

THE FORGOTTEN FRONT OF THE OKA CRISIS: OPERATION FEATHER/AKWESASNE¹

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Elements of Operation FEATHER enter Akwesasne on 2 May 1990. Photo Courtesy of Sgt. Peter Dorau

During the 1990 Oka Crisis, under Operation SALON, the Canadian Forces (CF) deployed 4,500 personnel in the function of *Aid to the Civil Power* to confront heavily armed Mohawk Warriors at Kanasatake (Oka) and Kahnawake, Quebec. The intense media attention surrounding the 78-day standoff overshadowed the prior deployment of the Canadian Forces to the Mohawk Reserve of Akwesasne straddling the borders of Ontario, Quebec and New York State near Cornwall, Ontario. Operation FEATHER/AKWESASNE, which involved infantry, engineer, intelligence, electronic warfare, armour, maritime and air assets of the CF, began on 1 May 1990—over three

¹ Operation FEATHER was renamed Operation AKWESASNE on 16 May 1990 for obvious politically sensitive reasons.

months prior to CF involvement at Oka. This operation has become the forgotten front of the Oka Crisis.

The role of the CF to quell the growing hostility (and intermediate in what some have labelled a Mohawk “Civil War”) at Akwesasne has been neglected in its own context, in the historiography of the Oka Crisis, and in broader examinations of the violence plaguing Mohawk country throughout the spring and summer of 1990 culminating at Oka. The most widely circulated works on the endemic violence at Akwesasne or the Oka Crisis fail to mention the deployment of the CF to Akwesasne perpetuating the disinformation, mythology and “facts” surrounding these events.

Rick Hornung’s narrative, *One Nation Under the Gun: Inside the Mohawk Civil War* (1991), outlines the course to confrontation and provides a detailed depiction of the zenith of the violence between pro and anti-gambling Mohawk factions in April-May 1990. Nowhere does he mention the involvement of the Canadian Forces.² In Bruce E. Johansen’s more thorough and academically positioned account, *Life & Death in Mohawk Country* (1993), the lone mention of CF intervention is inaccurate. He simply states that on 3 May, “some of the Canadian Army that had been rushed to Cornwall pulled out.”³ In actuality, the CF strength to Operation FEATHER/AKWESASNE on 3 May consisted of: 248 personnel, 81 vehicles, 3 rafts, various boats and 2 CH-135 helicopters.⁴ Lastly, both Operation FEATHER/AKWESASNE and the “Civil War”

² Rick Hornung, *One Nation Under the Gun: Inside the Mohawk Civil War* (Toronto: Stoddart Publishing Co. Limited, 1991).

³ Bruce E. Johansen, *Life & Death in Mohawk Country* (Golden: North American Press, 1993), p. 104.

⁴ Canada. DND ATI, “Op Feather, Groupings and Tasks, 03 May 1990.”

garner no mention in Geoffrey York and Loreen Pindera's, *People of the Pines: The Warriors and the Legacy of Oka* (1991).⁵

This detailed examination of the pervasive violence at Akwesasne and the CF intervention during the spring and summer of 1990 not only highlights Canada's confounding internal security (IS) legislations but also provides an enhanced understanding of the Oka Crisis and the subsequent deployment of the CF under Op SALON. The violence at Akwesasne was not born in a vacuum, and like the Oka Crisis, was the product of compounding events spanning a period of 250 years. To understand the confrontations during the "Indian Summer" of 1990 the analysis must begin with a brief chronological survey of important episodes which culminated in the dissident environment within the Mohawk Nation, including Akwesasne.

A Brief Historical Sketch of Akwesasne/St. Regis

The Mohawk community of Akwesasne ("Where the Partridge Drums") was formally established in 1755 by the Roman Catholic mission of St. Regis and a splinter

⁵ Geoffrey York and Loreen Pindera, *People of the Pines: The Warriors and the Legacy of Oka* (Toronto: Little, Brown & Company Limited, 1991). The only literature dedicated to the CF operation at Akwesasne is a brief three page narrative written in 1990 by Captain Tony Keene, a DND Public Affairs Officer. See: Tony Keene, "Guns among the Mohawks," *Sentinel: Magazine of the Canadian Forces*, Vol. 26, No. 4 (1990), pp. 2-4. The aforementioned works were written between 1990 and 1993, shortly after Oka; therefore, they are predominantly narrative, lacking a scholarly source base and foundation. In fairness to the authors, most primary source materials and documentation were not available at the time of writing. This however does not excuse them from presenting many episodes and happenings as "fact" without any substantial or credible sources. Recently, a select few scholarly investigations have highlighted the weaknesses of these sources and have discredited much of the "factual" information presented. Unfortunately, many others simply recycle these myths and "truths" propagating much of the disinformation that still exists in the public (and academic to some extent) perception of the Oka Crisis. For the most recent scholarly accounts of the Oka Crisis see: Timothy C. Winegard, *Oka: A Convergence of Cultures and the Canadian Forces* (Kingston: Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2009) and P. Whitney Lackenbauer, "Carrying the Burden of Peace: The Mohawks, the Canadian Forces, and the Oka Crisis," *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (Winter 2008), pp. 1-71. However, Lackenbauer incorrectly states that, "a Canadian mechanized battalion moved to Cornwall in preparation for an aid to the civil power mission which was subsequently cancelled." As will be detailed, Op FEATHER/AWESASNE was neither cancelled, as two companies of 1RCR Battalion from London were deployed in rotation, nor did it operate under *Aid to the Civil Power*; rather, was under *Provision of Armed Assistance*.

group of Mohawks from Kahnawake.⁶ Throughout the eighteenth century, Native settlements administered by French religious orders, including Akwesasne, appeared throughout modern-day Quebec and northern New York State and became known as the Seven Nations of Canada.⁷ The French surrendered Montreal to British forces in September 1760, and Article 40 of the *Articles of Capitulation* guaranteed the Mohawks of Akwesasne retention of their lands: “The Indian allies of His Most Christian Majesty, Louis XV, shall be maintained in possession of the lands which they occupy, if they wish to remain thereon; they shall not be molested under any pretext whatsoever for having taken up arms and served His Most Christian Majesty, they will have, like the French, liberty of religion, and will keep their missionaries.”⁸

Following the American Revolution, the United States and Great Britain signed an agreement entitled the *Treaty of Amity, Commerce, and Navigation (The Jay Treaty)*. This treaty acknowledged various rights of Aboriginal nations occupying lands on or near the newly created U.S.-Canadian border, such as Akwesasne, which was literally cut in half by the international boundary: “...the Indians dwelling on either side of the said Boundary Line, freely to pass and repass by Land, or Inland Navigation, into the respective Territories and Countries of the Two Parties, on the Continent of America...and to navigate all the Lakes, Rivers, and waters thereof, and freely to carry on trade and commerce with each other.”⁹ The *Jay Treaty* was used as a defence by

⁶ Gerald F. Reid, *Mohawk Territory: A Cultural Geography* (Kahnawake: Center for Curriculum Development, Kahnawake Survival School, 1981), p. 118.

⁷ Gerald F. Reid, *Kahnawake: Factionalism, Traditionalism, and Nationalism in a Mohawk Community* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), pp. 12-13.

⁸ Article 40 of *Articles of Capitulation*, Montreal, 1760 as quoted in John Thompson, *Materials Relating to the History of the Land Dispute at Kanesatake* (Ottawa: Claims and Historical Research Centre, Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, 1993), p. 14.

⁹ The 1794 *Jay Treaty* available online at www.solon.org/misc/jay.html. Specifically, Articles II and III recognized the right of free movement over the border and the nullification of import duties.

the Mohawks who operated illegal international smuggling enterprises primarily based in Akwesasne during the 1980s through to the present day.

With the advent of the War of 1812, Akwesasne and its warriors attempted to remain neutral. By early 1813, however, its members were fighting in both camps. According to an 1814 British military report, the 670 warriors of Akwesasne/St. Regis, “were divided in Politik [sic] and owing chiefly to our own mismanagement one half of them at least were with the Enemy.”¹⁰ This division led to the creation of two distinct Reserves with disparate membership registers: Akwesasne in Canada (split by the Ontario/Quebec border) and St. Regis in New York State (See Appendix A). The jurisdictional and political ramifications of this fissure would haunt both federal governments in the years to come, most notably during the closing decades of the twentieth century.

The geographic and demographic divisions of Akwesasne/St. Regis were magnified by successive governmental policies of the Dominion of Canada after 1867. Under the provisions of the *Indian Act* an elected band council was created at Akwesasne in 1898. This government-sponsored council was the only political representation accredited by Canadian governmental bodies. In 1899, five traditional Akwesasne Longhouse Chiefs were arrested and held in prison for one year. The New York State Legislature had imposed a similar system on the American portion of the Reserve in 1802.¹¹ Many Mohawks maintained their allegiance to the customary Longhouse form of governance and refused to vote in elections or to recognize the authority of the elected chiefs, believed to be corrupt adjuncts to the oppressive

¹⁰ Robert S. Allen, *His Majesty's Indian Allies: British Indian Policy in The Defence of Canada, 1774-1815* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1992), pp. 122, 221.

¹¹ Paul Pasquaretta, *Gambling and Survival in Native North America* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2003), p. 130.

Canadian and American governments. These divisions created mistrust and suspicion and were integral to the protracted violence at Akwesasne during the 1980s and 1990s.

These political discrepancies were magnified by the erosion of economic stability and traditional livelihood throughout Mohawk territory during the second half of the twentieth century. According to Johansen in his work, *Life and Death in Mohawk Country*:

Without loss of land and the way of life that Mohawks had based on it, the nationalistic Warrior Society, a Mohawk paramilitary group whose image mesmerized headline writers in north-eastern United States and most of Canada during that violent summer of 1990, might never have arisen. Had the construction of the Saint Lawrence Seaway shortly after World War II and subsequent industrialization of the area not destroyed traditional ways of making a living in Mohawk Country, gambling and smuggling may never have emerged.¹²

To what measure the smuggling and gambling can be attributed to this cause and effect duality is unknown. However, as Johansen correctly points out, the rise in illegal activities, gaming and Mohawk nationalism, including the Warrior Society, corresponds to the time period of the 1960s and 1970s, shortly after the construction of the seaway.

The Rebirth and Influence of the Mohawk Warrior Society

The 1960s and 1970s were eras of social reform, protest and movements of every kind. In this atmosphere of political ferment, Dennis Banks and George Mitchell founded the American Indian Movement (AIM) in Minneapolis, Minnesota in 1968. AIM gained considerable media attention through high-profile occupations and demonstrations throughout the early 1970s. Radical demonstrations, however, were not restricted to the more dissident Native population of the United States. By 1975, at least

¹² Johansen, *Life and Death in Mohawk Country*, p. xxii.

five armed-Native blockades had occurred in Canada, the best known being the Ojibwa occupation of Anicinabe Park near Kenora, Ontario in 1974.¹³

Within this dissident environment the Mohawk Warrior Society began a resurrection after years of relative dormancy, its influence most pervasive at Akwesasne. Members of the Warrior Society identified with AIM and began to take action against what it perceived to be elements of Native and non-Native society in conflict with the Longhouse traditions and a sovereign Mohawk Nation. The Warrior Society itself further divided opinion over the governance of the Mohawk Nation, the support for its various Band Councils and the means by which sovereignty should be addressed and procured. The traditionalists who supported the Longhouse were divided over the role of the Society and were not as unified as they appeared to outside commentators.

An ex-Warrior nicknamed "Cartoon" who served in Vietnam and trained the original Warriors in military tactics during the 1970s and 1980s surmised that the society "took the garbage and the throwaways and put pride into them. What they [Warriors] set out to be is not what they are." He was also deeply concerned that the movement had lost its social credibility and was now a front for illegal activities where the "unstable expendables" who were floundering in life were put in the front lines "to hold the fort" and protect the multi-million dollar illegal enterprises of a few "Silks or Silk-shirt" (This is derogatory Mohawk slang for the businessmen or entrepreneurs of gaming and smuggling who use the Warriors to protect their "investments").¹⁴

¹³ Maurice Tugwell and John Thompson, *The Legacy of Oka* (Toronto: The Mackenzie Institute, 1991), p. 10.

¹⁴ "Cartoon" as quoted in John Thompson, *The Long Fall of the Mohawk Warriors* (Toronto: The Mackenzie Institute, 1996), p. 2.

The rise of the Warrior Society also corresponded to a time when the economies of Mohawk territories were in decline. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, a disproportionate number of Mohawks made a living in high-steel, building bridges and skyscrapers throughout the larger centres of north-eastern North America. By the 1970s, the demand for this brave skill was dissolving, leading to higher unemployment rates among Mohawk men. As a result, illegal enterprises began to compensate for the loss of income. Since Canadian “sin-taxes” on tobacco and alcohol were introduced in the 1970s, certain Mohawks have used their tax-free status to earn a profitable living selling cigarettes and petrol at discount prices. A complex business and administrative system connected all Mohawk territories. Liquor, drugs, alien citizens and a vast array of weapons were soon included in the inventory of this pipeline.¹⁵

In addition, bingo parlours and casinos began to appear on Reserves throughout North America. Akwesasne became the largest proprietor of the lucrative gambling enterprise in the Mohawk territories. The gambling war of 1989-1990 can be traced back to 1983, when the St. Regis Tribal Council, made up of pro-gaming members, licensed the first high-stakes gambling venue. By 1989, six other facilities were operating without agreements from the elected councils or the State of New York.¹⁶ These “Bingo Chiefs” gained support as they injected new sources of income into the struggling Akwesasne economy. A connection emerged between the illegal smuggling, the gaming industry and the militant Warrior Society, which quickly gained financial

¹⁵ Canada. DND ATI, “Intelligence Report—Op AKWESASNE, 17 August 1990.”

¹⁶ Pasquaretta, *Gambling and Survival in Native North America*, p. 131.

resources from these activities. Casinos and bingo halls also provided a medium for laundering money earned from smuggling operations.¹⁷

The internal divisions over politics, smuggling and gambling at Akwesasne and Kahnawake produced violent clashes between opposing factions and U.S. and Canadian security agencies. Mohawk territories increasingly became “no-go zones” for outside law enforcement agencies—a development that occurred gradually since the late-1970s. Policing duties were left in the hands of the Band Council appointed Mohawk Police Forces or “Peacekeepers.” By this time Akwesasne was split into two distinct camps; those who supported gaming and those who did not. The anti-gambling side was predominantly made up of the elected Council Chiefs, those who supported the electoral process and those, including Longhouse supporters, who resented the Warrior movement. The pro-gaming faction primarily consisted of casino owners (and staff, including ‘private security’), the Warriors, and residents who dismissed the elected councils as pawns of the governments of Canada and the United States.

This division over gaming produced sporadic violence throughout the 1980s and incited raids by Canadian and American security agencies. According to Johansen, by 1987 the New York State Police estimated that the owners of six gaming establishments at Akwesasne were profiting \$7 million tax-free per year. By 1989, this figure had swelled to more than \$100 million annually in unreported income. In addition, the cigarette trade through Akwesasne was costing the Canadian government an estimated \$25 million a year in lost revenue.¹⁸ Given the geography of Akwesasne, which is

¹⁷ See: E.J. Dickson, *Communities, Contraband and Conflict: Considering Restorative Responses to Repairing the Harms Implicit in Smuggling in the Akwesasne Mohawk Nation* (Ottawa: Research and Evaluation Branch, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2002), p. 25.

¹⁸ Johansen, *Life and Death in Mohawk Country*, pp. 26, 51.

located in Ontario, Quebec and New York State, raids had to be carefully conducted with co-operation from both national law enforcement agencies. If a raid was attempted by one country without the co-operation of the other, Mohawks could simply cross the border to evade law officers whose jurisdiction was limited to their own side of the Reserve. Although many Mohawks do not recognize the border, this was a convenient loophole used to avoid arrest. Police raids only intensified the Warriors' resolve to rid their territories of government interference. Warrior patrols were set up on both Kahnawake and Akwesasne to give notice of raids and possible police intervention. Akwesasne underwent a gradual metamorphosis into a narco-parasitic state (Narco-Parastate).¹⁹ In the words of Art Kakwirakeron Montour: "We patrol our land as the Mohawk Sovereignty Security Patrol, and we will persist like the people of Vietnam or Afghanistan until outside intervention is stopped. Just like Afghanistan was to the Soviet Union and Vietnam to the United States, Akwesasne will be to New York State and the United States."²⁰

Monies from illegal enterprises could support the instruments of revolution and provide the economic base for political independence and sovereignty for the Mohawk Nation. As an anonymous member of the Akwesasne Warrior Society revealed to Linda Pertusati, "the various Mohawk Warrior societies and the Mohawk Warrior Movement itself has been funded by the cigarette and gambling trade."²¹ Estimates revealed that the cocaine ring through Akwesasne to Montreal and Toronto during the late-1980s was

¹⁹ Term coined by Sean M. Maloney, "Domestic Operations: The Canadian Approach," *Parameters*, US Army War College (Autumn 1997), p. 135. A "narco-parastate" is an unrecognized "nation" within a legitimate host nation, which survives on the trafficking of drugs and other illicit materials in order to further political independence. The drug cartels of South America are examples.

²⁰ Art Kakwirakeron Montour as quoted in Hornung, *One Nation Under the Gun: Inside the Mohawk Civil War*, pp. 30-31.

²¹ As quoted in Linda Pertusati, *In Defense of Mohawk Land: Ethnopolitical Conflict in Native North America* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1997), p. 73.

worth \$40 million per month.²² This process was/is not isolated to the Mohawk Warrior Society. In Ireland, both the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and the Protestant Ulster Volunteer Force funded their activities with bootlegging and smuggling. In Sri Lanka, the Tamil Tigers are widespread heroin smugglers and currency counterfeiters. South American Maoist guerrillas have strong connections to cocaine lords. In Afghanistan, the Taliban and al-Qaeda have economic links to the production of poppy and opiates.

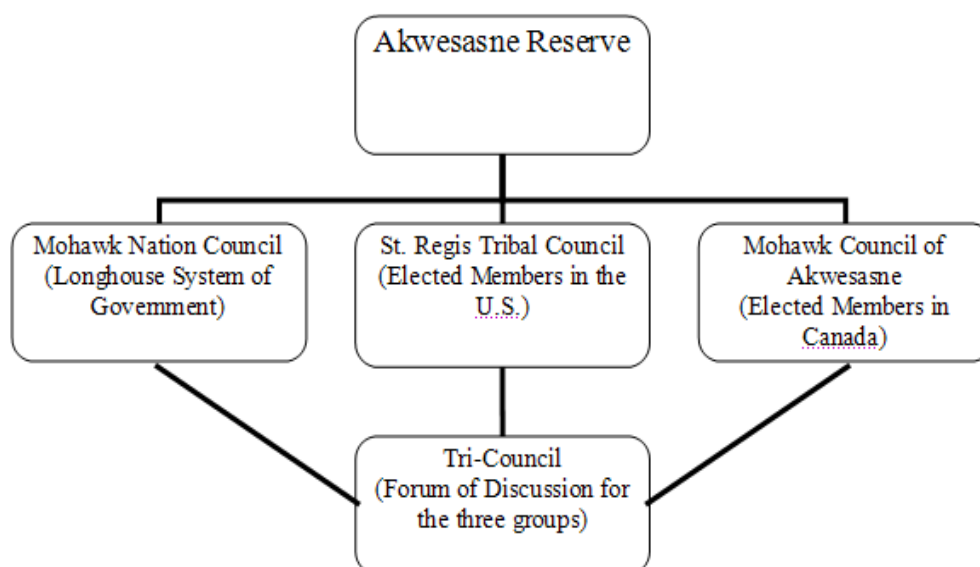
Using tax-free status to circumvent the government's "sin-taxes" on tobacco and cigarettes, the agenda of the Warrior Society slowly shifted from protectors of Mohawk sovereignty and land to smuggling and gaming. Intimidation was used to quell opposition within Mohawk territory. The violence at Akwesasne, and the subsequent Oka Crisis, was an exercise of power. The spring and summer of 1990 allowed the Warrior Society to persuade the federal and provincial governments that policing the Reserves with outside law enforcement agencies (LEAs) would have immense political ramifications and that the Reserves and the Warriors were better left alone.

Civil War at Akwesasne and the Approaches to CF Intervention

The divisions of government and their sponsors created complications unique to Akwesasne. A power vacuum left the residents with no consensus on policy or governance. In this atmosphere, it became the hotbed for Warrior activity. The ensuing power struggle created the conditions for civil war. Three disparate councils exercised functions of government at Akwesasne. The Mohawk Nation Council operated as part of the greater Iroquois Confederacy under the traditional system and constitution of the Great Law of Peace. The oldest of all governing bodies, it claims to represent Mohawk

²² Johansen, *Life and Death in Mohawk Country*, pp. 109-110.

on both sides of the international border. However, it is not recognized by federal, provincial or state authorities—as are the two other councils. In the New York State sector of the Reservation, three elected tribal chiefs operate under the laws of New York State and the federal laws of the United States within the St. Regis Tribal Council formed in 1802. The third council, the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne, was created in 1898 under the *Canadian Indian Act*. It represents the districts of Akwesasne in Ontario and Quebec.²³



On the surface, Mohawk Council of Akwesasne Grand Chief Mike Mitchell opposed the influx of gaming as did the Chief of Akwesasne Police Force, Ernest King. Within the American St. Regis Tribal Council, only Head Chief Harold Tarbell contested gambling: “I wanted the police, the governor, the FBI, the federal bureaucracy, the BIA—anyone—to come in and restore order. If they didn’t want to come in then I said give us the power, deputize us....We couldn’t have gamblers walking around

²³ DIAND, *Mohawk Band Government* (Ottawa: Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, July 1990), pp. 2-3.

proclaiming sovereignty. We had to have the rule of law.”²⁴ In an interview with CBC in July 1990, Tarbell reaffirmed the framework of revolution within the Warrior movement:

It's basically a paramilitary standing group which has taken unilateral authority onto itself.... It's a group...that understands political goals that we [Mohawks] have...but have formed a philosophy of force to achieve those goals. I think it is a group of people who are sincere in their belief...but are young and caught up in the machoism [sic] of it all. Then I think there are a number of others who are on the fringes of our society and are involved in different things and are either the outcasts or have vested interest in there being a lack of a regulatory and enforcement capacity in Indian communities so that they can capitalize on that for their personal gain.... Without an alternative to replace it [gambling and smuggling], it's a hard thing to battle against.²⁵

The violence at Akwesasne between the pro and anti-gambling factions intensified throughout 1989 and 1990, which Johansen and Hornung depict with reasonably accurate detail. The 8,500 Mohawks living on the Reserve began to fight one another, the New York State Police (NYSP), the SQ, the OPP, the RCMP and the FBI. Roving bands of gun-wielding Mohawks, armed law enforcers, barricades, frequent outbursts of gunfire and widespread arson were commonplace. School boards refused to send buses to take children to school, businesses were closed, postal services interrupted, and many families fled to shelters set up in Cornwall by the Ontario Department of Transport. It is estimated that 2,000-3,000 people left the Reserve by April 1990.²⁶

All rational law and order, whether imposed by Mohawk means or governmental means, had melted away. Akwesasne was in chaos and the head Chiefs of both the American and Canadian Councils urged the governments to act, while encouraging

²⁴ Harold Tarbell as quoted in Hornung, *One Nation Under the Gun: Inside the Mohawk Civil War*, p. 31.

²⁵ Harold Tarbell interview with Jennifer Westaway, CBC: The House, 28 July 1990, "Are Mohawks Criminals?" (Ottawa: Bowdens, 1990), pp. 2-4.

²⁶ Canada. DND ATI, "Press Dispatches, 02 May 1990;" Johansen, *Life and Death in Mohawk Country*, pp. 76-84.

residents to seek safety off of the Reserve. Harold Tarbell pleaded with New York Governor, Mario Cuomo, to deploy the National Guard, as did Canadian Minister of Indian Affairs, Tom Siddon. On 25 April, a letter was sent to Major-General L.P. Flynn, commander of the New York Division of Military and Naval Affairs, from “all three of the governing Councils, acting on behalf of the Mohawk people of Akwesasne (Saint Regis Tribal Council, Mohawk Nation Council of Chiefs and the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne) urgently request emergency law enforcement assistance to restore peace and order.... Immediate action is needed by appropriate law enforcement or military agencies.”²⁷ On the same day, Grand Chief Mike Mitchell wrote a similar faxed letter to Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and Minister Siddon asking for “assistance in restoring Peace, Safety and Security for all citizens of Akwesasne by sending in Canada’s equivalent of the National Guard.”²⁸

Following the requests for assistance from both Mohawk councils, contingency planning was initiated by National Defence Headquarters (NDHQ) on 25 April and three options were evaluated. The first was simply to support police forces imposing law and order by supplying equipment and military resources. This was seen as the most likely option. The second was the evacuation of innocent persons, should violence occur in the process of option one. The last option, regarded as the least likely, was a forceful military intervention. All options were limited to the sovereignty of national borders and cooperation with U.S. forces.²⁹ Interestingly, the original assessment contained a clause specifically prohibiting the use 5 Canadian Mechanized Brigade Group (5CMBG) for

²⁷ Canada. DND ATI, “Letter: Mohawk Councils of Akwesasne to Major General L.P. Flynn, 25 April 1990.”

²⁸ Canada. DND ATI, “Letter: Mohawk Council of Akwesasne to Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and Minister of Indian Affairs Tom Siddon, 25 April 1990.” The letters were faxed so they arrived on 25 April.

²⁹ Canada. DND ATI, “Possible CF Involvement on the Akwesasne Indian Reserve, 25 April 1990.”

operations in Akwesasne. It was 5CMBG that ultimately deployed to Kanasatake and Kahnawake for Op SALON roughly three months later.³⁰

The conference at NDHQ on the 25th led to immediate actions. On 26 April, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney secretly alerted Bill McKnight, the previous Minister of Indian Affairs and now Minister of National Defence, to prepare contingency plans to support operations by the RCMP, OPP and SQ. McKnight stressed that no military intervention would occur unless these agencies failed to restore peaceful conditions.³¹ On 27 April, elements of 2nd Combat Engineer Regiment (2CER) from CFB Petawawa and 450 Squadron (Ottawa), dressed in civilian clothing, conducted a reconnaissance of the Canadian portions of the Akwesasne Reserve. Correspondingly, the Special Investigations Unit (SIU) conducted its own intelligence gathering. The goal was to identify resource requirements, Armoured Personnel Carrier (APC) fording sites between the mainland and Cornwall Island (Akwesasne), and helicopter landing zones on the islands of St. Regis and Cornwall. Aerial photographs of the Reserve were taken by CF-5 aircraft in synchronization with U.S. assets and government satellites.³² Throughout 26-28 April, the RCMP emergency response team conducted familiarization training with CF equipment at CFB Petawawa.³³

The CF also conducted thorough intelligence and threat assessments and liaised with OPP, SQ and RCMP detachments already deployed to determine the nature and extent of potential involvement. A summary of all gathered intelligence revealed that the number of Warriors and sympathizers at Akwesasne fluctuated between 300 and

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Canada. DND ATI, "Op Feather War Diary, 26-27 April 1990."

³² Canada. DND ATI, "Possible CF Involvement on the Akwesasne Indian Reserve, 25 April 1990;" Canada. DND ATI, "Air Photo-Akwesasne, 30 April 1990."

³³ Canada. DND ATI, "Possible CF Involvement on the Akwesasne Indian Reserve, 25 April 1990."

500. After profiling, many individuals were identified to have U.S. Marine Corps or Vietnam experience.³⁴ Canadian and American security agencies knew that the Warrior Society was heavily armed. As of 27 April, the following weapons had been seen and identified (although quantities remained unknown): reactivated grenades,³⁵ semi-automatic rifles (AR-15, M-16 and various Shot Guns), automatic rifles (AK-47 and 9mm Uzi) and an assortment of revolvers. Ammunition was plentiful. Twenty-five thousand rounds of various calibres had been purchased through Canadian commercial sources, and American purchases were estimated at four times that amount. The Warriors fired 500-800 rounds daily, another indication that their ammunition reserve was large. The Warriors were also in possession of, or could acquire on short notice, two .50 calibre heavy machine guns and M-72 Light Anti-Tank Weapons (LAW).³⁶ The purchase of these weapons was explained by a federal intelligence officer:

A lot of things were illegal on the Canadian side but not on the American side. All you had to do was get it across the border. Now at Akwesasne that is not hard. They had a real smuggling network. Everything came down that net. When the wars in Latin America shut down in the 1980s the place was awash with sophisticated weapon systems, people willing to sell them for a little money. It is not hard to get these. For these guys [Warriors] it is almost a free run with boat loads, car loads of cigarettes, weapons, drugs, illegal immigrants, you name it.³⁷

Other equipment in the Warrior arsenal included a sophisticated and expensive communications network. They were monitoring police frequencies and conducted

³⁴ Canada. DND ATI, "Force Mobile Command Warning Order, 28 April 1990;" Canada. DND ATI, "Request for Security Intelligence Assessment-Akwesasne Indian Reserve, 30 April 1990;" Canada. DND ATI, "Support to Law Enforcement Agencies-Akwesasne Indian Reserve, 27 April 1990."

³⁵ Inert grenades which had been refilled with Black Powder, rearmed resulting in the explosion of larger fragments

³⁶ Canada. DND ATI, "Threat Assessment-St. Regis Akwesasne Indian Reserve, 27 April 1990;" Canada. DND ATI, "Intelligence Report-Threats St. Regis Indian Reserve, 28 April 1990."

³⁷ Confidential Source.

successful jamming operations using white noise, Native music and threats. They also were in possession of at least two 265HP speedboats ("Pride" and "Joy").³⁸

The American reaction was slower than that of Canada. Governor Cuomo, who was making provisions to legalize gaming on the U.S. side of the Reserve, refused to activate the National Guard believing the reports of violence were overblown and exaggerated. Finally on 28 April, the governor "directed the New York state Division of Military and Naval Affairs...to take steps to be prepared for that type of action" and the National Guard was readied for possible intervention. Cuomo added that, "There is a time for the use of military force but only after we have done everything in our power first to bring about a peaceful resolution."³⁹ According to Chief Tarbell, "it was very clear that the Canadian government understood the threat to public safety, while Cuomo just shrugged."⁴⁰ The editor of *Akwesasne Notes*, Doug George concurred: "It's a real good strategy to stick to the Canadian side, where our police have the authority and the provincial and federal governments have said they would support our police."⁴¹

Canadian and American federal, provincial and state governmental representatives understood that bi-national coordination was vital. On 30 April, representatives from the police forces of Ontario, Quebec, New York State and the RCMP met to discuss tactical options. As of 30 April, however, any CF involvement was still considered "unlikely" by NDHQ.⁴² This changed literally overnight. On 30 April/1 May, incidents on Akwesasne prompted the Canadian government to act. Over

³⁸ Canada. DND ATI, "Threat Assessment-St. Regis Akwesasne Indian Reserve, 27 April 1990;" "Intelligence Report-Threats St. Regis Indian Reserve, 28 April 1990."

³⁹ Canada. DND ATI, "Statement by Governor Mario Cuomo, 30 April 1990."

⁴⁰ Harold Tarbell as quoted in Hornung, *One Nation Under the Gun: Inside the Mohawk Civil War*, p. 157.

⁴¹ Doug George as quoted in Hornung, *One Nation Under the Gun: Inside the Mohawk Civil War*, p. 163.

⁴² Canada. DND ATI, "Air Photo-Akwesasne, 30 April 1990."

the course the night and morning, a nine-hour gun battle raged, marking the zenith of the "Civil War." Two Mohawks were killed by gun shots on the Snye, Quebec land base of Akwesasne, numerous houses were set ablaze, and an estimated 3,000 to 4,000 rounds of ammunition were expended. An RCMP patrol boat also received direct fire from a speed-boat.⁴³

On 1 May, Canadian and American mediators met at the U.S. Embassy in Ottawa with a view to forming an agreement and a unified political and strategic stance. Tom Siddon and Governor Cuomo were in constant communication, as were U.S. Secretary of State, James A. Baker III and Joe Clark, Canadian Minister of External Affairs.⁴⁴ American representatives recommended legalizing gambling with the protection of state police forces. The flaw in this plan was that the Warrior Society would not be included in negotiations and gaming would still not be under community control. Even gambling opponents, such as Mike Mitchell, were willing to allow gaming on Akwesasne only if it was controlled by a joint Akwesasne Council (both U.S. and Canada), the profits be used for the entire well-being of the territory, with strict enforcements in place to uphold these principles. The obvious impediment was wrestling the monopoly on gaming away from the Warriors and their supporters. In the opinion of Governor Cuomo, the worst case scenario was to disarm the Warriors by force (including the use of military personnel), a solution he refused to endorse.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, from 1 and 3 May, 500 police officers from six individual organizations converged on Akwesasne from both borders in a well co-ordinated joint operation and

⁴³ Canada. DND ATI, "Op Feather War Diary 01 May 1990." During the battle Doug George called a radio talk show, the guest of which was Governor Cuomo. After describing the violent situation, George got into an argument with Cuomo, who promptly hung up.

⁴⁴ Canada. DND ATI, "National Contingency Plan-Akwesasne, 30 April 1990." These occurrences were never made public.

⁴⁵ Canada. DND ATI, "National Contingency Plan-Akwesasne, 30 April 1990."

sealed off access to the Reserve. With their presence, an eerie calm descended over Mohawk country.⁴⁶ Although Cuomo refused to mobilize the New York State National Guard, the battle prompted the Canadian federal government to mobilize military resources under the *National Defence Act*.

Operation FEATHER/AKWESASNE

At 2045hrs, 1 May 1990, the Solicitor-General of Canada, Pierre Cadieux, asked the Minister of National Defence, Bill McKnight, to provide military assistance to the RCMP in and around Akwesasne. The request detailed amphibious armoured vehicles, secure communication systems and engineering assets (totalling roughly 100 personnel) to be in readiness for RCMP operations. This application was not forwarded through the traditional clause of *Aid to the Civil Power*, rather, under the *Provision of Armed Assistance*.⁴⁷

A province can request, if necessary, the assistance of the Canadian Forces in managing riots and domestic disturbances without invoking *Aid to the Civil Power* under Part XI of the *National Defence Act*. The Attorney-General of a province, through the Solicitor-General of Canada, can request armed assistance from the Minister of National Defence. The latter's response is discretionary. He/She can direct the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) to order deployment; however, unlike *Aid to the Civil Power*, control remains with the federal government not with that of the requesting province.⁴⁸ This was the scenario for the CF implementation and deployment of Operation

⁴⁶ Canada. DND ATI, "Op Feather War Diaries 01-03 May 1990."

⁴⁷ Canada. DND ATI, "CF Support to Police Activities at Akwesasne, 02 May 1990."

⁴⁸ E.P. Craig, "In Light of Oka: A Need to Re-Examine Aid to the Civil Power" contained in *Military Operations in Unique Environments: Domestic Operations Précis* (Canadian Land Force Command and Staff College, 1995), ANX 1- p. 2.

FEATHER (renamed Operation AKWESASNE on 16 May for obvious politically sensitive reasons) to Cornwall and Akwesasne. The creation and legality of this operation differed from Operation SALON at Kanesatake/Oka and Kahnawake which followed the traditional *Aid to the Civil Power* skeleton. While Op FEATHER was under federal control, Op SALON was requested and controlled by Quebec Premier Robert Bourassa and his provincial government.

The federal government could no longer ignore the violence at Akwesasne. The Grand Chiefs of both the American and Canadian Band Councils requested intervention on 25 April and again after the gun battle of 30 April-1 May. They knew that the situation was beyond the control of internal police forces and band councils. The RCMP and OPP did not have the required equipment to carryout operations without the support of the Canadian Forces. Intelligence also revealed that these agencies did not have the capacity or weapon systems to suppress the Warriors in a direct confrontation. These requests and realizations prompted the Solicitor-General to appeal for CF support under *Provision of Armed Assistance*. This legislation forced the CF to participate in operations in and around Akwesasne. Although CF intervention at Akwesasne differed in both form and function from the future deployments to Kanesatake and Kahnawake during the Oka Crisis, it served as an example and warning to the Canadian Forces to begin preparing for a possible *Aid to the Civil Power* request.

The deployment of Operation FEATHER to Akwesasne in May 1990 did not fit the typical *Aid to the Civil Power* construction. The 1 May request from Solicitor-General Pierre Cadieux for CF assistance to the RCMP was a shock to Lieutenant-Colonel

Derald Prosser who co-ordinated the operation from the Regional Direction Centre of the Long Sault, Ontario detachment of the OPP: "Although I had met with the police the same day, there was no indication that the military would be called in to assist."⁴⁹ By the morning of 2 May, however, all CF personnel and equipment (save for certain service and support elements) were in their designated locations to provide:

armed assistance to RCMP to restore law and order on Canadian portion of St Regis Akwesasne Indian Reserve. CF assistance to be confined to provision of armoured vehicles for transport and protection of police personnel, mobile VHF/FM secure communications for LEA use and any non lethal operational support requested to ensure success and safety of personnel involved. Duration of Operation undetermined however commitment made for seven days. Contingency planning must take place to cater for any increase in scope of operations.⁵⁰

The operation was strategically commanded by Force Mobile Command (FMC) with sub-command elements at HQ Central Region and HQ Eastern Region. Major-General Bob Stewart was the designated strategic commander, while Lieutenant-Colonel Norris Pettis, commanding officer (CO) of 1st Battalion, The Royal Canadian Regiment (1RCR) of London, was appointed tactical commander. He was well aware of the jurisdictional intricacies of his command: "I can't imagine a more complicated problem. We're dealing with three police forces [SQ, OPP and RCMP], two provinces and two national governments. It has taken days to develop mutual trust and understanding."⁵¹ To improve communication between the various forces, a Joint Operations Centre (JOC) was set up at the OPP station at Long Sault, 19 km west of Cornwall. As of 2 May under command of Pettis, was the Special Service Force (SSF) made up of 248 personnel, 81 vehicles, 3 rafts, various boats and 2 CH-135 helicopters.

⁴⁹ Lieutenant-Colonel Derald Prosser as quoted in Keene, "Guns Among the Mohawks," p. 2.

⁵⁰ Canada. DND ATI, "Op Feather, Operation Orders, 02 May 1990."

⁵¹ Lieutenant-Colonel Norris Pettis as quoted in Keene, "Guns Among the Mohawks," p. 3. Pettis was replaced by Major B. Bowes on 13 May 1990.

The deployment to Akwesasne reached its peak on 9 May after which time there were continuous reductions in both men and materials (See Appendix B).⁵² CF personnel had authority to carry weapons only when participating in active operations with police forces. These soldiers carried live ammunition; however, the magazines could only be loaded into the weapon on order or in self-defence, in accordance with the use of force guidelines provided by the *Queen's Regulations and Orders* (QR&Os). In addition, because Op FEATHER was an IS mission, no foreign exchange officers were allowed to participate.⁵³

Op FEATHER commanders knew the capabilities of the Warriors based upon preliminary reconnaissance patrols and police intelligence reports. In addition, receipts from gun stores in New York and Vermont recorded Warrior purchases of many heavier machine-guns and RPGs (Rocket Propelled Grenades). No weapons were visible during joint police/military patrols, however, and knowledge of the full Warrior arsenal remained inconclusive. Two boat loads of weapons were seen being transported from Cornwall Island to St. Regis Island on 2 May, and it was also ascertained that the Warriors had a mobile detection unit, which had the ability to intercept and jam the radio communications of LEAs.⁵⁴

To counter Warrior equipment, the RCMP requested secure CF communications equipment. The CF deployed elements of 706 Communication Squadron from CFB Borden. The CF thought it would also be necessary to monitor Warrior message traffic (most of which was on cellular phones), to locate base stations and mobile parties, and if need be, to jam Warrior communications in the event of hostile activity. Recent

⁵² Canada. DND ATI, "Op Feather, Groupings and Tasks, 02 May 1990."

⁵³ Canada DND ATI, "Situation Report, 02 May 1990." This would hold true for Op SALON as well.

⁵⁴ Canada. DND ATI, "Intelligence Reports, 03-04 May 1990."

Warrior phone traffic had revealed an intention to resume pro-gaming operations once the CF and police presence diminished. Furthermore, the Warriors successfully jammed RCMP and OPP short-range communications.⁵⁵

To bolster communication and intelligence assets, 1st Canadian Division (Kingston) deployed 2 Electronic Warfare Squadron (2 EW SQ) and 1 Intelligence Company (1 Int Coy) on 6 May, "to be kept to lowest profile possible." Due to complications over legality, only radio transmissions could be intercepted (Cellular communication was a new phenomena in 1990, and there was a question whether cellular phones were included in "radio communication" as per the *Canadian Criminal Code*). Accordingly, information from cellular phones was not divulged to third parties. All lawful Signal Intelligence (SIGINT) was for use of the CF and LEAs with the "understanding that CF personnel would under no circumstances be called upon to testify in a court of law nor would the source of product be used in formal court proceedings."⁵⁶

The police presence on both sides of the Reserve subdued the violence. The funerals of the two Mohawks killed in the 30 April-1 May battle passed without incident on 5 and 7 May respectively (This is not surprising as it is customary in Native culture to cease hostilities during periods of mourning). The Mohawks who had fled Akwesasne in the wake of the gaming violence slowly began to return to their homes with support from governmental agencies and LEAs. As of 6 May it was estimated that only 215

⁵⁵ Canada. DND ATI, "Situation Report, Deployment of SIGINT Resources, 06 May 1990."

⁵⁶ Ibid.

Mohawks remained in the Cornwall shelters, the number lessening to 125 the following day. All schools re-opened on 9 May.⁵⁷

Human intelligence sources (HUMINT) also reported that the police presence on the Reserve “is deeply felt by the Warriors as it has cut their main sources of income, which are the gambling and traffic of cigarettes across the border to Canada. This lack of money gain is also felt severely at Kahnawake Reserve by Warriors there, as this police presence has curtailed many main sources of income.” Canada Border Services Agency at Cornwall required the use of the Cornwall Armouries in order to store an estimated \$3.1 million worth of cigarettes sequestered at the border crossing over the previous two months.⁵⁸ The Warriors were also using the influx of media to Akwesasne to convey the message that the police were occupying their territory. They also indicated that they were the victims of a disinformation campaign portraying them as oppressors to the Mohawk Nation and terrorists to the Canadian and American public. According to a 6 May intelligence report: “The request for withdrawal of all white police from Akwesasne Reserve by Warriors and their supporters will soon become the main topic in this conflict.”⁵⁹

To this point, the primary functions of the CF were limited to service and support elements such as the feeding and canvas tent housing of LEA personnel. The CF also supplied secure communication assets, intelligence cells and night vision equipment. 2CER had ferried police and military vehicles, including a helicopter from Cornwall to Cornwall Island and St. Regis in order to conduct joint police/CF patrols on the islands and mainland of Canadian Akwesasne. Each military patrol was accompanied by one

⁵⁷ Canada. DND ATI, “Op FEATHER War Dairy, 06 May 1990.”

⁵⁸ Canada. DND ATI, “Op FEATHER War Dairy, 06 May 1990.”

⁵⁹ Canada. DND ATI, “Intelligence Summary 04-06 May 1990.”

or more police officers, to avoid a situation where CF personnel were required to make arrests (although CF members had this authority as Peace Officers). Concurrently, the New York State Police and the FBI conducted patrols and searches in American Akwesasne (See Appendix C).⁶⁰

Having been deployed with no foreseen extraction, and facing a relatively low immediate threat, elements of the CF took advantage of the situation to conduct training. Joint infantry/engineer rafting and amphibious training were conducted throughout the operation, including the recovery of a sunken OPP patrol boat. Between 6-8 May, float tests and swim tests were conducted with Grizzly Armoured Vehicle General Purpose (AVGP). These were accomplished with varying success, with at least one Grizzly sinking almost immediately after entering the St. Lawrence River.⁶¹ (It should be noted that on 16 May, Operation FEATHER was renamed Operation AKWESASNE by the CF and will now be referred to as such).

⁶⁰ Canada. DND ATI, "Situation Reports, 04-10 May 1990.

⁶¹ As CF training and patrolling continued, a joint patrol on Cornwall Island raided a home in the early morning of 10 May seizing over \$1 million worth of cocaine (4 lbs) and 12 weapons. With the arrests stemming from this raid, the total for the operation was 19.



1RCR Grizzly Float Tests, Operation FEATHER. (Photo Courtesy of Sgt. Peter Dorau)

As the overall threat to LEAs was diminished thanks to patrolling and checkpoints, the CF commitment was reduced. By 25 May the CF contingent at Akwesasne consisted of 89 personnel, 35 vehicles and 9 marine vessels.⁶² All but three personnel from 2 EW SQ and 1 Int Coy returned to Kingston between 13 and 16 May, and most of the secure communication equipment was withdrawn on 18 May. The threats to both LEA personnel and Mohawk inhabitants, however, were not completely negligible. Although the CF contributions to Op AKWESASNE were reduced, the CF was still required to provide immediate armed assistance resources, in addition to, offering operational equipment and administrative support.⁶³

⁶² Canada. DND ATI, "Situation Report. 25 May 1990."

⁶³ Canada DND ATI, "Intelligence Support-Op AKWESASNE, 17 May 1990."

Although the overall atmosphere at Akwesasne was calm, there were still violent episodes. Gunshots were frequent and unmanned roadblocks were sporadically erected to impede police activity. On 19 and 22 May, Molotov Cocktails were hurled at NYSP checkpoints. CF patrols uncovered 10 boxes of Molotov Cocktails on Cornwall Island and 6 more were found in a parked car. There were two reported incidents of bomb threats in Hogansburg, New York. On another occasion, a cache of weapons was seen being thrown overboard into the river. 2CER conducted combat dive training and searches in the area of the drop but did not recover the weapons. An OPP raid on 24 May uncovered six automatic weapons and ammunition.⁶⁴ As the police and CF presence thinned, the intelligence cell reported an increasing number of smuggling related incidents. Warriors and smugglers monitored police frequencies, determined the pattern of police movements, and altered their routes accordingly.⁶⁵

Compounding the already volatile environment in Akwesasne was the election for Grand Chief of the American St. Regis tribal council, scheduled for 2 June. Anti-gambling supporter and incumbent Grand Chief Harold Tarbell was challenged for leadership by a pro-gambling candidate, Norman Tarbell (no relation). Harold was the only anti-gamer on the council and if he was defeated, the St. Regis Tribal Council would be entirely composed of pro-gambling supporters. Demonstrations of support for both men were frequent throughout late May. The outcome of the election would no doubt have an effect on Warrior intentions. Also, the Akwesasne Police Force (APF)

⁶⁴ Canada. DND ATI, "Situation Reports, 10-23 May 1990; "Op AKWESASNE Intelligence Summaries, 18-30 May 1990."

⁶⁵ Canada. DND ATI, "Op AKWESASNE Intelligence Summaries, 18-30 May 1990."

returned to active duty on 28 May under protest from groups of Mohawks who believed them to be corrupted by pro-gaming supporters.⁶⁶

Norman Tarbell won the election over Harold Tarbell 637 votes to 538 votes. The only eligible voters for the election were American Mohawks (roughly 3,500 eligible) as ruled by a New York State judge. Anti-gambling factions quickly began protesting the manner in which the election was conducted and also its outcome. Threats to LEA officers and damage to police vehicles increased as pro-gamers wanted to rid Akwesasne of outside forces. Norman Tarbell, who was to take office on 2 July, made campaign promises to re-open the casinos and remove non-Native police forces from Akwesasne.⁶⁷ On 18 June, the Bingo Halls of Akwesasne re-opened without incident. The casinos remained closed. Governor Cuomo and the New York State Legislature were determining the legalities of gaming on tribal land. Cuomo sought to legalize gaming, but members of the Legislature argued that keeping the casinos closed and persistent police patrols were essential to a continuing peace on Akwesasne.⁶⁸

Although elements of the OPP, SQ and RCMP remained in Mohawk territory, they all agreed that extensive CF support was no longer required provided that the personnel and equipment as of 6 June (87 soldiers, 33 vehicles, and 11 marine vehicles) could be redeployed within six hours. As a result, on 7 June the majority of personnel and equipment to Op AKWESASNE was withdrawn leaving behind a small rear party and 9 intelligence personnel. By 25 June the CF commitment had increased

⁶⁶ Canada. DND ATI, "Intelligence Summary Op AKWESASNE, 28-30 May 1990.

⁶⁷ Canada DND ATI, "Situation Reports Op AKWESASNE, 3-10 June 1990."

⁶⁸ Canada. DND ATI, "Akwesasne-Gaming Report, 30 June 1990."

slightly to 12 personnel (two from 2 EW SQ), eight vehicles, and seven marine vessels.⁶⁹

The lack of CF support had a negative effect on policing operations and violent activities increased almost immediately. On 11 June the Warriors held a meeting at The Bear's Den, a local bar and grill, and most, if not all, casino owners were present. Use of electronic communication devices by the Warriors ceased almost completely, cutting off a vital supply of information to LEAs. The Warriors also continued to monitor police movements and numbers.⁷⁰ On 15 June, 42 rounds were fired at an RCMP roadblock. This incident was repeated at an SQ checkpoint on 17 June.⁷¹ Sporadic gunfire still plagued the Reserve.⁷² On 17 June elements of 2 EW SQ intercepted the following conversation:

Navajo: One of them state troopers that were out yesterday said well if he's in his own yard he said we can't do a damn thing about it and they went over there and I guess he couldn't do nothing.

UM1: Who was shooting around?

Navajo: My young Warriors were testing out the new machines that what it was...They were checking out the new artillery...probably start again tomorrow.

UM1: Probably get a new lot tomorrow.

UM2: Save your ammo.

Navajo: We've got about 75,000 rounds just waiting to be used.

⁶⁹ Canada. DND ATI, "Warning Order-Standby Force, 07 June 1990;" "Situation Report Op AKWESASNE, 25 June 1990."

⁷⁰ Canada. DND ATI, "Situation Report, Op AKWESASNE, 12 June 1990."

⁷¹ This was believed to be in retaliation for the arrest of prominent Warrior spokesperson Christine King for impaired driving on 15 June.

⁷² Canada. DND ATI, "Situation Reports Op AKWESASNE, 16-19 June 1990."

During the same conversation a bazooka was mentioned.⁷³ Analysts were cautious with the information received from monitoring Warrior communication (the Warriors knew they were being screened and conversations could be part of a disinformation campaign). Another furtive Warriors' action was to pay non-Natives to smuggle weapons over the border.⁷⁴

Nevertheless, police presence continued to deter any large-scale violence and patrols frequently uncovered caches of cigarettes, weapons and other contraband. LEAs all cited the CF existence and support had a positive impact on their mandate, but they agreed that CF men and materials could be further reduced (providing assistance could be quickly redeployed). As of 5 July, only three CF members remained: a liaison officer and two members of 2 EW SQ. Equipment was reduced to three vehicles and one raft.⁷⁵

Overall, the involvement of the Canadian Forces in support of LEAs appeared to have had a calming effect at Akwesasne. The violence had subsided and the Operation AKWESASNE was thought to be nearing completion. The circumstances at Kanesatake and Kahnawake throughout July, however, prolonged CF intervention. NDHQ kept a close watch on the events at Oka knowing that, "concerns about the situation at Oka could make its way to Akwesasne Reserve."⁷⁶ The negotiations concerning the land dispute at Kanesatake were at a standstill. Neither side was willing to compromise their positions. Given that Akwesasne was continuously monitored and patrolled by police forces, Warriors and weapons from the three sister territories (Akwesasne, Kahnawake

⁷³ Canada. DND ATI, "CTI Unit Intercept Activity Report, 17 June 1990."

⁷⁴ Thompson, *The Long Fall of the Mohawk Warriors*, pp. 3-5.

⁷⁵ Canada. DND ATI, "Op AKWESASNE Redeployment and Reduction of Readiness, 27 June 1990;" Canada. DND ATI, "Situation Report Op AKWESASNE, 05 July 1990."

⁷⁶ Canada. DND ATI, "Situation Report Op AKWESASNE, 14 June 1990."

and Ganienkeh) slowly began to infiltrate the peaceful Mohawk camp at Kanesatake. During this time period CF intelligence at Akwesasne noted that the Warriors were “conspicuous by their absence.”⁷⁷ As an increase in Warriors and weapons appeared behind the barricade in the Pines at Kanesatake, the Municipality of Oka secured court injunctions for the forceful removal of these Mohawk elements by the Surete du Quebec.

The rotation of SQ members at Akwesasne in early May was perceived by the CF liaison officer “as a step towards a future intervention at Oka. The troops used presently at Akwesasne are trained members of the Unite d’Urgence who would be used for any type of intervention at Oka. It is therefore logical to conclude that concrete plans are being made for a future intervention.”⁷⁸ Force Mobile Command (FMC) Headquarters located in St. Hubert was also concerned with the prospect of violence at Oka and on 4 May requested air photos of Kanesatake and Kahnawake in order to formulate contingency plans.⁷⁹ This planning for Op SALON occurred much earlier than previously thought or recorded.

The failed SQ raid on 11 July, when SQ Corporal Marcel Lemay was shot dead by an unidentified Warrior, made CF intervention at Kanesatake more probable. When asked if he saw the Warrior Society taking over the legitimate land claim grievances at Kanesatake for their own interests, Harold Tarbell replied:

This started over a land claim dispute in Oka, in Kanesatake, and I think every Indian and probably most of the people in North America agree with the Kanesatake Mohawks on their land dispute. But clearly with this promotion of a trans-Mohawk agenda that’s coming forward about, for example, one of the demands in Kanesatake being the removal of the

⁷⁷ Canada. DND ATI, “Intelligence Reports Op AKWESASNE, 26 April – 4 May 1990.”

⁷⁸ Canada. DND ATI, “Security Intelligence Report – Akwesasne and Oka, 8 May 1990.”

⁷⁹ Canada. DND ATI, “Air Photo Request, 4 May 1990.”

police from Akwesasne. It's clear that somebody else is promoting a different agenda, and it's clear that that agenda is beyond...the Kanesatake people. I would encourage the Canadian federal government to actively engage in that process...but if they do that with the Warrior Society, they will in effect give the Warrior Society recognition as being the de facto Mohawk nation.... I don't think we gain with the long term philosophy that is promoted in our culture by force of arms or by having everything resolved at roadblocks.⁸⁰

The failed SQ raid had immediate consequences. First, it demonstrated that the Mohawks in the Pines at Kanesatake would not capitulate and were prepared to use force in retaliation for any LEA encroachment on what they believed to be their land. Second, it revealed that the SQ did not have the weapons capability or the professional training to confront the warriors, and in attempting to do so escalated an already volatile situation. Third, more barricades were erected in Kanesatake, including more travelled traffic routes such as Highway 344. Sympathetic Mohawks from Kahnawake barricaded the Mercier Bridge connecting Montreal to the south shore and other routes with significant traffic volume around the Reserve. Fourth, the unsuccessful raid left little operational and tactical manoeuvrability for the SQ. Premier Bourassa of Quebec saw an *Aid to the Civil Power* request for the CF as a realistic option.

The effects of the July raid went beyond the Kahnawake blockades. It united Mohawks who believed in the use of force to promote their agenda, but also fuelled the belief that the governments would use excessive force to end the standoff. A CF intelligence officer revealed that, "There was a lot of resistance to the Warriors within the Mohawk Nation, and they needed some kind of catalyst to get the support they did get and were able to hold on to for a certain period. 11 July was that catalyst. We had

⁸⁰ Harold Tarbell interview with Jennifer Westaway, CBC: The House, 28 July 1990, "Are Mohawks Criminals?" pp. 4-6.

found evidence that the closure of the bridge was already planned and 11 July hastened it or was the perfect excuse."⁸¹

The events at Kanesatake and Kahnawake affected the already tumultuous state at Akwesasne. Intelligence from 2 EW elements still present in Akwesasne revealed that the Reserve was "being used as a rear supply/support base for activities taking place on other Reserves. There is evidence of communication between Oka and Akwesasne. Information is passed on and assistance is requested." It was also noted that a "deliberate yet disorganized psyops campaign is being waged against authorities" from the Warrior headquarters cell at Akwesasne.⁸² Warrior activity on Akwesasne increased immediately after the SQ raid. A meeting was held at the residence of War Chief Francis Boots at 0930hrs on 11 July. Threats were made about occupying the International Bridge at Cornwall. Gunfire and protests occurred. Warriors were observed purchasing large amounts of canned goods in Cornwall and eight VHF marine radios in Messena, New York. Two cars driven by Akwesasne residents were stopped near Kahnawake carrying hundreds of pounds of food. In addition to supplies, Warriors from Akwesasne were routinely observed travelling to and from Kahnawake and Oka. As a precautionary measure, the CF commitment to Op AKWESASNE was increased in both men and material to facilitate the evacuation of LEA personnel, if necessary.⁸³ The focus of Warrior activity, however, had shifted from police patrolled Akwesasne to its sister Reserves near Montreal.

⁸¹ Confidential Source.

⁸² Canada. DND ATI, "Intelligence Summary, Op AKWESASNE, 11-15 July 1990."

⁸³ Canada. DND ATI, "Situation Reports Op AKWESASNE, 11-13 July 1990;" Canada. DND ATI, "Operation Order: Operation CROSSBELT, 17, 19 July 1990." During the week following the SQ raid, CF numbers fluctuated between 20 and 35.

In Support of Operation SALON

Sensing an escalation of violence throughout Mohawk country, a CF intelligence liaison officer was dispatched to CFB Montreal on 12 July to plan for joint operations with the SQ and the RCMP. At the same time, 515 RCMP officers were involved with operations in Mohawk territories and the SIU was rigorously, yet secretly, taking pictures of Mohawk defensive positions on all three Reserves.⁸⁴ That same morning elements of 2 EW SQ and 1 Int Coy arrived at CFB Montreal to begin compiling intelligence portfolios for Kanesatake and Kahnawake in support of Operation SALON. With another 2 EW SQ/1 Int Coy post still involved at Akwesasne, a complete representation of Warrior movements and communications could be obtained and shared. Later that day, Lieutenant-General Kent Foster, commander of Force Mobile Command, met with Brigadier-General Armand Roy, commander of 5 Canadian Mechanized Brigade Group (5CMBG), to discuss contingency plans for future operations.⁸⁵ The instigation of CF involvement at Kanesatake and Kahnawake heightened the tensions surrounding a peaceful resolution to the Oka Crisis.

The CF accelerated contingency planning for the eventual deployment of 5 Canadian Mechanized Brigade Group after the official *Aid to the Civil Power* request on 6 August. While Warrior attention was drawn to the standoffs at Kahnawake and Kanesatake, Akwesasne remained relatively calm, experiencing sporadic violent episodes. Despite the lack of apparent Warrior activity, Akwesasne was used as a staging area for Warrior operations on the other two Reserves. The CF intelligence cell of Op AKWESASNE supplied the joint intelligence centre supporting Op SALON with

⁸⁴ Canada DND ATI, "Op SALON Update, 12-17 July 1990;" Lieutenant-Colonel Robin Gagnon, "Briefing to the Infantry Conference at Ottawa, 18 November 1991 (Private Collection).

⁸⁵ Canada. DND ATI, "Op SALON Situation Reports, 17-20 July 1990."

information regarding movements of men and materials to and from Akwesasne. Both operations were under strategic control of FMC allowing intelligence and information to be disseminated without legal or bureaucratic hindrance. This joint strategic command also permitted tactical operations to be designed and executed simultaneously.

An SIU intelligence report from Akwesasne revealed that, “10 x U.S. Marines home on leave in Akwesasne on 17 July. Have contacted U.S. Consulate Montreal for help in getting them RTU [Returned to Unit].” These 10 Marines were deployed by Warrior leadership to various barricades at Kahnawake on 18 July.⁸⁶ Warrior communication was frequent between Akwesasne, Kahnawake and Kanesatake. All three territories were on a coloured alert system designating threat levels and corresponding actions. A federal intelligence officer remembered that “there was a high level of planning and knowledge. They did have a great information processing capability. The Warrior Society was able to surge people into locations very quickly, until their influence started to decline.”⁸⁷

The airlift removal of heavy weapons and Warriors from Kahnawake to Akwesasne and Ganienkeh serves as an example of the cooperation between Reserves. On the night of 28 August low-level flights of light planes were observed by 3R22eR (Van Doos) Observation Posts flying in and out of Kahnawake. These flights were also tracked by ADATS (anti-aircraft missile defence system) located at St. Hubert

⁸⁶ Canada. DND ATI, “Op AKWESASNE—War Diary 17-23 July 1990.”

⁸⁷ Canada. DND ATI, “Intelligence Reports—Op AKWESASNE, 8-12 August 1990;” Confidential Source.

and by U.S. Customs in New York State.⁸⁸ The Warriors and Mohawks deny that any flights took place.⁸⁹ According to a senior level intelligence agent:

It is not a rumour. It occurred. I remember when the reports came in. They were light planes; they flew at tree-top levels and were easy to see. There were eye witness accounts from Voodoo outposts. We believe that they got out the crew served and heavy weapons, as well as a number of Warriors, mostly to New York State. How many flights were there? The reports varied but there were multiple flights, no more than 12. We knew at Akwesasne there were a couple of sea planes and we linked one to a retired Canadian Forces Captain who was a Mohawk. There was a link that this plane was used. After that we deployed the Skyguard, but the horses had already bolted.⁹⁰

Given that Kanesatake did not have an established Warrior Society, frequent communication from Akwesasne was intercepted by elements of 2 EW SQ, including the instruction to burn or bury weapons and other materials during the tightening of the Treatment Centre (TC) perimeter by 2R22eR on 1 and 3 September.⁹¹ The reduction of the TC perimeter affected the relative peace at Akwesasne, where elements of the Royal Canadian Dragoons (RCD) were now part of the CF contingent to Op AKWESASNE consisting of 40 persons, six vehicles and nine aquatic vessels. On 3 September, a group of Natives led by four Warriors attempted to block the Cornwall Bridge to no avail. Later that day two SQ patrol cars were overturned and damaged by 80 Mohawk demonstrators, and over 100 rounds of gunfire were heard in Akwesasne that evening.⁹²

CF intelligence reports indicated that communications between Kanesatake (including those inside the TC), Kahnawake and Akwesasne were maintained

⁸⁸ Canada. DND ATI, "Op SALON War Diary, 28-29 August 1990;" Tugwell and Thompson, *The Legacy of Oka*, p. 31; Captain Tony Keene, "Drug-Net," *Sentinel*/Vol. 28 no. 2 (1992): 7-9.

⁸⁹ York and Pindera, *People of the Pines: the Warriors and the Legacy of Oka*, pp. 332-334; Gabriel, Ellen. Personal Interview. Kahnawake M.T., 1 September 2005.

⁹⁰ Confidential Source.

⁹¹ Canada. DND ATI, "SIU—Situation Report 1-2 September 1990."

⁹² Canada. DND ATI, "Op AKWESASNE-Situation Report, 04 September 1990."

throughout September until the end of the Oka Crisis on 26 September. The outward conclusion of the Oka Crisis sparked violence in Akwesasne. On the night of 26-27 September due to the finality at the TC, several RCMP cars were vandalized. LEA personnel were pelted with a variety of objects ranging from tomatoes to bricks. The 37 CF personnel of Op AKWESASNE were placed on alert for the potential extraction of police forces, which did not occur.⁹³

After 27 September, the CF reduced its numbers throughout Mohawk country and gradually handed policing duties back to the SQ, OPP and the RCMP. By 9 October, 1,582 CF personnel remained active in Operation SALON. Overall, 4,500 soldiers had been deployed throughout the crisis. At any one time the peak deployment was 3,700.⁹⁴ The last CF members of Op SALON left Kahnawake and Kanesatake on 31 October. 3R22eR continued as the Rapid Reaction Force (RRF) on 12 hours notice to move (NTM) from CFB Valcartier.⁹⁵ The Government of Quebec, however, refused to withdrawal its request for CF assistance.

Under the legislation of *Aid to the Civil Power* Quebec could maintain CF participation for as long as it desired. The degree of CF participation, however, was left in the hands of the FMC commander Lieutenant-General Foster (representing the Chief of Defence Staff, General John de Chastelain). On 2 November, Foster told his Quebec governmental liaison Claude Ryan that one company from 3R22eR was on 36 hours NTM as the RRF. Ryan responded by stating that the intention of the Province of

⁹³ Canada. DND ATI, "Op AKWESASNE-Situation Report, 27 September 1990."

⁹⁴ House of Commons, *Minutes of the Proceedings and Evidence of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, Issue No. 55* (Government of Canada: Supply and Services Canada, 1991), p. 94; COS TF, "Briefing Op SALON, 01 November 1990" (Private Collection); Canada. DND ATI, "Op AKWESASNE-Situation Report, 27 September 1990." This total included almost 700 Reservists and 180 females.

⁹⁵ Canada. DND ATI, "Op SALON-Situation reports 07-26 October 1990."

Quebec was to maintain the request until it deemed the situations at Kanasatake and Kahnawake were stable. The Government of Quebec officially withdrew its request for *Aid to the Civil Power* in writing on 30 May 1991.⁹⁶ Operation SALON was terminated after 10 months.

The direct participation of CF personnel lasted longer for Operation AKWESASNE. On 14 November LEAs reported that CF support to their operations was no longer required. As a result all CF personnel and stores were returned to their home units by 23 November. On 1 December, DND sent a letter to the Solicitor-General of Canada indicating the military's intention to be released from its role of *Provision of Armed Assistance*. Operation AKWESASNE was officially concluded by Pierre Cadieux, the Solicitor-General, on 5 December 1990. The deployment, reaching its zenith at 373 CF personnel and a combined 161 land, air and marine vehicles, lasted just over seven months.⁹⁷ As both Operation FEATHER/AKWESASNE and Operation SALON were domestic, no CF individuals were awarded decorations and no campaign medal was issued, although 5 CMBG was awarded the Canadian Forces' Unit Commendation (which is not worn on uniforms).⁹⁸

The cost for Operation FEATHER/AKWESASNE totalled \$840,000.⁹⁹ The cost of Operation SALON to the Canadian Forces was \$120 million. However, it was estimated that 80% of these costs would have been incurred on exercises, training and other previously planned activities had the operations not taken place.¹⁰⁰ The cost for the

⁹⁶ Canada. DND ATI, "NDHQ Command and Control Volume 3: A Case Study Operation SALON (The Oka Crisis), December 1993."

⁹⁷ Canada. DND ATI, "Op AKWESASNE-Redeployment 13-21 November 1990, 27 November 1990;" Canada. DND ATI, "DEM-Op SALON/Op AKWESASNE Update, 9 December 1990."

⁹⁸ Letter to author from The Chancellery of Honours Rideau Hall, Office of the Governor-General, 8 November 2005.

⁹⁹ Canada. DND ATI, "Final Cost Report-Operation AKWESASNE, 7 March 1991."

¹⁰⁰ Canada. DND ATI, "Operation SALON Sustainment Costs-Final Version, 25 November 1990."

RCMP was an additional \$25 million.¹⁰¹ In relation, the Akwesasne “Civil War” and the Oka Crisis cost the Province of Quebec \$108 million of which \$71 million was paid by the federal government in compensation.¹⁰² The financial burden to the federal government, and in relation to the taxpayer nation wide, was consistent with Part 7 of the 1988 *Emergencies Act* which states that such military activities are a federal responsibility in accordance with Section 91(7) of the *Constitution Act*.¹⁰³

Although all CF forces were removed from the various areas of operation by November, the strife in Mohawk territory did not end. After the withdrawal of the CF and LEAs the Reserves reverted back to no-go zones. The internal violence, factionalism and smuggling continued. After Op AKWESASNE and Op SALON, the Government of Canada (and of Quebec and Ontario) was reluctant to become embroiled in another standoff and took a hands-off approach to dealing with the smuggling and intimidation of the Warrior Society. Lawlessness and the influence of the Warrior Society increased in Mohawk territories, nowhere more so than in Akwesasne. In this sense the Warriors won the Oka Crisis and the Akwesasne “Civil War” and the same situation of pre-1990 continued.

Operations CAMPUS and SCORPION-SAXON

By 1993, the smuggling and violence was again reaching epidemic proportions and gunfire became a common sound to the residents of Akwesasne and neighbouring Cornwall. By this time, “sin-taxes” on tobacco and alcohol had grown enormously. The

¹⁰¹ Canada. DND ATI, “Oka Crisis-Financial Assistance to Quebec, 03 October 1994.”

¹⁰² Office of the Auditor General of Canada, *Review of the Request by the Province of Quebec for Financial Assistance Related to the Emergency in July 1990 Affecting Oka, Kahnawake and Chateauguay* (Ottawa: Office of the Auditor General of Canada, August 1995), pp. 8-32.

¹⁰³ Canada. DND ATI, “Operation SALON Sustainment Costs-Final Version, 25 November 1990.”

price of a pack of cigarettes in Canada was double compared to the United States. These costs, and increased demand, created unparalleled profit margins for the “Silks” and the Warriors. At Akwesasne, \$3.6 billion worth of tobacco products were flowing south to north, in addition to alcohol and weapons. In exchange, the Warriors shuttled counterfeit money, illegal aliens and narcotics south. Before 1990, loose ties had existed between the Warrior Society and organized crime. By 1993, these connections had grown stronger and larger to include the Hell’s Angels, Chinese triads, the Russian Mafia, and other ethnic criminal organizations. A senior police officer in Cornwall described the area as the, “Klondike of organized crime [and] multiculturalism’s finest hour.”¹⁰⁴

Ottawa was finally ready to act. Throughout December 1993 and January 1994, strategies were discussed, and preparations and training conducted, for joint operations in all three Mohawk territories by CSIS personnel, members of Joint Task Force Two (or JTF2, Canada’s Special Forces), 2,000 RCMP, a combined force of 2,000 SQ and OPP officers and over 2,000 CF members. The operation was given two names: Operation CAMPUS and Operation SCORPION-SAXON. The first was used in reference to the actual operation. The second was a decoy to describe a series of “training exercises” to deceive the media about real intentions. The inflated CF and LEA personnel contributions to Operation CAMPUS were designed “to make some show of force during the initial deployment,” very similar to that of the Op AKWESASNE and Op SALON. Stories were released to the media to mislead journalists about the movements of CF

¹⁰⁴ Dickson, *Communities, Contraband and Conflict: Considering Restorative Responses to Repairing the Harms Implicit in Smuggling in the Akwesasne Mohawk Nation*, p. 25; Thompson, *The Long Fall of the Mohawk Warriors*, pp. 1-4. AIM leader Vernon Bellecourt had visited Libya as a guest of Khaddafi on a number of occasions and had facilitated visits for many AIM and Warrior Society members between 1986-1988. In June of 1991, a delegation of three Mohawk Warriors went to Libya to collect a \$250,000 “Human Rights Award for the Red Race of America.”

personnel and equipment throughout the country between January and March 1994. A Canadian Forces warning order bluntly stated that, "Because of existing censorship, we are in a situation where we have to either avoid the media altogether or lie about the state of our preparations."¹⁰⁵

Members of the intelligence community from CSIS, SIU, the CF, the RCMP and JTF2 had compiled thorough profiles of Kahnawake, Kanesatake and Akwesasne. Members of JTF2 had been covertly inserted onto the Reserves and monitored smuggling patterns. CSIS members collected data from Mohawks on all three Reserves who opposed the Warriors and the smuggling. Jean Jolicoeur, "a former resident of Kahnawake," was approached by CSIS in Dorval and Laval seven times during 1994: "We said nothing to them; if we had revealed something, we would be dead."¹⁰⁶ A combined forces threat assessment indicated that:

The Mohawk Warrior Society is the biggest extremist Aboriginal group and potentially the most violent in Canada. We must expect to have to confront people who are armed. Therefore, the commander in charge of tactics cannot risk exposing his soldiers equipped only with sticks and shields. Two of the three reserves have small civilian planes, but also weapons likely to cause heavy damage...50 calibre 'snipers,' M60 weapons [7.62mm US-made General Purpose Machine Gun], grenades, light anti-tank artillery [LAW], plus the usual AK-47.¹⁰⁷

5 CMBG's request for \$4.2 million worth of extra ammunition bears witness to the risk posed by the Warrior's extensive weapons arsenal. A JTF2 warning order of 2 February stressed that, "The MWS [Mohawk Warrior Society] has the capability to rapidly deploy a potent arsenal at Kahnawake and Akwesasne with a more limited

¹⁰⁵ David Pugliese, *Canada's Secret Commandos: The Unauthorized Story of Joint Task Force Two* (Ottawa: Esprit de Corps Books, 2002), pp. 33-36; Marco Fortier, "Operation Secrete Annulee," *Le Journal de Montreal*, 16 July 1999. NOTE: Fortier's brief article is based on what he labeled, "1,599 pages of documentation obtained through the Access to Information Act."

¹⁰⁶ Fortier, "Operation Secrete Annulee."

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

capability at Kanesatake. Of the three reserves, the potential for internal faction violence is strongest at Akwesasne.” The threat assessment was not limited to the three intended targets. JTF2 was told to prepare for rapid deployment to suppress “multiple native led terrorist strikes” on key sites such as water and hydro plants and transportation lines. Given special attention in the warning order were the Mohawk Reserve of Tyendinaga, near Belleville, and the Chippewa of Kettle and Stony Point (Ipperwash) northeast of Sarnia.¹⁰⁸

On 14 February, a DND warning order was issued to 5 CMBG and 1RCR of 2 CMBG stating that, “It is possible that the Canadian Forces are called upon to assist the civil authorities or to provide armed assistance to the RCMP in the struggle against contraband, mainly in Quebec or Ontario with little notice.” Therefore, between 14 February and 4 March, training tempo increased dramatically and combined arms exercises were conducted at CFB Petawawa, Valcartier and Gagetown. To facilitate realistic training, similar to that during the lead-up to both 1990 operations, units were told of their specific target location, given maps, aerial imagery and corresponding threat assessments. Areas of operation were as follows: 1RCR (Petawawa)—Akwesasne, 2RCR (Gagetown)—Kanesatake and 3R22eR (Valcartier)—Kahnawake.¹⁰⁹ Not surprisingly, units and locations were analogous to the deployments of 1990 under Op SALON and Op FEATHER/AKWESASNE: 1RCR—Akwesasne, 3R22eR—Kahnawake; however, 2RCR had also been at Kahnawake. 2R22eR was responsible

¹⁰⁸ Pugliese, *Canada's Secret Commandos: The Unauthorized Story of Joint Task Force Two*, pp. 34-35. NOTE: The Ipperwash Crisis and the shooting of Dudley George did not happen until August-September 1995. However, a dissident environment had been festering at Kettle and Stony Point long before 1995 and governments and the CF were quite aware of the dissatisfaction at these Reserves.

¹⁰⁹ Fortier, “Operation Secrete Annulee.”

for Kanesatake during the Oka Crisis. While training took place, elements of these battalions were placed on 24 to 72 hours notice to move.

On 29 June a message was sent by NDHQ to those units preparing for the operation: "Information available to date and our knowledge about the plan of the police indicate that it is appropriate from now on to lower the level of alert." The operation was eventually called off eight days prior to its scheduled start. Quebec Public Security Minister, Serge Menard, released a press statement ensuring the public and the Native communities that: "We have no more the intention of invading Kanesatake than of invading Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupre."¹¹⁰ Intelligence revealed that the element of surprise had been lost, as the media had reported that the CF was to initiate counter-smuggling operations. The government was also uneasy about the possibility of bloodshed and a nationwide indigenous uprising. CSIS warned that, "The police measures aiming to counter contraband activities will increase significantly the risk of grave political violence."¹¹¹ Instead, the government took notice of the reduced sales and tax revenue from alcohol and tobacco and lessened "sin-taxes." Although never disappearing, the cigarette industry in Mohawk territory took a hard hit.¹¹² JTF2 members remained covertly inserted on the Reserves to conduct surveillance on smuggling personnel and routes. Information gathered was relayed to LEAs.¹¹³

In May 2006, the RCMP reported that seizures of contraband cigarettes at Akwesasne had risen—100,000 more cases of cigarettes were confiscated in 2005 than in 1994 (the year they began keeping inventory). The year 2005, saw a 20 percent

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Thompson, *The Long Fall of the Mohawk Warriors*, pp. 4-5.

¹¹³ Pugliese, *Canada's Secret Commandos: The Unauthorized Story of Joint Task Force Two*, pp. 33-36; Confidential Source.

increase in confiscated contraband compared to the year before. Currently, 10 factories are operating on the Akwesasne Reserve, only four having official license.¹¹⁴ In addition, a 1996 *Globe and Mail* report cited that U.S. Border Security had intercepted 299 “deportable aliens” moving across the border through Akwesasne between October 1995 and October 1996. Another report connected Akwesasne with international human smuggling networks transporting “thousands of illegal immigrants into Canada...a new breed of global outlaws.”¹¹⁵

Conclusion

CF intervention in 1990 did not end the smuggling, gaming and deep-rooted divisions at Akwesasne. It did, however, help suppress the immediate violence and restored relatively normal conditions on the Reserve whereby innocent Mohawks could return to their homes following the apex of the “Civil War” on 1 May 1990. The request for the CF under *Provision of Armed Assistance* was officially submitted by the Solicitor-General of Canada on 1 May. The Grand Chiefs of the American and Canadian Band Councils at Akwesasne, however, specifically asked for the deployment of military forces from both Canada and the U.S. in writing (as is the legality) on 25 April and again on 1 May. These requests influenced the decision of the federal government to deploy the CF in an IS operation to Akwesasne and Cornwall. While Band Council Chiefs do not have the legal authority to request CF assistance to Native Reserves (as do provincial premiers) the appeals by both Chiefs for military assistance was heeded and

¹¹⁴ CBC News, “Cigarette Smuggling on the Rise, Mounties say,” 05 May 2006.

¹¹⁵ E.J. Dickson-Gilmore and Chris Whitehead, *Aboriginal Organized Crime in Canada: Developing a Typology for Understanding and Strategizing Responses* (Ottawa: Research and Evaluation Branch, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2005), p. 16; Dickson, *Communities, Contraband and Conflict: Considering Restorative Responses to Repairing the Harms Implicit in Smuggling in the Akwesasne Mohawk Nation*, p. 19.

endorsed by Canada through Solicitor-General Pierre Cadieux. Governor Cuomo, however, who was pushing to legalize gaming to secure tax benefits for New York State, refused to approve the mobilization and deployment of National Guard units under his direct control and jurisdiction.

CF planning and deployment was swift and well coordinated. On 25 April, the day the Band Chiefs of both elected councils requested military assistance, CF contingency planning was initiated at NDHQ. Reconnaissance, training and liaison with LEAs were initiated between 26 and 30 April. By 2 May, less than 24 hours after the official sanction of *Provision of Armed Assistance*, 250 soldiers were active in joint operations with LEAs in Akwesasne. While CF and LEA presence had a positive impact on abating the violence in Canadian Akwesasne, the American portion was still plagued with sporadic gunshots and violence in the absence of any significant American police or security presence.

The positive intervention of the CF in aid of LEAs at Akwesasne created a domino-effect for increased Warrior activity on Kanesatake and Kahnawake. First, the police and CF presence on Akwesasne after 1 May prompted the Akwesasne Warriors to shift their attention to what had previously been a peaceful and unarmed Mohawk protest over legitimate land grievances at the Kanesatake "Pines." Weapons, the construction of defensive positions and the influx of Warriors were not visible at Kanesatake until 7 May, shortly after CF intervention at Akwesasne.¹¹⁶ Second, the presence of Warriors, weapons and defensive positions in the Pines gave the Municipality of Oka motive to implement the court injunction and the fateful SQ raid. Correspondingly, the presence of large numbers of armed Warriors led to the failure of

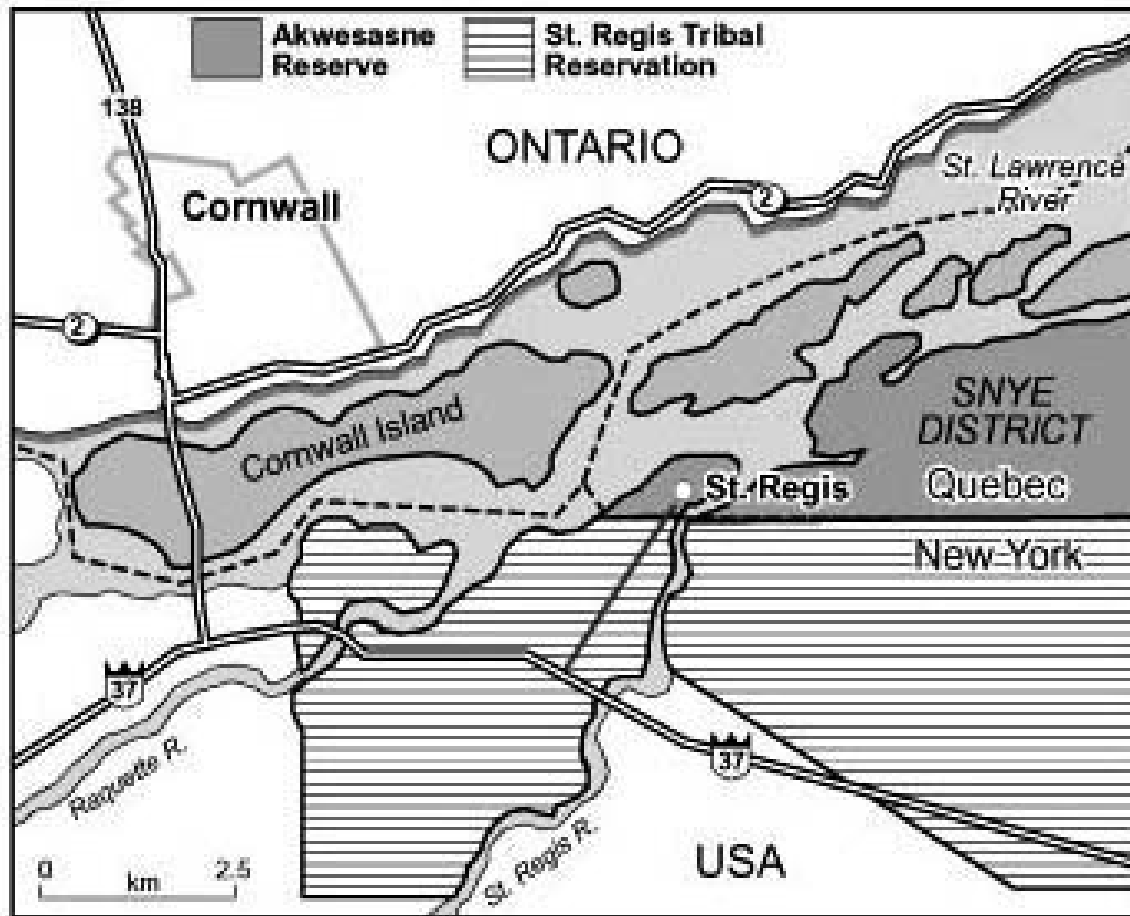
¹¹⁶Gabriel, Ellen. Personal Interview. Kahnawake M.T., 1 September 2005.

the raid and the death of Lemay. The raid itself led to the erection of more barricades at Kanesatake and the blocking of the Mercier Bridge and highways surrounding Kahnawake. With this escalation, the Province of Quebec requested the use of the CF under *Aid to the Civil Power* leading to the deployment of Operation SALON, which in turn led to an increase and extension of Operation AKWESASNE.

The continuation of CF intervention at Akwesasne helped provide a vital intelligence link between both CF operations running concurrently. Although under different political control, both Op AKWESASNE and Op SALON were strategically commanded by Force Mobile Command which made the sharing of information and operational planning more expedient and successful. In neglecting the influence of Operation FEATHER/ AKWESASNE upon the events at Akwesasne itself, and also Kanesatake and Kahnawake, the historical record of the violence in Mohawk country during the spring and summer of 1990 was incomplete and the CF intervention at Akwesasne remained the forgotten front of the Oka Crisis.

APPENDIX A

The Geographical Divisions of Akwesasne/St. Regis¹¹⁷



¹¹⁷ Source: Bernard Bennell, *Globe and Mail*, Toronto.

APPENDIX BOperation FEATHER/AKWESASNE—Deployment, 09 MAY 1990¹¹⁸

Unit/Home Location	Offices	NCMs	Vehicles/Equipment
1 RCR (1 st Battalion, The Royal Canadian Regiment), London	10	150	14 x AVGP (Grizzly) 2 x APC Dozer 1 x APC (ARVL) 2 x Huskys 5 x Iltis (all equipped with VINSON Comms.) 33 x Support Vehicles
2 CER (Combat Engineer Regiment), Petawawa	2	41	20 x Support Vehicles 5 x Kenworth 4 x Assault Boat 2 x Power Boat 2 x Sealander Jetboat 8 x Dive Team Equipment 2 x Class 16 Raft 1 x Class 60 Raft
2 SVC BN (Service Battalion), Petawawa	1	14	8 x Support Vehicles
2 MP PL (Military Police Platoon), Petawawa		4	2 x Support Vehicles
2 FD AMB (Field Ambulance), Petawawa	1	4	2 x Ambulances 6 x Support Vehicles
SSF HQ and SIGS (Headquarters and Signals)	14	17	10 x Support Vehicles
2 EW SQ (Electronic Warfare) 1 Can. Div. Kingston	3	34	12 x Support Vehicles
1 Int Coy (1 Intelligence Company) 1 Can. Div. Kingston	1	6	2 x Support Vehicles
427 SQ, Petawawa	6	11	2 x CH-135 3 x CH-135 (8 hrs Notice to Move or NTM)

¹¹⁸ Canada. DND ATI, "Op Feather/Akwesasne, Tasked Equipment and Support;" Canada. DND ATI, "Op Feather, Personnel and Equipment List, 08 May 1990."

430 SQ, Valcartier			4 x CH-136 (8 hrs NTM) 1 X FARP (for refuelling)
450 SQ, Borden			3 x CH-135 (8 hrs NTM) 4 x CH-136 (8 hrs NTM) 1 x CH 147 (4 hrs NTM)
Other	2	18	
Total	40	299	161
Cornwall Armouries: Base Security Force		30-40 Reser ve Pers.	All assistance was unarmed. Units: 28 Ottawa Service Bn, Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Highlanders, Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa and the Brockville Rifles.

APPENDIX C

Tactical Sketch of Area of Operations, Operation AKWESASNE, 24 May 1990. (DND ATI)

