



## **A NEW KIND OF WAR**

Alberta stages Exercise Maple Flag.

BY JON ELMER

Each year, Cold Lake, Alberta, hosts one of the world's largest air force training operations, with some 5,000 crew members from 11 countries. The 11,600 square kilometre range—about half the size of Israel—is scattered with mock targets so realistic that it is described by Canadian forces as “the world's largest Hollywood set.” This “set” consists of traditional targets such as communications towers, control centres and nine fake airfields—but it also includes more urban structures, setting the tone for a new kind of war.

This past summer, for the first time in the history of the operation, dubbed Exercise Maple Flag, 10 Israeli F-16s were among the 200 warplanes that took part in the six-week exercise. Israel's participation signalled a marked shift in Canadian military and political policy: more Gaza, less Battle of Britain. The question is, why is Canada seeking expertise from Israel in aerial warfare?

According to Colonel Charles S. “Duff” Sullivan, Wing Commander of 4 Wing Cold Lake, the era of the air wars is over, and training international coalitions for World War III aerial dog-fighting is becoming obsolete. “What we're seeing now is much more complex, much more of a counterinsurgency-type battle fighting guerrilla warfare on the ground,” he told a *National Post* reporter.

That is in line with what Defence Minister Bill Graham said in his speech at the annual conference of the McGill Institute for the Study of Canada about the emerging military/political agenda for the Canadian Forces—the role of “enforcing peace” in places such as Haiti and Afghanistan. According to Graham's speech, populations in question “must perceive the use of force in their neighbourhood, and the civilian casualties that are suffered, as being for their greater good and not just the repressive measures of a foreign occupying force.” Naturally, foreign occupation is seen as illegitimate by vast swaths of the world community.

Maple Flag 2005 is consistent with this idea, and aims to train military personnel to fight battles from the sky, rather than through direct ground occupation. Instead of traditional targets such as military installations or tank columns, the pilots are given what Sullivan calls moving, time-sensitive targets—for example, a resistance leader travelling in a car or a gunman crouching in an alley. According to Sullivan, “from 25,000 feet we can drop one bomb on a very precise target and that gets a lot of people's attention very quickly.”

Over the course of the five-year Palestinian uprising, popularly known as the Al-Aqsa intifada, Israel has increasingly used this form of aerial warfare in suppressing the resistance and entrenching their occupation regime in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. According to Israel Defense Force (IDF) statistics, since mid-2004 more than 90 percent of Israeli attacks in Gaza—a densely populated strip characterized by crowded refugee camps—have been carried out by the Israeli Air Force. Though no precise distinction can be made between air strikes and ground attacks, Palestine Red Crescent statistics show that during that same period some 600 Palestinians were killed and almost 3,000 were injured, the overwhelming majority of whom were civilians. In other words, in occupied countries, people still die at startling rates on the occupied side, but the occupier is spared casualties since they control completely from the air without the need for ground forces, or in military parlance, “boots on the ground.”

Nevertheless, after five years of fighting the Palestinian intifada, Israel's expertise in this type of warfare does not go unnoticed. In an interview with Israel's liberal daily, *Ha'aretz*, Moshe Ya'alon, the IDF's outgoing chief of staff, said that foreign armies took note of Israel's tactics, calling them a significant success.

In May, Dan Halutz, former commander of the Israeli Air Force, became the IDF's new chief of staff. His selection over an infantry general was widely seen as a nod to the success of Israel's air force in the intifada. The weekly publication for the global defence industry, *Defense News*, picked up on the significance of the development and ran a front page feature titled: “In Israel, air power takes on ground jobs.” In it, Halutz describes his doctrine of “Environmental Air Control.” It is, he said, the key to relieving “some of the burden traditionally shouldered by ground forces,” thereby minimizing the need for the “prolonged presence of ground troops.”

Israel's much-talked about “disengagement” from Gaza will see the IDF using Halutz's environmental air control to police the Gaza Strip without the need for military boots on the ground.

Does this aerial counterinsurgency expertise account for Israel's first ever invitation to Maple Flag? In any case, it is worth a moment of pause as Canadian forces act in Haiti and Afghanistan. For in the words of Colonel Sullivan: “We build [Maple Flag] around the new type of battle that we are being asked to fight.”

## CONTRIBUTORS

Namely: in reality, countercultural feminist theory is hardly the *sine qua non* of feminist political action. People from all walks of life (most of whom have never studied countercultural feminist theory) have joined forces to fight for women's rights not only in North America, but the world over. Renowned Quebec feminist and octogenarian Madeleine Parent is particularly eloquent on this point: "As far as we were concerned, we never really cared if they called it feminism—it was the women we wanted to help." That this movement to help women may bring men to greater empathy regarding the reality of women's issues remains our great hope and struggle.

**Cynthia Kelly**  
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I picked up the May/June issue of *This Magazine* specifically for Joseph Heath and Andrew Potter's exploration of what has gone wrong with the feminist movement. I am a performance scholar who writes from an explicitly feminist perspective, but I have long been bothered by certain tendencies within both the movement and the discourse. Thus, I welcomed the chance to read the thoughts of fellow academics on this pressing, contemporary problem.

What a disappointment the article turned out to be. After a compelling beginning, Heath and Potter's argument descended into nothing more than a banal history of old-school "radical" feminism. The authors waste their time attacking the old celebrity saws (Naomi Wolf, Catherine MacKinnon), and never even mention, let alone explore, the ways in which feminist materialism has changed the face of the discourse over the course of the past 15 years. As a result, their argument sounds dated, unoriginal, and effectively blames contemporary feminism for its history, which is not only unhelpful, but intellectually dishonest. Further, their core argument that idealist or theoretical arguments fail to achieve the material goals of feminism is too simplistic to be allowed to pass. As academics themselves, Heath and Potter should know there is always a link between theoretical argument and material practice, even if it is not obvious at first glance.

Early in their article, Heath and Potter note that young women are



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**Karen Connelly's** novel of Burma, *The Lizard Cage*, releases in October (Random House Canada). A previous version of her essay on page 20 was part of the CBC's *Alberta Anthology* program.

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**Stephen LaRose** won seven first prizes from the Saskatchewan Weekly Newspaper Association for commentary writing, cultural feature writing, and business writing while editing the *Fort Qu'Appelle Times*. He's now a freelance writer for *Prairie Dog* magazine, the Aboriginal Multi-Media Society of Alberta, and anybody else willing to give him a paycheque.

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Originally from Ottawa, **Kelly McCarthy-Maine** has written and produced series of radio documentaries on human rights and immigration issues in Dublin and Toronto. Her written work has appeared in the *Globe and Mail*, and regularly in *City Dog Magazine*. This fall, following her internship at *This Magazine*, she begins her Masters in Radio at Goldsmith College, University of London.

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**Ryan R. Schmidt** recently returned to his home province of Alberta after travelling and photographing in over 26 countries. His current projects include trying to stay put long enough to find the photographic magic in his own backyard. More of his images can be found on [www.photoryan.com](http://www.photoryan.com).