (LPD 21), Harpers Ferry-class dock landing ship USS Oak Hill (LSD 51), and Sailors and Marines of the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit, operated in international waters off the Bahamas. Meanwhile, four MH-53E Sea Stallion

helicopters were forward-staged at Homestead Air Reserve Base in southern Florida, 25 miles south of Miami.

“In the wake of the strongest storm to hit the Bahamas, I am proud of the hard work, dedication and professionalism of our wing,” said Capt. Shawn Bailey, Helicopter Sea Combat Wing Atlantic commander. “They rose to the occasion to help those in need.”

The Navy and Marine Corps provided several aviation and logistics capabilities around the geographically dispersed Bahamian islands:

- Medium-lift MH-60 Seahawk and heavy-lift CH-53E Sea Stallion helicopters, along with heavy lift tilt-rotor MV-22B Ospreys, transported humanitarian supplies.
- Navy and Marine aircraft transported dozens of military and civilian medical personnel who provided water, food, medical supplies, search-and-rescue gear, tarps and solar lights throughout the cities of Eleuthera, Freeport and Marsh Harbour.
- The aircraft also transported USAID Disaster Assistance Response Team personnel to Marsh Harbour; United Nations Office for Coordination of Human Affairs personnel to Grand Bahamas; Urban Search and Rescue personnel to Marsh Harbour; and a U.S. Air Force Airfield Assessment Team to Marsh Harbour and Sandy Point, to evaluate the Grand Bahama International Airport in Freeport.
- Marine Corps CH-53Es, as part of joint military support to USAID, provided ground refueling of U.S. Army CH-47 Chinook and UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters.

To enable those air operations, air traffic control Sailors aboard New York and Bataan helped monitor airspace safety for military aircraft in critical areas near Marsh Harbour.

The Bataan, New York and Oak Hill also used their shipboard

freshwater-making capability to fill pallets of water transferred by air to Marsh Harbour, Treasure Cay and Moore's Island.

McRaven Implores Sides to 'Calm Down a Bit' After Saudi Oil Facility Attack

The former commander of Special Operations Command and the Navy SEAL leader who directed the raid that killed al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden said he is "not overly concerned" about the current crisis with Iran, but he is worried that the attack on Saudi oil facilities "may ramp this up a bit."

Retired Adm. William McRaven added: "Everyone needs to calm down a bit. We need to think through this," try diplomacy and, "If that doesn't work, there's always the sense of proportionality."

"We don't need to be involved. But if we feel something more forceful is needed, we better make sure it's proportional so we don't get a spin up and escalate the situation. If the Saudis escalate, it could lead to war. We don't want that," McRaven said Sept 18 as he addressed a forum on special operations forces (SOF) at the New America think tank. "We've been dealing with the Iranians for decades. We know how to deal with the Iranians."

He noted that a U.S. cruiser shot down an Iranian airliner and “killed 298 innocent folks” in 1979 during the Iran-Iraq war, but it did not lead to a U.S.-Iranian war. “Strange as it may sound, I think people in the [Persian Gulf] are rational actors. Nobody wants to go to war. … We have to figure out how to work it out.”

In response to a question during the forum, McRaven said he “absolutely” was concerned about the lack of experienced officials on President Trump’s national security team, because it diminishes the traditional process by which the layers of experts and advisers develop options for the president.

“When you don’t have that process, or the process doesn’t work effectively, or you don’t have the depth of experience you need at different levels, then the president doesn’t have the best options. The president is never going to be the subject matter expert,” McRaven said.

He also said he “never thought negotiations with the Taliban were a good way to go” and predicted that if an agreement led to the withdrawal of all U.S. troops, in “six months or a year, all the blood and treasure we have put into Afghanistan would have been reversed” and all the progress made in educating girls and giving women more opportunities would be lost.

Earlier in the day, Roya Rahmani, Afghanistan’s ambassador, said Afghans had been concerned about the U.S. led negotiations because Afghan

officials were not involved, and she was “relieved” when Trump ended the talks.

Asked about the rash of scandals involving special operations personnel, particularly SEALs, McRaven suggested the 18 years of war in which SOF has borne a disproportionate burden must have had some effect. But he said Army Gen. Richard Clark, the current SOCOM commander, “did the right thing” by firing three senior SEAL leaders, which sent the right message to the force.

In other session during the day-long forum, House Armed Services Chairman Adam Smith (D-Wash.) and a Republican member of the committee agreed that Congress needs to ensure that SOF gets the resources it needs to conduct its vital missions and worried that the growing focus on “great power competition” with Russia and China would result in cutting SOF funding to pay for big war weapons, such as the Air Force’s B-21 strategic bomber.

Other panels of active or former SOF personnel and civilian officials suggested that SOF needed to seek greater ethnic and cultural diversity in the ranks to deal with the evolving global security situation, which would include a continuing threat of global extremists and terrorists.

BAE’s San Diego Shipyard to Tandem Dry-Dock Two Destroyers

USS Stethem and USS Decatur will dry-dock together in San Diego inside the “Pride of California.” BAE Systems

SAN DIEGO – BAE Systems has received $170.7 million in contracts from the U.S. Navy to perform simultaneous maintenance and repair on two Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyers in its shipyard here, according to a Sept. 18 company release.

The shipyard will tandem dry-dock the USS Stethem (DDG-63) and USS Decatur (DDG-73) in October. The synchronized two-ship docking will be a first for the company’s newest dry-dock in San Diego. The contracts include options that, if exercised, would bring their cumulative value to $185 million.

“The ability to simultaneously dock two DDGs is a special capability that BAE Systems brings to our Navy customer and comes at a critical time when additional throughput is necessary to meet surface combatant demands and modernization requirements,” said David M. Thomas Jr., vice president and general manager of BAE Systems San Diego Ship Repair.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RkLmRZTaeyg

“Beyond the remarkable nature of this

tandem docking, it will be business as usual for our shipyard team and partners
given our significant experience working with the Arleigh Burke class."

Positioned end to end, the Stethem and Decatur
will be lifted together inside BAE's "Pride of California" dry-dock. Installed
in 2017, the dry-dock is 950 feet long, 160 feet wide and has a lifting
capacity of 55,000 tons – making it the largest floating dry-dock in San Diego.
The destroyers each displace about 9,000 tons and are expected to be refloated next
April.

The Stethem is the 13thship
of the Arleigh Burke class, which is the Navy's largest class of surface
warfare combatants. Named for Master Chief Constructionman Robert Stethem, the
505-foot-long ship was commissioned in October 1995. BAE Systems will perform
hull, mechanical and engineering repairs aboard the ship. Once back in the
water, the Stethem's Extended Docking Selected Restricted Availability (EDSRA)
is expected to be completed in October 2020.

The Decatur is the 23rd ship of the Arleigh Burke class. Named for the early 19th-century Naval hero Stephen Decatur Jr., the ship was commissioned in August 1998. BAE Systems will perform much of the same upgrade work aboard the 505-foot-long Decatur as it will perform on board the Stethem.

After undocking, the Decatur's EDSRA work is expected to continue into October 2020. BAE Systems' San Diego shipyard currently employs about 1,300 people and hundreds of temporary

workers and subcontractors nearby the San Diego-Coronado Bridge.

Navy Accelerates Cloud-Based Warfare Systems

An SM-2 missile launches from the guided-missile cruiser USS Mobile Bay during a test of an AEGIS weapons system in 2017. Earlier this year, the Navy successfully tested ATRT as part of the AEGIS Virtual Twin project – which involved the tactical deployment of a virtualized AEGIS system as a digital twin to the existing physical one. U.S Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Chad M. Butler

ARLINGTON, Va. – As conflicts become compressed in time and more complex, with an increasing number of data sources and platforms feeding information to warfighters, it is a challenge to build and share a complete and accurate operational picture.

To address this issue and align with the chief of naval operations' concept for distributed maritime operations, the Office of Naval Research (ONR) and the U.S. Navy's Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) program are sponsoring the development of a cloud-computing environment called Cloud-to-Edge (CTE), according to an ONR release.

By harnessing the power of cloud computing and big-data fusion, the CTE environment will enhance the agility and responsiveness of naval warfighters.

The CTE environment is designed for use by Sailors and Marines across land, sea and air domains. It enables secure combat system development; automated software testing and analysis;

and scalable simulation. It also improves readiness, through extensive pre-mission training, feedback and assessment, and enhances operational information-gathering and decision-making.

> *"This is a great example of ONR partnering with Navy SBIR to fill a technology gap, by helping companies transition and commercialize their technologies at scale."*
>
> *ONR Executive Director E. Anne Sandel*

The goal is to enable the Navy to make software changes (without requiring additional authorities) and assess the performance of CTE environments either on single vessels or within larger carrier strike groups and against a variety of mission scenarios. The result will be certified software, deployable by the Navy on demand, for all carrier strike groups.

ONR Executive Director E. Anne Sandel said, "This is a great example of ONR partnering with Navy SBIR to fill a technology gap, by helping companies transition and commercialize their technologies at scale."

"An important step in getting the CTE environment to the fleet is ONR's work with Navy SBIR to accelerate technology development by partnering with small businesses," SBIR Director Bob Smith added.

The key component of the CTE environment is the Automated Test and Re-Test (ATRT) system, which delivers software-driven capabilities to the warfighter as quickly as possible. Virginia-based company Innovative Defense Technologies (IDT) developed ATRT after receiving SBIR funding to design technology that would promote rapid integration, testing and certification of new and updated software.

Earlier this year, the Navy successfully tested ATRT as part

of the AEGIS Virtual Twin project – which involved the tactical deployment of a virtualized AEGIS Weapon System as a digital twin to the existing physical one.

The virtual twin contains all the computer code used by the existing AEGIS Weapon System. Made up of multiple computer servers, it occupies a relatively small amount of space aboard a ship, does not interfere with the ship's combat systems and is ideal for training and software testing.

Several AEGIS Virtual Twin systems were demonstrated on the USS Arleigh Burke, USS Ralph Johnson and USS Thomas Hudner. During the tests aboard the Thomas Hudner, the Virtual Twin executed a successful anti-air warfare engagement (operating as the tactical system) and demonstrated the capability to test and deploy a software update in less than 24 hours.

James Geurts, assistant secretary of the Navy for research, development and acquisition, described the tests as a pathway to revolutionize the speed at which the Navy can modernize current systems and keep pace with future threats.

"Success stories like IDT, ATRT and CTE environment demonstrate how the Navy leverages the expertise of small businesses to enable technology adoption at the pace of innovation," Smith said. "Companies that do business with SBIR are helping to strengthen America's naval advantage for years to come."

Speakers at Modern Day Marine

Stress Commandant's Directives

Lt. Gen. Eric M. Smith, deputy commandant for combat development and integration, speaks during the opening ceremony for the 2019 Modern Day Marine expo at Marine Corps Base Quantico, Virginia, on Sept. 17. U.S. Marine Corps/Lance Cpl. Yuritzy Gomez

QUANTICO, Va. – The Marines' annual appeal to industry is focusing heavily this year on capabilities that would allow distributed Marine Corps forces to not just survive but persist within the deadly areas created by the kinds of high-technology weapons that a peer competitor – such as China – can create.

The priorities at the Modern Day Marine exposition were unmanned systems, man-machine teaming, long-range precision fires, more secure and alternative forms of communications to counter the adversaries' demonstrated abilities to intercept, jam and distort traditional means, and systems that better integrate with the U.S. Navy – all directives from Commandant Gen. David H. Berger.

> *"We're focused on a naval campaign. How does the Marine Corps support naval operations."*
>
> *Col. Tim Barrick, director of wargaming, Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory*

And it all must be lighter, faster and affordable, Lt. Gen. Eric Smith, the Corps' top future capabilities officer, stressed.

"We're looking for autonomy, man-unmanned teaming, we need to get lighter. … I'm willing to take risks," Smith, commanding general of Marine Combat Development Command, told industry representatives on Sept. 17 at the opening of Modern Day Marine.

Smith repeated the commandant's guidance that new systems should be "good, not exquisite. … It's not an existential threat to use good enough for a few years until the budget improves." But the ultimate need is the ability "to persist in the weapons-engagement zone. Not survive, persist," he said.

Col. Brian Magnuson, Office of Naval Research Science and Technology military deputy, joined leaders from the Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory for a "Marine Corps Futures" panel during the Modern Day Marine expo. U.S. Navy/John F. Williams

Panels of the senior officers and civilian officials in the Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory (MCWL) and the Combat Development and Integration division under Smith's command repeated those views as they discussed their programs. And all of them emphasized the focus on integrating with the Navy in ways that would allow the Corps to help naval task forces get through the anti-access, area-denial capabilities that China – and to a lesser extent Russia and Iran – can create with long-range missiles,

mines and other
weapons.

Col. Tim Barrick, director of wargaming at MCWL, said Berger's guidance to the Corps emphasized the need for additional wargaming to shape the missions and capabilities they would need to meet the emerging great power competition. To meet that demand, the Marines are planning to create a wargaming center that would go from 22 to more than 200 personnel and serve not just the Marines but the joint forces in the Washington, D.C., region.

Barrick said they were stressing three concepts: distributed operations; littoral operations in a contested environment; and expeditionary advanced based operations. "We're focused on a naval campaign. How does the Marine Corps support naval operations," he added.

Many briefers said the level of Marine integration and cooperation with the Navy leadership and senior staffs was the highest they had ever seen. The greatest deficiencies cited by the briefers was a lack of long-range precision fires in the ground forces, the need for command, control and communications systems that are mobile enough to move with small distributed combat units but work in the highly contested information environment, and logistics methods and systems that can sustain those distributed units within the deadly "weapons-engagement zone."

Unmanned and robotic systems were proposed as possible solutions to some of those capabilities gaps.

Vigor Lays Keel for Army's Next-Generation Landing Craft

An artist's rendering of the U.S. Army's next-generation landing craft, the MSV(L). Rendering courtesy of Vigor

VANCOUVER, Wash. – Representatives from the U.S. Army and federal and local elected officials joined Vigor employees for a keel laying ceremony on Sept. 16, celebrating the first milestone in the construction of the Army's next-generation landing craft, the Maneuver Support Vessel (Light) or MSV(L), according to a release from Vigor.

The nearly billion-dollar contract to build MSV(L) was awarded to Vigor in October 2017. The new design, developed in partnership with BMT, dramatically improves the capabilities of the current LCM-8 and provides the optimal combination of performance, operational flexibility and life-cycle cost while maintaining the reliability and versatility of the Army's current craft.

The MSV(L) prototype is named in honor of Staff Sgt. Elroy F. Wells, an Army watercraft operator killed in action in 1970 in Vietnam.

The event began with a welcome from Vigor CEO Frank Foti. Remarks were delivered by Rep. Jaime Herrera Beutler (R-Wash.), Vancouver Mayor Anne McEnerny-Ogle, Timothy Goddette, U.S. Army Program Executive Office, Combat Support & Combat Service Support and Col. (P) Jered P. Helwig, the Armys chief of transportation. Helwig also gave the dedication honoring the service of Staff Sgt. Elroy F. Wells.

The ceremonial welds performed by Beutler and Helwig marked not only the start of the MSV(L) program but also the beginning of a new era in shipbuilding at Vigor's recently acquired state-of-the-art all aluminum fabrication facility in

Vancouver. Vigor expects the site to employ up to 400 workers by 2023 building high-performance military craft, workboats and aluminum fast ferries in addition to MSV(L).

Once the Staff Sgt. Elroy F. Wells is completed and testing and refinements have occurred, the schedule calls for four vessels in the low-rate production phase, followed by up to 32 vessels once full production is underway. Vigor's MSV(L) team consists of partners such as BMT, Gladding-Hearn and Northrop Grumman.

Naval Special Warfare Acquisition Corps Established

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Navy has established the Naval Special Warfare (NSW) Unrestricted Line (URL) Officer Acquisition Corps (AC) and Major Program Manager (MPM) career path, the chief of naval personnel public affairs said in a release.

The NSW URL AC will professionalize an acquisitions career path for SEAL officers and build a cadre of leaders who can expertly develop, field and sustain capabilities needed for NSW's and the Navy's future operating environment, according to the release.

Experience, education and certification requirements for major acquisition command selection result in career patterns different from URL officers who serve exclusively in their primary warfare specialty. The most significant difference is the need for NSW URL AC designated officers to serve in acquisition-related billets before and after completing NSW O-5 command or NSW O-5 acquisition milestone assignments.

SEAL officers selected for NSW URL AC will receive designation as NSW AC eligible via an additional qualification designator.

NSW AC eligible candidates can compete for Major Program Management (MPM) and sequential major acquisition command slating after a minimum of 48 months of experience in acquisition-coded or related billets. Officers who accept orders to NSW O-5 acquisition milestone assignments will not be eligible to compete for URL major operational command.

The first NSW O-5 acquisition milestone board is slated to occur concurrently with the NSW commanding officer/executive officer administrative board in 2019.

Navy Pushing to Sustain Lethal Capacity with New DASN Office

PENTAGON – The Navy has created a new leadership position – deputy assistant secretary of sustainment – in its work to sustain and grow lethal capacity and move faster to respond to the growing size of the fleet.

"Building a workforce aligned to mission is critical to competing and winning," James Geurts, assistant secretary of the Navy for research, development and acquisition, announced on Sept. 13. "Establishing a deputy assistant secretary of the Navy for sustainment [DASN-S] to develop, monitor and implement policy and guidance throughout the Navy will enable us to better plan, program, budget and execute the Navy's sustainment mission."

Geurts added, “Sustainment is as critical as new construction to ensure the Navy is ready to deploy. This position will allow us to improve and align the complex drivers of maintenance and modernization completion – that in turn will increase our output to the fleet. We have to get better, and this will help.”

The new DASN-S position will report directly to Geurts and have oversight of sustainment funding across the Department of the Navy, which will be important to meeting Defense Department readiness goals. Additionally, DASN-S will oversee and manage Navy and U.S. Marine Corps sustainment and life-cycle management policies.

Additionally, to improve maintenance flow, the Navy is taking other steps. For surface ship maintenance availabilities conducted at private shipyards, the sea service is adjusting its contracting strategies to group multiple surface ships into one contract. This will provide workload stability for the private shipyards.

The Navy is also executing a “perform to plan” initiative that identifies performance gaps and barriers to execution so they can be addressed to improve performance. For submarine and aircraft carrier maintenance, that are generally done at one of the four shipyards, the Navy is executing a 20-year shipyard infrastructure optimization plan that coordinates required dry dock maintenance and modernization, optimizing workflow and replacing outmoded capital equipment.

“Across the board, we need to improve how we execute ship maintenance, whether it’s done in a public or private shipyard,” said Vice Adm. Tom Moore, commander of Naval Sea Systems Command. “We need to work with our industrial partners to provide workload stability and, for the Naval shipyards, we need to provide our 21st-century workforce with 21st-century facilities and equipment.”

“To win in an era of great power competition, we need to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our public and private shipyards so we can deliver combat-ready ships to our Sailors and Marines,” Geurts added.