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REPORT NO. 92  
HISTORICAL SECTION (G.S.)  
ARMY HEADQUARTERS

1 December 1960

The Canadian Rangers

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The Canadian Rangers

1. This report describes the organization in 1947 of the Canadian Rangers as a Corps of the Reserve Militia and traces its development until the end of 1954. As a consequence of the American lead in nuclear weapons over the only potential enemy, whose economy was recovering slowly from the destruction inflicted by the German Army during the Second World War, there did not seem to be any great urgency to defensive preparations in North America prior to the outbreak of fighting in Korea in 1950 and the intensification of a state of "cold war" elsewhere. Even then the general public refused to get excited, indifference rather than faith in the efficiency of the United Nations organization seeming to govern the attitude of the man-in-the-street towards world problems.

Antecedents

2. In an effort to reassure an alarmed populace in British Columbia and to copy Britain's Home Guard, Maj Gen R.O. Alexander, G.O.C. -in-C, Pacific Command had suggested early in February 1942 the formation of a voluntary organization of Coast Defence Guards. On 5 March authority was granted for both Pacific and Atlantic Commands to form such units as part of the Reserve Militia, although priority was to be given to the west coast. During the following weeks, while action was being taken to create such independent companies, the official view changed. The Pacific Coast Militia Rangers was named as a Corps of the Active Militia (by General Order 320 dated 12 August 1942), but the reserve companies intended for Atlantic Command were actually authorized as supernumerary to existing Reserve Army units. Increasing German U-boat activity in the lower St. Lawrence resulted in enough additional companies being recruited along the Gaspé coast of M.D. No. 5 to justify an additional Reserve Army battalion for Les Fusiliers du St.-Laurent.<sup>1</sup>

3. Companies of the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers were organized primarily in the isolated areas of British Columbia – along the coast, on Vancouver Island, on the Queen Charlotte Islands and near the mountain passes of the interior. By March 1943 there were approximately 15,000 trappers, loggers and fisher-men organized in 126 companies, which reported to a special staff increment headed by Lt.-Col. T.A.H. Taylor at Pacific Command Headquarters. Equipment initially consisted only of sporting rifles, steel helmets and armbands. Subsequent issues were waterproof jackets and trousers, Sten guns, .30/06 Enfield rifles and pistols. Training of a very limited nature was conducted during leisure time and without remuneration. Duties were to patrol the local area, to report any findings of a suspicious nature and to fight, if required, as guerrilla bands against any enemy invader.<sup>2</sup> A one time officer in the Irish Republican Army and now resident of British Columbia, Brendan Kennelly, was appointed to instruct in guerrilla warfare.<sup>3</sup>

4. During the autumn of 1943 the overall strength of the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers was reduced to about 10,000 by streamlining the then existing 123 companies. A proposal to reduce all but the 29 companies in coastal areas north of the top of Vancouver Island was approved by the Minister of National Defence in December 1944. No action was taken, however, because the Japanese then began to launch

free, unmanned balloons carrying small explosive charges against North America.<sup>4</sup> Fortunately, only 90 of these balloons landed on Canadian soil and no damage was done.<sup>5</sup>

5. On 25 August 1945 Lt.-Gen. Charles Foulkes, newly appointed Chief of the General Staff, recommended to the Minister of National Defence that the 123 continuing companies of Pacific Coast Militia Rangers should be reduced to nil strength. He argued as follows:

It is possible that in another war, valuable Local Defence tasks such as Coast Watching, co-operation with police forces on anti-sabotage duties in remote regions and in armed action (pending arrival of Army units) against enemy raids on isolated localities, would be performed by units organized along the lines of the PCMR. Under peace conditions, I feel that it is very doubtful that there will be a requirement for a Force of this nature, but it is difficult during the present period of transition to determine whether or not this will be so. However it may be found desirable at some future date to form a Reserve Militia along the general lines of the PCMR. In the meantime until conditions become more stabilized, it is considered the PCMR should be disbanded.

In this connection, personnel desirous of maintaining their interest in the Army might do so by joining the Reserve Army in the meantime, if and where sufficient numbers would warrant the necessary localization of units or sub-units.<sup>6</sup>

6. The Minister agreed. On 30 September he officiated at an official “stand down” ceremony at Vancouver. All companies were disbanded with effect from 15 October. In recognition of their voluntary and unpaid services, ex-members were allowed to purchase their rifles for the nominal sum of \$5.00.<sup>7</sup>

#### Plans for a new corps

7. A Pacific Coast Militia Rangers Association was formed shortly thereafter and incorporated under the Societies Act of British Columbia. Its managing director, Lt.-Col. T.A.H. Taylor, began bombarding Cabinet Ministers and other Members of Parliament from British Columbia with requests to assist in obtaining military status and recognition. Legally, of course, this was impossible, because the Association was a purely civilian organization. Consideration was, however, being given by D.M.O. & P. to the possibility of retaining the experience gained for the post-war Canadian Army, which was still in the planning stages.<sup>8</sup>

8. On 18 April 1946 Maj.-Gen. F. F. Worthington, G. O. C. Western Command, sent a personal letter to the V.C. G. S. describing the considerable military interest encountered by Brigadier T. E. Snow, D. O. C., M. D. No. 13, during a recent trip to the Northwest Territories. Transportation difficulties and the smallness of the scattered communities mitigated against the establishment of units of the Reserve Army, but General Worthington suggested that rifle clubs might be authorized.<sup>9</sup> The V. C. G. S. replied that there would be difficulty exercising any form of military control over rifle clubs, whose training must also be of a restricted nature.<sup>10</sup> But he directed that studies be made envisaging an organization along the lines of the wartime Pacific Coast Militia Rangers. The D. C. G. S.(A). felt that the areas to be covered should include both coasts and the northland - small, isolated communities where there would be no competition with Reserve Force units. His understanding was that statutory authority already existed for such a force as part of the Reserve Militia. An appropriate name would be “Militia Rangers.<sup>11</sup>

9. D. M. O. & P. got busy and on 17 June 1946 a paper was circulated to the several G.Os.C indicating that the formation of such a part-time volunteer organization of Canadian Rangers would be discussed at the Conference of Commanders slated for the end of the year. Such an organization would be confined to the sparsely populated areas of Canada along the east and west coasts and along the fringe

of the northern limits of population, where there would be no Reserve Force units of the Canadian Army. Personnel would be trained to act as guides and scouts, to increase their local knowledge of the surrounding country, and to act as guerrillas if necessary.<sup>12</sup> Answers to a questionnaire subsequently circulated were embodied in the outline plan placed before the Conference of G.Os.C. with the C. G. S. in Ottawa on 5-6 December 1946. Service should be voluntary and unpaid, in units of the Reserve Militia. Obsolescent .30/06 Enfield rifles and an annual issue of ammunition would be the only stores issued. Training should include elementary military topography, message writing, use of wireless and other basic essentials consistent with the envisaged role. Organization and accounting should be handled by individual Commands. The Conference agreed on there being a requirement for such an organization, but it was left to the discretion of individual G.Os.C. to recommend the formation of units in areas where it was considered desirable and practicable.<sup>14</sup>

10. Legislation was drafted to amend Appendix I of The King's Regulations and Orders for the Canadian Militia so that such units could be formed as part of the Reserve Militia. During the Minister of National Defence's visit to Western Canada in March 1947 information was released to the press that a Canadian Ranger organization would be announced shortly. Order in Council P.C. 1644 of 23 May 1947 authorized the formation of the Canadian Rangers as a Corps of the Reserve Militia, but considerable difficulty was experienced drafting a satisfactory policy statement. Commenting on an early draft, one officer at Headquarters, Western Command wrote:

We don't want, and we don't need, further organized military bodies supplementing Active and Reserve Force but what we do need is that small groups of specially adapted people take an interest in the defence of their country in order that we may derive the greatest benefits from their knowledge and particular facilities and it is necessary that they be organized to some extent; but I am afraid that if we try to make them too military we will certainly stand to lose by it. I can understand that the "powers that be" wish to retain the strictest possible control over anyone with firearms, particularly when issued by the Department and I can see the reason for it but I also suggest that if the vetting is properly done and interest taken by the respective Commanders, that the organization can be kept in line and a great deal of benefit will accrue to the Forces and the country in general.<sup>15</sup>

11. Only on 12 August was a satisfactory General Staff Policy Statement ready for issue. This stated that units were to be organized and function only in the sparsely populated coastal areas and in the area north of the main belt of population across Canada; they would not be located in areas where Reserve Force units either existed or were contemplated. Overall strength was limited to 5000 all ranks, broken down as follows:

Eastern Command	60
Quebec Command	550
Central Command	300
Prairie Command	1490
Western Command	<u>2600</u>
	5000

Because of variations in roles, location and terrain it was impossible to create a standard establishment. The largest unit would be the company, with a headquarters and not more than five platoons. Each platoon would consist of not more than 30 other ranks and be commanded by a Reserve Militia lieutenant. It would be divided into sections commanded by sergeants. These officers and sergeants would exercise command only over personnel of the Canadian Rangers, except when called out for service or placed on active service, when they would have military status junior to those of equivalent rank in the other components of the Canadian Army. In war the role & the Canadian Rangers would be:

- (a) Provision of guides to organized troops within own area.
- (b) Coast watching.
- (c) Assistance to the RCMP and/or Provincial Police in the discovery, reporting and apprehension of enemy agents or saboteurs. The reporting of other suspicious activities.
- (d) Immediate local defence against sabotage by small enemy detachment or saboteurs and to assist and augment civilian protective arrangements against saboteurs, within the area in which the organization is authorized to operate.
- (e) Reporting, locating and rescue work, including first aid treatment in connection with aircraft in distress.

Its peace-time role was envisaged as:

- (a) Provision of guides to troops on exercises when required.
- (b) The preparation of local defence schemes referred to in (d) above.
- (c) Collection of detailed information concerning their local area likely to be of assistance to them in carrying out their roles in war and the documenting of such information with any necessary sketches.
- (d) Provision of rescue parties for civilian or military purposes, where required.**16**

Companies would be designated numerically within each Command, followed by the locality concerned; but platoons would be designated by locality only. Control would be vested in the G. O. C. of the particular Command.

12. Leadership was to be sought from "well established" men permanently located in an area, after "security checks" had been made. No definite limitations were made in respect of age or physical fitness for officers and other ranks; what was desired were the most suitable and desirable residents of an area. Furthermore:

Personnel should be drawn mainly from those who for reasons of age, category or other conditions would not be available on mobilization for active service in other elements of the Canadian Army. However, there will be no objection to the recruitment during peace of personnel who would be expected to depart for service elsewhere with a mobilizing unit, except that no substantial portion of any unit will comprise personnel in this category. The larger proportion of the strength will comprise personnel who will be expected to remain in the unit area during peace and war.

Rangers would not be trained in, nor expected to perform, close order or arms drill. Clothing would not be issued in peacetime, merely distinctive armbands. No equipment would be provided, except Rifles No. 4 Mk I\* on loan. Rangers would serve without pay, except when attending courses of instruction, when called out for service, or placed upon active service.

13. The organization of the Canadian Rangers was to be conducted in four phases under individual Command arrangements: selection of company and platoon areas; acceptance of these by Army

Headquarters and authorization of Companies; selection of company, platoon and section commanders; local recruitment of other ranks to the strength authorized.

14. General Worthington had been busy planning the organization of Ranger companies within Western Command but, as he subsequently made clear in a letter to Army Headquarters, considered it better to progress slowly and not attempt overall coverage at the outset. Many of the men selected as leaders, for example, would not understand the necessity for long delays in obtaining military authorization. Therefore, careful scrutiny by the R. C. M. P. in Alberta and the Northwest Territories and by provincial police in British Columbia was given each potential officer before his services were sought. General Worthington hoped that the former captain of Pacific Coast Militia Rangers at Dawson City would take on a company: "He has been carefully vetted and in actual fact is the brother-in-law of the RCMP Inspector - a very reliable man".<sup>17</sup>

### **First companies formed**

15. On 22 August 1947 General Worthington requested authority to form the first two companies - at Dawson City and Whitehorse. On 4 September the Minister of National Defence authorized, under the provisions of Section 20 of the Militia Act, the formation of:

No. 1 (Dawson City) Company, with platoons at Mayo, KeDo, Selkirk and Dawson City.

No. 2 (Whitehorse) Company, with platoons at Burwash Landing, Tealin, Carcross and Whitehorse.<sup>18</sup>

16. General Worthington's plans called for the subsequent organization of 13 more companies.<sup>19</sup> The result would be coverage of localities along the Mackenzie River and North-West Highway system, where it would not be economical or desirable to station operational troops in the event of an emergency, exposed coastal localities of British Columbia where communications were poor, and protection for certain vulnerable points along lines of communication in the interior. Although approved at Army Headquarters, Maj.-Gen. G. C. Mann who was acting for the C. G. S., emphasized two basic principles in his reply-dated 4 October:

- (a) that when selecting locations the emphasis should be on the Northern and Coastal areas, where the necessity for these units is more apparent;
- (b) that as no funds have been provided for this purpose, expense to the public should be avoided.<sup>20</sup>

About this time Sir Patrick Ashley Cooper, Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company, expressed surprise that the Canadian Army had not sought the assistance of his organization.<sup>21</sup> In view of the fact that nowadays there were oil companies, mining companies and other trading organizations in the north, however, Col. L.M. Chesley, A/B.G.S. (Plans), did not consider it wise to link local companies of Canadian Rangers too closely with Hudson's Bay Company factors.<sup>22</sup> Thus General Foulkes wrote Sir Patrick Ashley Cooper on 5 November merely asking that General Officers Commanding be permitted to contact Hudson's Bay Company representatives in the various projected unit areas and seek their co-operation in the organization of the Canadian Rangers.<sup>23</sup>

17. Brigadier R.O.G. Morton, Officer Commanding the Prairie Command, subsequently interviewed Mr. P.A. Chester, Managing Director of the Hudson's Bay Company at Winnipeg. The latter welcomed the suggestion that Hudson's Bay Company factors at isolated posts should act as platoon commanders. Senior Officials of the Canadian National and Canadian Pacific Railways promised similar assistance in forming detachments at small isolated stations along the transcontinental lines. R.C.M.P. officers in

Winnipeg also made useful suggestions. So soon as the required unit locations should be firm, Brigadier Morton planned to ask officials of the three companies to suggest leaders.<sup>24</sup>

18. Officers of Quebec Command sought assistance from large mining and paper companies, the clergy and other organizations operating in the north in planning a tentative organization of four companies with a total of 11 platoons.<sup>25</sup> These were:

No. 1 (Mingan) Company

Anticosti Platoon  
Harrington Harbour Platoon  
Blanc Sablon Platoon

No. 2 (Seven Islands) Company

Clarke City Platoon  
Nichicun Lake Platoon  
Baie Comeau Platoon

No. 3 (La Tuque) Company

La Tuque Platoon  
Chibougamau Platoon

No. 4 (Forth Chimo) Company

Fort Mackenzie Platoon  
Fort Harrison Platoon  
Rupert House Platoon

These were authorized on 27 February 1948.<sup>26</sup>

19. On March 1948 Western Command requested authority to form a company headquarters at Yellowknife, with four platoons to be located (probably) at Snare River, Fort Providence, Fort Simpson and Wrigley. Although 24 Field Squadron, R.C.E. of the Reserve Force was being relocated at Yellowknife it was not considered that there need be any competition or confusion because:

- (a) The type of personnel most desirable for the work characterized by the Canadian Rangers is not generally acceptable to the Reserve Force due to physical standards, mainly age.
- (b) It is considered necessary to establish the Coy HQ in Yellowknife because of the communication factor. There is no intention of enlisting the service of any personnel potentially useful to a unit of the Reserve Force.
- (c) It is considered that the establishment of a Canadian Ranger H.Q. in Yellowknife will assist in drawing to the attention of the residents the fact that the Department of National Defence is progressing with plans for the defence of the North, and thus increase their interest in the Reserve Force.<sup>27</sup>

Moreover, Yellowknife was the main supply and transportation centre for a large area of the Northwest Territories, with bush pilots, prospectors and trappers using it as a base. On 15 March Western Command requested authorization for a further company headquarters at Fort Smith with platoons probably at Fort Resolution, Hay River, Chipewyan, Embarras and Fort McMurray.<sup>28</sup>



20. On 6 April 1948 the Minister of National Defence queried the C.G.S. as to whether it would be “a good thing to make General Worthington Honorary Colonel of Canadian Rangers and give him work to do in connection with their organization?”<sup>29</sup> General Worthington had been retired from the Canadian Army during the previous autumn, but during his tenure of Pacific and Western Commands had been keenly interested successively in the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers and the Canadian Rangers. Therefore his appointment as Honorary Colonel Commandant of the Canadian Rangers was recommended, and approved by the Minister of National Defence on 27 April 1948.<sup>30</sup> General Worthington did not remain long in retirement, however; effective 1 October 1948 he became Special Advisor to the Minister of National Defence as Civil Defence Co-ordinator.

**Growth on Paper**

21. Since the Canadian Rangers would be undertaking operational activities at their peace-time locations only, unlike units of the Active and Reserve Forces, the interests of security suggested that such locations should not form part of the unit designation. On 3 May, therefore, the acting C.G.S. requested approval from the Minister of National Defence to delete such territorial designations and to number all companies consecutively across the country, as they were formed, instead of separately for each command.<sup>31</sup> This having been agreed to, the following was notified with effect from 10 May 1948:

**Presentation Designation**

**Redesignation Authorized**

No. 1 (Dawson City) Company, Canadian Rangers	No.1 Company, Canadian Rangers
No. 2 (Whitehorse) Company, Canadian Rangers	No. 2 Company, Canadian Rangers
No. 1 (Mingan) Company, Canadian Rangers	No. 3 Company, Canadian Rangers
No. 2 (Seven Islands) Company, Canadian Rangers	No. 4 Company, Canadian Rangers
No. 3 (La Tuque) Company, Canadian Rangers	No. 5 Company, Canadian Rangers
No. 4 (Fort Chimo) Company, Canadian Rangers	No. 6 Company, Canadian Rangers

Nos. 7 and 8 Companies were now authorized at Yellowknife and Fort Smith respectively.<sup>32</sup> (Effectively 3 February 1949, platoons were designated numerically within each company and localities dropped from their designations also.)

22. During May 1948 Western Command sought authorization for further companies; after study by D.M.O. & P., approval was sought from the Minister of National Defence on 25 June for:

- No. 9 Company with H.Q. at Tofino, B.C.
- No. 10 Company with H.Q. at Alert Bay, B.C.
- No. 11 Company with H.Q. at Bella Coola, B.C.
- No. 12 Company with H.Q. at Ocean Falls, B.C.
- No. 13 Company with H.Q. at Terrace, B.C.

With the exception of No. 13 Company and two platoons of No. 11 Company, sub-units of the above would be employed primarily in a coast watching role. This submission emphasized that:

...certain of these proposed locations, such as Ucluelet, Sooke and Terrace, are sites where it was found necessary to station operational troops in the last war. The presence of such units as the Canadian Rangers at these exposed posts would be invaluable and would ease the demands on manpower in an emergency.**33**

Approval having been given, with effect from 28 June, authority was sought on 21 July for No. 14 Company, with headquarters at Smithers, B.C. and platoons also at Ootsa Lake and Nazco, and No. 15 Company, with headquarters at Fort George, B.C. and platoons also at McBride and Hudson Hope. These were designed to give additional coverage to the main communications axes connecting Prince Rupert with the interior and the south. Although a company of the Rock Mountain Rangers was already localized at Prince George, its importance as a communications centre and the fact that the Reserve Force sub-unit would be withdrawn on mobilization made it desirable to position Canadian Rangers there.**34**

23. On 12 August 1948 Brigadier J.P.E. Bernatchez wrote from Winnipeg that, following extensive liaison with the R.C.M.P., C.N.R., C.P.R. and the Hudson's Bay Company, Prairie Command had selected four company and 18 platoon locations. The headquarters of companies were to be at Nelson House and Norway House in Manitoba, Carrot River in Saskatchewan and Kenora in Ontario. Although Kenora, Ignace and Sioux Lookout of the last-mentioned company area infringed on Reserve Force territory, their inclusion was recommended as being extremely vulnerable communication centres. Furthermore:

It is unlikely that Ranger units will clash with the Reserve Force units which are finally established and draw a younger set centred in the city. The Ranger personnel would be older and of the trapper, guide and hunter class whose work excludes them from participating in Reserve Force activities. This can be carefully watched from this Headquarters.**35**

The long delay in taking action was blamed on the paucity of road and rail facilities, a situation aggravated by unusual floods that spring, but Brigadier Bernatchez now hoped to proceed right ahead to phases III and IV. Their formation as Nos. 16, 17, 18, and 19 Companies was authorized with effect from 8 September 1948.**36**

### **Reality vs. Appearance**

24. When a stocktaking was attempted during October 1948 of the progress actually made, however, the B.G.S. (Plans) received a severe jolt. After an existence of 15 months there were only 44 officers and 57 other ranks actually belonging to the Canadian Rangers, of whom 27 officers and 53 other ranks were in Western Command.**37** Because of his pre-war familiarity with the Northwest Territories and Yukon Radio System operated by the Royal Canadian Signals, Brigadier W.J. McGill, D.C.G.S., did try to inject a rational note on 17 November:

I agree that the strength of the Canadian Rangers is most disappointing, but consider the most such an organization can hope to accomplish in time of peace is preparation of a suitable organizational

structure. Unless the habits of the average Canadian change in a marked degree, I would be very much surprised to find any large proportion of the personnel of an outpost prepared to join the organization in peace – whereas they would come in 100% in war.

It might of course be possible to increase the interest by provision of a uniform; certain additional equipment, notably binoculars, compasses and other gear useful in the bush; and by issue of pay for training.

However, I consider that acceptance of a commitment of this type would not be in accordance with the basic principles behind the organization of the Rangers. They are intended essentially to be individuals who report and act on such information as they are able to acquire when going about their normal tasks. The only occasion on which they would be expected to act as a formed body would be in an emergency.

One major difficulty with the Rangers will of course be that of intercommunication – both physical and the passage of reports. In war it will probably be necessary to provide suitable simple wireless sets for intercommunication from isolated platoons to Company HQ and from Company HQ to a Report Centre, which might be a regular station of the CASS [Canadian Army Signal System] or NWT & Y Radio System. Provision of such sets in peace might serve to stimulate interest, and would provide personnel with experience in operating them as well as providing a means of normal contact from isolated localities to the outside. However, this would mean acceptance of a commitment both for provisions and maintenance which might well grow beyond reasonable bounds, and which would undoubtedly result in some added problems for the Army wireless stations operating at the end of such networks as it would be very difficult to eliminate personal traffic.**38**

The result, however, was that the C.G.S. wrote personally to each G.O.C. on 3 December, for reports and suggestions.**39**

25. During the summer season the G.S.O. II (Intelligence) of Quebec Command had been flown north by the R.C.A.F. to make a survey of the areas where it was proposed to locate units of the Canadian Rangers. Because of poor means of communications between the northern trading posts, it was recommended to Ottawa on 7 December that company headquarters should remain dormant until there should be an emergency when wireless sets should be provided so that they might maintain contacts with their platoons.**40** Maj.-Gen. R.O.G. Morton agreed with his staff that, so long as peace prevailed, it would be preferable to supply and administer most platoons direct from Headquarters, Quebec Command. In a further appreciation dated 17 December, the G.O.C. elaborated. Small arms training might possibly be done on a platoon or section level, but the Eskimos and Indians living in isolated communities were excellent marks-men and probably would use the annual 100-round allotment of ammunition (the only remuneration received) for hunting seal and reindeer. Companies had been organized at Mingan, Baie Comeau and Fort Chimo with 11 of their 14 platoons, and the Port Harrison company would form in 1949. Officers had been appointed and recruiting was proceeding under platoon arrangements, but a strength returned had been delayed by communication difficulties. General Morton further emphasized that it would never be easy to keep in touch with the other ranks, many of whom were Indians and Eskimos of migratory habits.**41**

26. On 8 December Maj.-Gen. H.W. Foster replied from Halifax that, although nominal rolls had not yet been compiled, a ranger organization was well in hand. An allotment of 60 all ranks was not enough for Eastern Command, however, and authority had already been requested to raise 200 in Nova Scotia and 100 in New Brunswick. Zone representatives in Nova Scotia of the (Dominion) Department of Fisheries were all ex-officers of the armed forces and the enthusiastic about the ranger idea. Through

them local fishermen had been instructed in the duties required. Many of these men had belonged to the Civilian Aircraft Detection Corps during the Second World War and performed similar duties for the R.C.A.F. However:

We have not issued any rifles or ammunition because these men already possess their own firearms and are not particular in that respect of it. They are however, very keen to be issued with a uniform.<sup>42</sup>

At the moment negotiations were under way in New Brunswick with Department of Fisheries representatives and larger lumber companies to produce an organization to that of Nova Scotia. Prince Edward Island had been ignored because it was cultivated throughout to the shoreline and there were no industrial targets to interest saboteurs. Nothing had been attempted in Newfoundland or Labrador; however Newfoundland was not to become Canada's 10<sup>th</sup> province until 31 March 1949.

27. On 9 December Maj.-Gen. C. Vokes explained in his reply to the C.G.S that nothing had been attempted because correspondence received by his staff from Army Head-quarters suggested that the "formation of units of the Canadian Rangers is not anticipated in any Central Command".<sup>43</sup> Having twice travelled the Cochrane-Moosonee-James Bay branch line of the Ontario Northland Railway, General Vokes realized that some sort of ranger organization could be organized. But;

The population is for the most part CREE Indian, some with scotch names and blue eyes who exist by trapping and guiding for goose and duck hunters in the Autumn. They are most indolent and unreliable and born lazy. Hunger is the only motivating force, plus the propagation of their race, at which they are very adept.... I doubt the value of these Indians in a para military organization.

I don't think there is any need to organize in this area. Nothing goes on in the James Bay area which is not quickly known through the natural curiosity of the natives. The Hudson Bay factor and the missionaries plus the RCMP pretty well know everything which goes on between ALBANY and MOOSSONEE through the moccasin telegraph and their private wireless.

Moreover, enemy operations would be most difficult because of the muskeg, interspersed by rivers navigable only by canoe. If desired however, he would endeavour to organize small units of white inhabitants at Moosonee, Moose factory and Fraserville.

28. In this letter dated 15 December, Brigadier Bernatchez explained that a recent survey of what had been attempted in Prairie Command had led to the submission of an entirely new plan to D.M.O. & P. After two companies, involving seven officers and 11 other ranks had been organized around Hudson's Bay Company posts, it was realized that, except for two of the proposed company locations, the complete Ranger organization envisaged for his Command could be superimposed on the Hudson's Bay Company network of fur trading posts. The factors at these posts could serve as platoon commanders and use their own wireless for intercommunication.<sup>44</sup>

29. Maj.-Gen. M.H.S. Penhale's letter of 30 December indicated that although 11 companies had been authorized for Western Command, only that at Dawson City had undertaken any training; the others will still appointing officers and/or endeavouring to recruit men. The reasons for slow progress were not difficult to find:

Except at larger centres, such as Dawson City, Whitehorse, Yellowknife, etc., personnel selected are generally operating as prospectors, trappers, surveyors, etc., in the bush for months at the time and are difficult to contact. Such contact by a visiting officer from his Headquarters is necessary at least twice a year for guidance and encouragement and to spur on the organization. Distances

in this Command are tremendous and the time required to accomplish the purpose would require full time employment of one Staff Officer with my present limited establishment and other heavy commitments I cannot provide for this scale of visitation. It was partially for this reason that I requested an addition to the establishment of my GS Branch which was not granted although I had been given previously to understand by yourself that you would look favourably upon such a request.

Another reason for slow progress is the lack of any authorized funds from which to reimburse appointed Ranger officers for out-of-pocket expenses entailed in organizational duties such as visits to outlying points and routine items of postage, telegrams, stationery, etc. As a general rule journeys must be undertaken by air which is expensive and few, if any, are prepared to shoulder such items without compensation. My view is that Commands should be given an allotment from which to expend funds at discretion of GOC's on a basis of straight out-of-pocket expenditures and piece work remuneration according to a sliding scale for tasks accomplished, or alternatively, upon a basis of straight pay and allowance with transportation and travelling expenses at special northern rates.**45**

However, he considered that the organization was well conceived and would pat off the time of emergency, as had the wartime Pacific Coast Militia Rangers. He did not think there need be too much worry about strength:

A reliable individual, be he officer or Ranger, a small group at an outlying point such as Eldorado or even a single man at some far distant post, might well prove very useful in undertaking the tasks envisaged within the present policy both as regards intelligence and security.

But he considered that training courses should be operated during the coming year, for about two weeks each at regional centres, and that an effort should be made to glamourize the Canadian Rangers, both by providing some distinctive item of uniform and by a publicity promotion campaign.

30. In his capacity as honorary Colonel Commandant of the Canadian Rangers, General Worthington had received two replies to a Christmas circular letter sent to all companies for which captains had been appointed. These indicated willingness, despite an ignorance of military procedures. Early in January he emphasized in a letter to the C.G.S that:

A point which must be borne in mind when dealing with these people is that they are not military and must be regarded as partisans. I am convinced that a great value can be obtained providing they are handled right, which will not take a great deal of time, but they must not be left simply to hibernate with nothing to do. Furthermore, such administration as they may have must be simple to a degree as writing is not of their long suits.**46**

31. D.M.O. & P. prepared a consolidated report and appreciation from the above correspondence and the V.C.G.S. then directed that a "go slow policy" be followed for the time being. In consequence, Quebec Command was advised on 20 May 1949 that authority would not be given for a further company and that in delay in completing the Canadian Ranger organization would have to be accepted. On 29 June, however, the V.C.G.S decided that further requests should be decided individually on their respective merits. Therefore a submission from western Command to form Nos. 20 and 21 Companies at Aklavik and Norman Wells was acted upon.**47**

32. At the request of Eastern Command the question of future organization and employment of the Canadian Rangers was discussed during the C.G.S Conference with C.Os.C. On 9 January 1950. According to the minutes:

The CGS advised that no changes were contemplated. The organization should remain as simple as possible. In respect to the proposal to use the Hudson's Bay Co. organization, he agreed that their facilities should be connected with those of the Army's wherever practicable. However, he was opposed to the establishment of a rank structure within the Hudson's Bay organization.<sup>48</sup>

33. The paucity of actual accomplishment is well illustrated by the by the comments made by Captain C.H. Chapman of No. 1 Company to an officer from Army Headquarters visiting Dawson City in another connection on 28 February 1950. This officer noted that Captain Chapman, who operated a general store, was a member of good standing in his community and appeared to be a capable conscientious officer. The following summary of Captain Chapman's remarks was subsequently submitted to D.M.O. & P.:

- (a) Up to the present time no activities, or training had been authorized for the organization. As a result, he considered that interest was decreasing, and that it would soon become impossible to maintain an effective organization.
- (b) He deplored to fact that the rangers were not invited to participate in ex SWEETBRIAR in some role or other: also that they have not been used in connection with the searches carried out at various times for missing air-craft.
- (c) He question the advisability of issuing rifles to Rangers – in his estimation most members were in possession of better rifles than these issued.
- (d) He submitted that the issue of many wireless sets would be very beneficial in order that Coy Comds could establish closer liaison with platoons or sections living in outlying and often remote areas.<sup>49</sup>

### **Further Development**

34. On 30 September 1950 the Canadian Rangers had a actual strength of 50 officers and 472 other ranks, organized in 21 companies, of which 13 in Western, four in Prairie and four in Quebec Commands.<sup>50</sup> Authorized Ranger strengths had been reallocated to provide more vacancies in Eastern Command, which now controlled a Newfoundland Area coinciding with boundaries of Canada's tenth province. Consideration was being given to the authorization of two companies there on in Northern Newfoundland and the other in Labrador. Prairie Command had requested authorization for four additional companies and a complete reorganization of the existing set-up, which would provide a screen of Rangers across the entire northern portion of that Command. On 8 November Western Command was authorized to call up Capt. J.R. Woolgar for employment as Command Canadian Ranger Liaison Officer until 31 March 1951. This officer had been an R.C.A.F. pilot during the Second World War and, since 1 August 1948, commanding No. 7 Company of Canadian Rangers at Yellowknife.<sup>51</sup> By this time, however, a Canadian Army Special Force was now being trained for service with United Nations intervention forces in Korea and thought was being given to what would be Canada's military commitment in Europe to support the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

35. Effective 10 February 1951, Nos. 22 and 23 Companies were authorized: the former, with headquarters at St. Anthony, had five platoons covering Northern Newfoundland and the Labrador side of the Strait of Belle Isle; the latter, with headquarters at Cartwright, had five platoons spread along the coast of Labrador.<sup>52</sup> Effective 8 March, five new companies and 24 new platoons were authorized, one company and nine platoons disappeared, and command of five existing platoons was transferred to there companies within Western Command: No. 18 Company headquarters was transferred from Carrot river to Seven Sisters Falls; headquarters of Nos. 24, 25, 26 and 27 Companies were located at Fort Albany, Big

Beaver House, Brochet and Fond du Lac<sup>53</sup>. On 27 April special authority was given Headquarters, Western Command to issue 12 Bren guns and 12 Sten guns to each of the Fort Radium Platoon, Canadian Rangers and No. 7 Company at Yellowknife because:

- (a) Fort Radium Platoon is composed of employees of the Eldorado Mining and Smelting Company ( a Crown Company) and will defend the uranium mine in an emergency.
- (b) Yellowknife would be an important forward base in the event of operations in the North.<sup>54</sup>

On 21 June Western Command was authorized to issue six Bren guns and six Sten guns to No. 21 Company at Norman wells, where there was an oil refinery, R.C.A.F. landing strip, aviation fuel storage tanks, radio and weather stations.<sup>55</sup> Effective 21 August 1951, Nos. 28 and 29 Companies were authorized for South and North Baffin Island respectively: because of travel difficulties facing prospective company commanders, only the four platoons of the former and three platoons of the later were organized initially; localization of company headquarters were left until later. It was hoped to recruit personnel from among the Eskimos and induce Hudson's bay Company factors to act as platoon commanders.<sup>56</sup> Seven further Companies, numbered 30 to 36, were authorized for the Newfoundland Area of Eastern Command, effective 28 November: headquarters were to be at Lewisporte, Bonavista, New Perlican, Grand Bank, Channel, Port Saunders and Hopedale.<sup>57</sup>

36. On 6 December 1951, a new Canadian Army Policy Statement was issued. Distribution of authorization strength was now:

Eastern Command	550
Quebec Command	550
Central Command	300
Prairie Command	1000
Western Command	2600

At the discretion of the G.O.s.C. Eastern and Western Commands, approval might be given to the location of units on the coast in a coast watching role, so long as there was no interference with the activities and development of Reserve Force units. The role of the Canadian Rangers in war now read:

- (a) To report to the operated army Command Headquarters any suspicious activities occurring in their Ranger areas.
- (b) Provision of guides to organized troops within their own area.
- (c) To assist in immediate local defence against sabotage by small enemy detachments or saboteurs and to assist and augment civilian protective arrangements against saboteurs. This does not include the responsibility for planning or directing local defence.
- (d) Observer Corps duties within their own localities as required to supplement the RCAF Ground Observer Corps.<sup>1</sup>
- (e) Coast watching.

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<sup>1</sup> Authorized 15 October 1951; disabled April 1960.

- (f) Reporting, locating and rescue work, including first aid treatment in connection with aircraft in distress.
- (g) Assistance to the RCMP and/or Provincial Police in the discovery, reporting and apprehensive of enemy agents or saboteurs.**58**

37. Although Capt. A.H. Shea initially had been called out for duty as Canadian Ranger Liaison Officer at Headquarters, eastern Command only for the period 30 January –31 March 1951, his tour was extended and he subsequently received a short-service commission in the active Force.**59** At the request of Prairie Command, early in May Cap. W.J. Cobb, a Hudson’s Bay Company official nominally in command of no. 18 Company, was temporarily appointed its Ranger liaison officer.**60** The same month saw Lt. – Col. T.A.H Taylor called out in Western Command in an effort to receive dwindling interest in British Columbia.**61**

38. General Worthington was pleased to earn of this last and suggested that the “reactivation of the P.C.M.R. into the Canadian Rangers would be invaluable”.**62** His comment that “Taylor is a very unorthodox man although a graduate of R.M.C., “ proved, however, to be premonition. After circularizing former officers of the pacific Militia Coast Rangers in June, Lt. – Col. Taylor visited those interested during July and left the impression that they could go ahead and begin organizing companies on the wartime basis. But D.M.O. & P. was not impressed with this reorganization plan, submitted by Western Command on 10 October 1951.**63** He termed it a “strong effort” to reactivate former units of the pacific Coast Militia Rangers pointed out that “little or no attention is being paid to existing policy. For instance five of the places selected for Ranger Companies now have Reserve Force Units. Furthermore, the isolated Northern part of the province has been completely ignored.**64** Consequently the recommendation was turned down and it was pointed out to western Command that Canadian Rangers must not be considered Home Guard units.**65** Shortly thereafter, however, the Minister of National Defence received letters from irate individuals who had taken Lt. – Col. Taylor seriously enough to organize potential companies of 70 to 90 all ranks, merely to discover that only five to 10 men would likely be enlisted in any one locality. In his replies the Minister of National Defence emphasized that there had been “ some misunderstanding” and went out to point out:

There is considerable difference between the purpose and scale of organization of the Canadian Rangers and the former Pacific Coast Militia rangers. The latter were organized on a fairly extensive basis and included in their terms of references such roles as assisting to repel major attacks, employing guerrilla tactics against a possible invader and anti-sabotage measures. The Canadian Rangers are organized on a limited scale to provided assistance on an individual basis to formed bodies of troops which may be required to operate in coastal areas, to act as coast watchers, and to provide information on any unusual occurrences in their local areas. It is not intended to employ the rangers as guerrillas, in organized defences tasks, in protection of Vital points or in any role that is the assigned responsibility of other elements of the Army or other government agencies.

39. The Canadian Leigon, at its Dominion Convention at Montreal on 18-23 May 1952, passed a resolution that a non-paid Citizen Militia, modelled on the wartime Pacific Coast Militia Rangers, should be organized in British Columbia –but to no available.**68**

40. Meanwhile the work of expansion continued. Effective 8 January 1952, No. 37 Company was authorized, with headquarters at Dawson Creek and platoons also at Kiskatinaw and Peace River.**69** Effective 15 May, authorization was given for No. 38 Company, with headquarters at Island Lake, Ontario in Prairie Command.**70** Only on 29 July 1953 were Nos. 39 and 40 Companies, with headquarters at Brooks Brook and Destruction Bay in Yukon Territory, authorized.**71** No. 41 Company with



headquarters at Fort Nelson, B.C., was added on 15 April 1954.<sup>72</sup> Canadian Army Order 246-3 dated 17 February 1954 had replaced the previous Canadian Army Policy Statements governing the Canadian Rangers. The maximum authorized strength for each Command now read :

Eastern Command	850
Quebec Command	550
Central Command	300
Prairie Command	700
Western Command	2600
Total	<hr/> 5000

The actual strength of the 41 companies on 31 December 1954 was 139 officers and 2351 other ranks; locations of these companies and individual strengths are given in Appendix "B".

41. Ranger Liaison Officers continued to function at the headquarters of each of Western, Prairie, Quebec and Eastern Commands. Yearly visits were paid by R.C.A.F. aircraft to the more remote companies. Paper work was held to a minimum and Headquarters, Western Command tried to include much of the desired instructions in the form of a periodic newsletter. In 1954, as in 1951 and 1952, authority was granted officers commanding Ranger companies to incur travelling expenses, not exceeding \$300.00 to tour their own company areas.<sup>73</sup>

### **Training**

42. Early in June 1952 Western Command conducted Exercise "Gabriel" to practice its Ranger companies in reporting relevant and accurate information to headquarters in Edmonton. Each company received the same messages of fictitious enemy movements on which to base their reports, but there proved to be wide and misleading variations in the information reported to Edmonton. The mistakes, and possible remedies, were discussed in The Canadian Rangers Liaison Letter No. 2 distributed on 19 June.<sup>74</sup>

43. During 15 February – 1 March 1953, No. Company, Canadian Rangers formed part of the friendly force engaged in Exercise "BULL DOG", which was held around Fort Norman in the Northwest Territories to test an airborne battalion group built around 2 P.P.C.L.I and the R.C.A.F. in a Mobile Striking Force role. The following paragraphs discuss the "lessons learned" as they affected the Canadian Rangers:

10. No knowledge existed as to what the Rangers intended to do when their settlement was attacked. Thus immediately after the initial para drop, a fire fight took place between the Rangers and the friendly force. The General plan of action of each Ranger Company should be known and appreciated by the Command concerned.
28. It is an essential part of the army plan that local Ranger organization give early warning of enemy activity or lodgements. This was done on the exercise as the enemy were slow in attacking the wireless facilities. Rangers must be thoroughly trained to appreciate the importance of passing early an accurate warning to the Command concerned.
34. Rangers were used to accompany friendly patrols and act as guides. However, their advance was sometimes misleading as they did not appreciate the problem of troop

movement at night with heavy sleds. Active co-operation with Rangers is the only solution to the learning of each other's problems.

60. 21 Ranger Company was not to effective in applying guerrilla tactics to the situation. The opportunity for such action is self- evident. Training in small scale raids and ambushes should be given to Ranger groups.
  63. When a state of emergency was declared steps were taken by the Rangers to block the runway. These steps could be countered by the enemy by capturing a bulldozer. There is a requirement, therefore, to prepare fuel stocks so that they could be rendered unusable very rapidly. This might be achieved by releasing into the fuel a chemical already contained in a small tank built within the main storage tank. Opening drain cocks is too slow and unreliable.
  66. It was found that the Rangers easily outdistanced and outpaced the enemy. This was partly due to the narrower snowshoes used by the former. During various patrols and on the approach march many snowshoes were broken. It is possible that storage or maintenance of the snowshoes is at fault as well as lack of practice by individuals.**75**
44. No. 4 Company rangers provided the local defence force in the Sven Islands area for Exercise " LOUP GAROU", which was held during the period 18 February – 1 March 1954 to test Quebec Command and No. 1 Tactical Air Command staffs in their roles for possible Mobile Striking Force operations. The friendly force was built around battalion headquarters and two company groups of 1 R.22eR., while a company of 1 R.C.R. acted as the enemy. **76**
45. Individual Ranger companies held their own simulated training exercises from time to time. In June 1954, No. 2 Company of Whitehorse won the North-West Highway System Service Rifle Competition by beating 19 other army and Ranger units.**77** The most interesting item in the Canadian Militia Rangers News Letter No. 8, issued by Western Command in September 1954, describes how. No 40 Company had helped the R.C.M.P. to capture three bandits during the previous April:

A report that three armed bandits, driving south of the NORTHWEST HIGHWAY in a stolen ALASKA vehicle, had broken down and held up and stolen a second car at Mile 1165 was received by CAPT DON BAKKE, Officer Commanding 40 Coy, DESTRUCTION BAY, YUKON TERRITORY.

Don alerted his Company and the progress of the vehicle was closely followed and reported on by his Rangers to the RCMP detachment at HAINES JUNCTION.

Three Rangers were detailed to proceed to the Airport Lodge at Mile 1095 in order to take such action as might be necessary to protect the owner's family. These Rangers watched the criminals enter the lodge peacefully so held their fire and allowed them to proceed as per CAPT BAKKE's instructions.

The RCMP Detachment Commander at HAINES JUNCTION has meanwhile requested further Ranger assistance for the actual apprehension of the bandits. LIEUT WALLY WANDGA, the Ranger Platoon Commander and Camp Foreman at Mile 1016, mustered ten Rangers and placed a road block of two road graders with a third vehicle throwing its lights across the highway. The ten Rangers took up a defensive position and covered the block. The ten Rangers took up a defensive position and covered the block. The bandits approached the block and looking down

the business end of ten 303's realized that the game was up. A RCMP Constable covered by the Rangers, then stepped forward and quietly effected the arrest.

Assistance to the RCMP is part of the Ranger role and in this case the action was firmly and sensibly carried out, forcibly illustrating that the Rangers are suitable and available in this type of an emergency.

We wish to congratulate CAPT BAKKE, LIEUT WANDGA and the Rangers of 40 Coy, for a ticklish job well done!**78**

### **Conclusion**

46. During 1955 discussion raged over proposals again put forward by Headquarters Western Command that certain Ranger companies should be given a local defence role and additional weapons to become virtual Home Guard units. But it's too close to the present to make possible an objective historical appraisal of this and subsequent events.

47. This report was written by J.Mackay Hitsman.

**APPENDIX A – STRENGTH RETURN, CANADIAN RANGERS**  
**30 September 1950**

<u>Company</u>	<u>Officers</u>	<u>Rangers</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Command</u>
No. 1	3	32	35	Western
No. 2	4	71	75	Western
No.3	3	17	20	Quebec
No. 4	2	5	7	Quebec
No. 5	2	-	2	Quebec
No. 6	6	113	119	Quebec
No. 7	5	31	36	Western
No.8	1	1	2	Western
No. 9	4	39	43	Western
No.10	3	18	21	Western
No. 11	1	25	26	Western
No. 12	4	21	25	Western
No.13	2	30	32	Western
No.14	1	-	1	Western
No. 15	1	20	21	Western
No. 16	4	27	31	Prairie
No. 17	3	21	24	Prairie
No. 18	-	-	-	Prairie
No. 19	-	-	-	Prairie
No. 20	1	1	2	Western
Nov. 21-	-	-	-	Western
<u>Total</u>	<u>50</u>	<u>472</u>	<u>522</u>	

APPENDIX B  
CANADIAN RANGERS – STRENGTH RETURN  
AS AT 31 DEC 54

	<u>UNITS</u>	<u>Offrs</u>	<u>OR's</u>	<u>Total</u>		<u>Location</u>
1	Coy Rangers	4	59	63		Dawson City, Y.T. Wescom
2	"	5	225	230		Whiethorse, Y.T. Wescom
3	"	4	123	127		Havre St.Pierre P.Q. Quecom
4	"	3	56	59		Seven Islands P.Q. Quecom
5	"	-	-			Port Harrison P.Q. Quecom
6	"	1	128	129		Fort Chimo P.Q. Wescom
7	"	14	86	100		Yellowknife Y.T. Wescom
8	"	3	49	52		Fort Smith Y.T. Wescom
9	"	3	20	23		Tofino B.C. Wescom
10	"	1	12	13		Alert Bay B.C. Wescom
11	"	1	35	36		Namu B.C. wescom
12	"	5	77	82		Ocean Falls B.C. Wescom
13	"	4	66	70		Terrace B.C. Wescom
14	"	2	16	18		Smithers B.C. wescom
15	"	7	160	167		Fort St John B.C. Wescom
16	"	-	9	9		Island Falls Sask. Pracom
17	"	5	44	49		Norway House Man. Pracom
18	"	4	9	13		Seven Sisters Falls Man. Pracom
19	"	1	-	1		Kenora Ont. Pracom
20	"	4	35	39		Aklavik N.W.T. Wescom
21	"	3	19	22		Norman Wells N.W.T. Wescom
22	"	4	76	80		Cartwright Labrador. Eascom
23	"	1	2	3		St Anthony Nfld. Eascom
24	"	5	79	84		Churchill Man. Pracom
25	"	7	76	83		Red Lake Ont. Pracom
26	"	5	56	61		Moose Factory Ont. Pracom
27	"	1	-	1		Fond du Lake Sask. Pracom
28	"	4	114	118		Forbisher Bay Baffin Is. Eascom
29	"	3	75	78		Clyde River Baffin Is. Eascom
30	"	3	8	11		Lewisporte Nfld. Eascom
31	"	4	58	62		Bonavista Nfld. Eascom
32	"	4	45	49		New Perlican Nfld. Eascom
33	"	2	-	2		Burin Nfld. Eascom
34	"	3	45	48		Channel Nfld. Eascom
35	"	2	46	48		Port Saunders Nfld. Eascom
36	"	4	57	61		Hopedale Labrador. Eascom
37	"	4	110	114		Trutch B.C. Wescom
38	"	6	97	103		Island Lake Man. Pracom
39	"	2	41	43		Brooks Brook Y.T. Wescom
40	"	-	29	29		Destruction bay Y.T. Wescom
41	"	1	109	110		Fort Nelson B.C. Wescom
<hr/>						
	<u>Total</u>	139	2351	2490		

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