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DOMINION OF THE LAKES?
A RE-ASSESSMENT OF JOHN BRADSTREET'S RAID ON FORT FRONTENAC, 1758

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John (Jean-Baptiste) BRADSTREET (1714-1774)
Painted by Thomas Mcilworth, 1764.

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By the demolition of fort Frontenac, the enemy have been depriv'd of their grand magazine, from whence their western territories, garrisons, and Indian allies were supplied with ammunition, provisions, and goods of all kinds. By the destruction of their fleet, the intercourse between Canada and Niagara, has in great measure been cut off, and the **dominion of the lake** *wrested from their hands*

` Lt. Col John Bradstreet, *Impartial Account…*, 1759.

ABSTRACT

This paper re-examines the highlight of John Bradstreet's military career during the Seven Years' War (1756-1763): the successful raid conducted against Fort Frontenac in the late summer of 1758. The aim of the paper is to determine if Bradstreet's raid was truly a strategic victory as numerous historians have claimed or whether they accepted at face value the assertions by the self-promoting Bradstreet in his endless quest for promotion that he achieved strategic "advantages"?

Using the tenets of the Canadian Forces (CF) Operational Planning Process (OPP) as a reference tool, the paper describes the New France-New England operating environment of 1758 and the attendant problems facing planners trying to achieve their stated operational *endstates* in the North American theatre. The conception, the lobbying for and the execution of the actual raid itself (as well as the raid's aftermath) will be examined utilizing primary sources of the day to determine if it was operationally designed to achieve a strategic *endstate* or effect as per the OPP.

Bradstreet's raid was a good example of a tactical *coup de main* which owed a great deal to surprise and good luck more than any serious "strategic" planning or the exercise of the operational art. It will be shown however that Bradstreet's "diversion" may have induced negative operational effects through its "soaking off" of 3000 Provincial troops from the main "line of operation" on the interior approach, as well as depriving the army of their most able and dynamic administrator at a time of critical want and reorganization for the actual operational tasks at hand.

The paper will conclude that the destruction of Frontenac in 1758 was a "nice-to-have" vice a "must have" in the overall scheme of things, and Abercromby was ultimately outmanoeuvred by his own subordinate who led off him off his "critical path". It will be conclusively demonstrated that the Fort

Frontenac raid was **not** strategic in spite of what current history books state. As the *objective* itself was not strategic, nor its capture or physical destruction needed to achieve the desired British strategic *endstate i*n North America – the capture of New France – the paper concludes that, while the raid was a resounding tactical success of the moment for Bradstreet, it was, in fact, an operational blunder for General Abercromby. The key conclusion is that the tactically executed raid **did** actually transcend the operational level of war but not in the traditional historical understanding of the raid's achievements or alleged "strategic success." Instead it prolonged the Seven Years War in North America by two years.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE – "A Very Extraordinary Man"

John (Jean-Baptiste) Bradstreet, the main character in this study, was born 1714 in Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia, to an English officer and an Acadian mother. This bilingual officer was considered by General James Wolfe to be the best man in America during the Seven Years War (1755-63) "for the battues and expeditions" and "a very extraordinary man".[1] One of the principal planners behind the 1745 capture of Louisburg by New England forces, Bradstreet quickly established an excellent reputation as a logistician on the Albany-Oswego corridor at the outbreak of the Seven Years War a decade later. He was instrumental in establishing "The Battoe Service" which gave the British Army a much needed operational capability to manouevre in the wildernesses of North America and, during this time, formulated his daring plan to take Fort Frontenac on Lake Ontario by a *coup de main.*

Various commanders and higher priority operations put his plan on hold until 1758 when, in the aftermath of General James Abercromby's failed assault on Fort Ticonderoga, he was finally allowed to put his scheme into operation. Bradstreet's largely colonial force of approximately 3000 men reached Lake Ontario on 21 August and four days later his force was laying siege to the small French fort and its vital supply depot at the mouth of the Cataraqui River near the egress of Lake Ontario. The French garrison surrendered 27 August 1758

[1] James Wolfe to Lord George Sackville, 24 May 1758, in Beckles Willson, *The Life and Letters of James Wolfe*, (New York: W. Heineman, 1909), 369. For the only biography of John Bradstreet see William Godfrey, *Pursuit of profit and preferment in colonial North America: John Bradstreet's quest* [hereafter *PPP*] (Waterloo:Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1982).

after a short but futile resistance and the fort was plundered of its fur pelts, trading goods and other supplies.

Many historians have claimed that this daring surprise raid, which saw the partial demolition of the decrepit fort, as well as the destruction of the small flotilla of French ships based there, was one of great strategic import and contributed largely to the final defeat of New France. American historian Fred Anderson has recently praised Bradstreet as being an officer of "strategic insight, persistence and ingenuity". Was Bradstreet really a gifted forward thinker with "strategic insight" or merely a good tactical leader of men and overly determined to make a name for himself by whatever means possible.[2]

Bradstreet was appointed "Colonel in America" for his exploits and continued to serve as Deputy Quarter Master General for America for the remainder of the war. During the Indian uprising of 1763-4, he was assigned to lead a northern expedition from Fort Niagara to relieve the besieged Detroit which he accomplished, but overstepped the bounds of his authority and orders by offering peace to the various tribes thus incurring the displeasure of the Commander-in-Chief, Major-General Thomas Gage, but more especially, the northern Superintendant of Indian Affairs, Sir William Johnson.

Bradstreet's military record and reputation never recovered from this 1764 campaign which overshadowed his 1758 accomplishment. All future requests for governorships or preferment were ignored by Gage who remained as the Commander-in-Chief of North America for the rest of Bradstreet's life. John

[2] See Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War*, (New York: Vintage, 2001 [paperback edition]), 259. See also Anderson, *The War that Made America: A Short History of the French and Indian War* (New York, Viking, 2005), 146-51, in which Anderson characterizes Bradstreet's plan as one of "strategic elegance". Other historians that posit Bradstreet's Raid was strategic are Francis Parkman (1823-93); Sir John Fortescue (1859-1933), Lawrence Henry Gipson (1880-1971). Their analysis and the weight of evidence will be examined in detail in Chapter 5.

Bradstreet died on 25 September 1774 at New York, spared the spectacle of armed insurrection that the abrasive and ambitious harbinger had long predicted would come.

The aim of the paper is to determine if Bradstreet's raid was truly a strategic victory as numerous historians have claimed or whether they accepted at face value the assertions by the self-promoting Bradstreet in his endless quest for promotion that he achieved strategic "advantages." This study will thus re-examine the highlight of Bradstreet's military career, the raid against Fort Frontenac in the late summer of 1758. Was it truly strategic as numerous American and British historians have claimed? Or did it merely have the outward appearance of a strategic coup, played up as such at the time to bolster the morale of the American colonies still dismayed by General James Abercromby's stunning defeat on the Heights of Carillon outside Fort Ticonderoga in July? Were vital supply lines truly severed and French dominion of the Great Lakes eliminated? Were Indian tribes truly impressed and duly influenced to abandon the French cause and sit neutral on the sidelines for the rest of the war?

In order to differentiate between strategic, operational and tactical levels of war, this paper will first define the three levels of war, which, while not espoused during the 18th century, certainly exist from a modern conceptual perspective. The aim of this discussion will be to orient and anchor the respective strategies actually articulated by the British and French as they pertained to their colonies in North America during the Seven Years War by using the tenets of the Canadian Forces (CF) Operational Planning Process (OPP).

The paper will continue by describing the New France-New England operating environment and the attendant problems facing planners trying to

achieve their stated operational endstates[3] in the North American theatre. The conception, the lobbying for and the execution of the actual raid itself utilizing primary sources of the day will be examined with a particular view of identifying whether key concepts of OPP campaign design were present in the design and conduct of the raid.

Finally, the raid's aftermath and its perceived successes at the three respective levels of war will be reviewed through the contemporary lenses of the the British and the French. This will be followed by a short review of the various interpretations of Bradstreet's raid by modern day British, American and Canadian historians to identify whether they offer any important additional insights as to the "strategic" value of Bradstreet's operation. The principal question to be addressed in this section will be: did they slavishly adopt his depiction of the event as a "strategic coup", or did the tactically executed raid actually transcend the operational level of war and achieve strategic effects?

This paper will conclude that Bradstreet's raid was a good example of a tactical *coup de main* which owed a great deal to surprise and good luck more than any serious "strategic" planning or the exercise of operational art. It will also be shown that it was in Bradstreet's defeated commander's interest to play up the importance of his subordinate's raid in order to ameliorate and deflect criticism of his own catastrophic performance at Ticonderoga and his failure to achieve his operational *endstate.* In the end, it will be demonstrated that the Fort Frontenac raid was not part of the original operational design for the Ticonderoga campaign in the North American theatre. In spite of what current

[3] **Endstate**: "the political and/or military situation to be attained at the end of an operation, which indicates that the objective[s have] been achieved". *Land Ops*, 3-1. For a comprehensive glossary of all OPP terms, see Annex A. For further detailed discussion of *Endstates* see section in Chapter Two.

history books state, the raid while a resounding tactical success of the moment for Bradstreet, was in fact, an operational blunder for General Abercromby.

The key conclusion will be that the tactically executed raid **did** actually transcend the operational level of war but not in the traditional historical understanding. When the total sum of activities occurring along the two main operational lines of approach leading towards "the trunk of the tree" of New France are viewed through the lens of CF campaign design tenets, the raid can be said to have created the most spectacular negative effect on the strategic level of war for 1758. Instead of aiding and abetting the achievement of the strategic endstate – the capture of New France – Bradstreet's raid prolonged the war by another two years.

CHAPTER TWO – THE LEVELS OF WAR

> *The primary purpose of any theory is to clarify concepts and ideas that have become, as it were, confused and entangled. Not until terms and concepts have been defined can one hope to make any progress in examining the question clearly and simply and expect the reader to share one's views.*[4]
>
> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*.

While modern historians tend to use the term strategic and tactical liberally, they often misunderstand exactly what the terms mean. The result is imprecise and unpersuasive analysis, and subsequently, erroneous conclusions. As Donald Stoker recently observed in "The Forum" of *The Journal of Military History*:

> Unfortunately, we historians too often fail to differentiate between the terms "strategy", "operations" and "tactics", sometimes using them interchangeably and thus incorrectly. We also sometimes neglect to account for the changing definitions and usage of military terms.[5]

Therefore to orient and anchor the respective strategies actually espoused by the British and French with regard to their colonies in North America in 1758, and, more specifically, to show how and where John Bradstreet's Raid is situated within the campaign design of his operational commander, it is necessary to first articulate the theoretical differences between the strategic, operational and tactical levels of war.

The three levels of war while not used as terms during the 18th century, certainly exist from a modern conceptual perspective and have been characterized as

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[4] Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989 [paperback edition]), 132.

[5] Donald Stoker, "There was no Offensive-Defensive Confederate Strategy", *The Journal of Military History* 73 (April 2009): 573 (571-590). Dr Stoker is Professor of Strategy and Policy at the US Naval War College.

defining and clarifying "the relationship between strategy, operational approach, and tactical actions".[6]

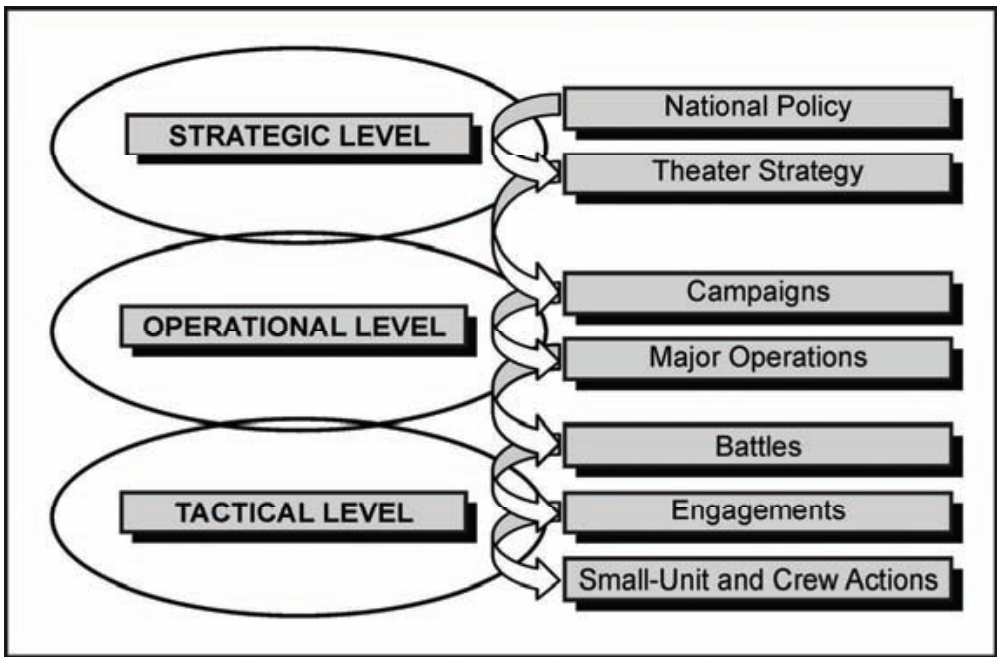

Figure 2.1: Levels of War.

Source: Army Field Manual No. 3-0 (FM 3-0), Operations, 6-1.

This conceptual categorization (shown above) has evolved to help military commanders organize their thoughts and to visualize a logical flow of operations, a realistic assignment of tasks and the allocation of resources to achieve them. In essence, it ensures that "the translation of national aims and political goals into military action [is] done in a manner that ensures clarity and unity of effort" throughout the respective levels of war.[7]

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[6] Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Field Manual no. 3-0 Operations* [(hereafter *FM 3-0*] (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, February 27, 2008), 6-1, http://usacac.army.mil/cac2/Repository/Materials/FM3-0(FEB%202008).pdf (accessed January 27, 2010).

[7] Department of National Defence, *B-GL-300-001/FP-001 Land Operations* [hereafter *Land Ops*] (Ottawa: DND Canada, [DRAFT] 2007), 3-2.

From a purely military perspective, the strategic level is the level where commanders and staff are given their national or alliance strategic objectives, as well as an allocation of national strategic resources to accomplish those objectives (such as fleets or armies). At this level they are then expected to focus and sagely apply that military power to achieve their endstate which leads to those assigned strategic objectives.[8]

The operational level, subsequently, is the level at which

> …campaigns and major operations are planned, conducted, and sustained to accomplish strategic objectives within theatres or areas of operation. Activities at this level link tactics and strategy by establishing operational objectives needed to accomplish the strategic objectives, sequencing events to achieve the operational objectives, and initiating actions and applying resources to bring about and sustain those events.[9]

Finally, the tactical level is the level where battles, sieges, raids and other tactical engagements are planned and executed to accomplish the operational objectives assigned by their commander at the next higher level. Operational-level commanders typically determine, integrate and synchronize their activities and capabilities to achieve strategic objectives across broader dimensions of time and space than their tactical commanders who focus primarily on employing and manouevring their forces to achieve their tactical and assigned operational objectives. It can thus be seen that "the horizons for planning, preparation, and execution differ greatly" at each of the three levels of war.[10]

All of this, however, is not set in stone, for some operations do not neatly fall into neat prescriptive categorizations. CF doctrine recognizes the danger of oversimplification when it states that:

[8] Department of National Defence, *B-GJ-005-3000/FP-000 Canadian Forces Operations* [hereafter CF Ops](Ottawa: DND Canada, 2005), 1-4.

[9] *Ibid.*, 1-5.

[10] *FM 3-0*, 6-1.

> No level of warfare should be viewed in isolation. Tactical success does not guarantee strategic success. Battles and engagements generally shape the course of events at the operational level, but they become relevant only in the larger context of the campaign plan. The campaign, in turn, only gains meaning in the context of the strategy.[11]

Thus the levels can blur, merge, or, in some cases, be bypassed. What should be kept in mind, however, is that, regardless of the size of one's force, or the rank of its commander, if a force is being tasked to achieve a strategic objective, then it is being employed at the operational level. In other words, the objective determines the level of war and scale of force employment and not vice versa.

It is important to understand some of the planning concepts and operational terminology used in CF doctrine in order to establish a baseline for analysis of John Bradstreet's raid and to help determine exactly where his operation fitted into the larger campaign design of his theatre commander, James Abercromby. The art of campaigning implies artisanship on the part of the operational commander who must, according to CF doctrine, demonstrate marked abilities to "translate strategic direction into tactical action" and "visualize the synergistic effects of all available capabilities in the achievement of the strategic goal." This creative human process is termed as "operational art" or "the skill of employing military forces to attain strategic objectives in a theatre of operations through design, organization and conduct of campaigns and major operations."[12]

As the stated intent of this paper is to examine whether or not John Bradstreet's raid was strategic (or achieved strategic effects), it is necessary to

[11] *Land Ops*, 3-4.

[12] Department of National Defence, B-GJ-005-500/FP-000 *The Canadian Forces Operational Planning Process* [hereafter CFOPP] (Ottawa, DND/MDN Canada, 2008), 1-3.

discuss some basic terminology and concepts that were applicable in the design and conduct of this specific operation and establish whether Abercromby (or his superior, William Pitt) demonstrated any particular aptitude for the operational art.[13]

Endstate and Objectives

> *Now to win battles and take your objectives, but fail to exploit these achievements is ominous and may be described as "wasteful delay". And therefore it is said that enlightened rulers deliberate upon the plans, and good generals execute them.*[14]
>
> Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*.

According to CF doctrine, an *endstate* is "the political and/or military situation to be attained at the end of an operation, which indicates that the objective[s have] been achieved." The strategic *endstate* is always defined and directed by government and can change over the course of a campaign due to a range of factors including adverse public opinion, international pressures, a loss of political will or a lack of resources. Despite its vulnerability to change, however, it remains "the unifying focus of any campaign." [15]

Objectives referred to in the *endstate* definition are those which represent "a clearly defined and obtainable goal for a military operation" and can involve, for example, "seizing a terrain feature, neutralizing an enemy's force or capability or achieving some other desired outcome that is essential to the commander's plan and towards which the operation is directed."[16] An operational commander in

[13] When these OPP terms are used in the analyses sections of this paper according to their definitions stated in the glossary at Annex A, they will be highlighted in italics.

[14] Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, trans. Samuel B.Griffith London: Oxford University Press, 1963), 142.

[15] *Land Ops*, 3-1.

theatre, once assigned his higher commander's military *endstate* and the strategic *objectives* he must attain, will, in turn, establish operational *objectives* for his subordinates to attain after synchronizing and integrating all resources and capabilities he will require. At the operational level, these operational *objectives* will often be described as conditions or *effects* to be achieved at *decisive points*.

Lines of Operation & Decisive Points

> *The general must create situations which will contribute to their accomplishment. By "situations" I mean that he should act expediently in accordance with what is advantageous and so control the balance.*[17]
>
> Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*.

In campaign design, *lines of operation* represent critical paths of effort in time and space and are designed to sequentially and logically achieve desired effects or battle capabilities leading to a designated *endstate.* They help a commander ensure that the critical activities required to achieve *objectives* are fully synchronized and integrated. These critical activities are known individually as a *decisive point* or an "event that paves the way to the *end-state*."[18]

When these *decisive points* are logically arranged along a *line of operation* then successfully integrated and applied, they achieve *effects* which are defined doctrinally as "the consequence of one or more activities that contribute to one or more *objectives*." [19] *Decisive points* can also be termed as "an *effect* to be produced and its purpose" which means when any *objective* is defined as a desired *effect,* it is also the final and ultimate *decisive point* on its *line of operation*.[20] The successful

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[16] *CFOPP*, 2-1.

[17] Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, 66.

[18] *CFOPP*, 2-1.

[19] *Ibid.*

outcome of a *decision point* on a *line of operation* is typically styled "a precondition to the …achievement of a campaign and/or achievement of the *endstate*."[21]

Manoeuvre

> *Nothing is more difficult than the art of manoeuvre. What is difficult about man oeuvre is to make the devious route the most direct and to turn misfortune to advantage.*[22]
>
> Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*.

Another important tenet of campaign design to be understood is the concept of operational *manoeuvre* which states a commander should seek to "to gain a position of advantage in respect to the opponent from which force can be applied or threatened." The object of *manoeuvre* should be "either to destroy the opponent's physical means to resist or to destroy his capability to resist." The first approach implies kinetic, lethal activities (force on force) to achieve an *objective*, i.e. an attritionist approach. The second is directed more against the adversary's will and cohesion and can be achieved through second or third order effects resulting from the first approach, or by psychological means such as non-kinetic information operations. No matter which approach is chosen by a commander, CF doctrine states that "the campaign design must cater to finding, fixing and striking the opponent's critical vulnerabilities" which is achieved only through manoeuvre. [23]

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[20] Canadian Forces College [CFC], *CFC Guide to CF Operational Planning Process* [hereafter CFC Guide] CFC 230 (2010), II-11/17.

[21] *Ibid.*

[22] Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, 102.

[23] *CFOPP*, 2-4.

Manoeuvre is thus important to achieving specific *decisive points* along a *line of operation*, and "as the strengths and weaknesses of *decisive points* are determined and critical vulnerabilities revealed, forces will *manoeuvre*, jointly, to achieve these points". Thus within one campaign, there can be a variety of *man oeuvre* approaches on the physical and psychological planes which, ideally, allow subordinate commanders sufficient freedom of action to achieve their assigned *objectives*.[24] The significance of *manoeuvre* for the purposes of this paper lies in the fact that it implies the use of an indirect approach which in turn, further implies approaching from flanks, a somewhat tactical perspective. At the operational level of war it is important to remember that flanks are not related to a specific direction but to where an adversary cannot focus appropriate combat power or attention.[25] It also speaks to the agility of a commander's mental faculties and how he applies his knowledge to leverage the operating environment to his best advantage. As Sun Tzu summarized: "What is of supreme importance in war is to attack the enemy's strategy".[26]

Flexibility

> *The wise general in his deliberations must consider both the favourable and unfavourable factors. By taking into account the favourable factors, he makes his plan feasible; by taking into account the unfavourable, he may resolve the difficulties.*[27]
>
> Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*.

The last important tenet of campaign design that needs to be grasped, before this paper proceeds to examine the strategic context of John Bradstreet's

[24] *Ibid.*

[25] *Ibid.*

[26] Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, 77.

[27] **Ibid.**, 113.

raid, is *flexibility*. This design concept recognizes that planning cannot foresee or predict all eventualities in war, a chaotic and uncertain human activity at the best of times. Therefore, plans will always need to be flexible and capable of adapting to unforeseen factors ranging from pre-emptive enemy actions, lack of resources or evolving political direction.

Planning, according to CF doctrine, should never be "so specific as to inhibit *flexibility*" and that the commander and his staff "must build *flexibility* into the operational design for the campaign." Contingency plans are usually conceived before a campaign is launched and, by having them, staffs preserve their commanders' freedom of action even under rapidly changing circumstances. Typically, there are two kinds: "*branch plans*…built into the basic plan for adjusting the ongoing operation if necessary to ensure the maintenance of the overall operational design; and, *sequels* which "are based upon ***the probable outcomes*** (author's emphasis) of current operations." In addition, *sequels* "are always included in the planning process because once the *sequel* is determined, its requirements will influence planning and execution of current operations,"[28] specifically the allocation and prioritization of resources.

These last two concepts of design - *flexibility* which caters to uncertainty, and *manoeuvre* which caters to opportunity – will be important when considering the factors that were critical to the operational commander's decision to launch Bradstreet across Lake Ontario in the late summer of 1758. Additionally important, is that basic terminology has now been established to understand the relationship between strategy, operational approach and tactical actions, and the respective levels of war at which they occur. These definitions will now serve to orient and anchor further discussion on the actual French and British theatre

[28] *CFOPP*, 2-6.

strategies for 1758 and help the reader understand the operational parameters and constraints of the Bradstreet raid.

CHAPTER THREE – THE STRATEGIC CONTEXT

> *The first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgment that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish…the kind of war on which they are embarking; neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature. This is the first of all strategic questions and the most comprehensive.* [29]
>
> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War.*

Eighteenth century conventional warfare was first waged on a large scale in the New World during the Seven Years War (1756-1763). It was a radical departure from the military resources normally allocated to the far flung colonies of the various European nation states harbouring imperial ambitions. European professional armies represented "the last argument of kings"[30] and were not to be squandered frivolously in peripheral conflicts that did not achieve decisive or strategic outcomes such as dynastic change. As Canadian historian Ian K. Steele has observed

> …murderous battles were not the main strategic objective of war. The peace treaty was the goal of the war in a real sense, the fighting was to obtain a favourable settlement of dispute, not to destroy a religion or an ideology.[31]

For seventy years France and Britain had fought each other in Europe in a succession of wars (The War of the League of Augsburg [1689-1697]; The War of the Spanish Succession, [1702-1713]; and The War of the Austrian Succession [1744-1748]). Preoccupied with these "much more important and expensive

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[29] Clausewitz, *On War*, 88-89.

[30] From the Latin phrase "*Ultimo oratio regnum*" ("The Last Argument of Kings"), a 1660 motto inscribed on the barrels of all French artillery field pieces by order of King Louis XIV. Quoted in *The Greenhill Dictionary of Military Quotations*, ed. Lieutenant-Colonel Peter G. Tsouras (London: Greenhill Books, 2000), 42.

[31] Ian K. Steele, *Guerillas and Grenadiers: The Struggle for Canada, 1689 - 1760*, (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1974), 7.

European main event[s]", the protagonists had left the prosecution of them in the North American theatre to their proxies making them very much "contests by colonists and for colonists."[32] The introduction of regulars, siege artillery and dedicated fleets in support of operational objectives in the New World changed all that. That a significant shift in global strategic outlook and the waging of war in the mid-18th century had truly occurred is underscored by the title American historian Lawrence Henry Gipson bestowed on the conflict in his magisterial 15 volume study *The British Empire Before the American Revolution.* He styled the Seven Years' War as the *The Great War for Empire,* and, in every sense, he was correct, for it was truly the first global conflict to be conducted on several oceans and continents.

Compared to the scale of warfare waged on the European continent, however (and in other theatres of operation such as India, Africa, South America, the Caribbean and the Philippines), North America was not considered a high priority for Britain until William Pitt took office as southern Secretary of State in June 1757. Pitt's "strategic" system allegedly had the sole purpose of seizing all French possessions in North America, according to Canadian historian C.P. Stacey, while "the British activities in Europe were mere containing operations, designed to divert France while the main campaign deprived her of Canada."[33] And while Pitt had taken over the strategic helm too late to influence any campaigns of 1757 in North America, he made it clear to all concerned that he

[32] Steele, *Guerillas & Grenadiers*, 11-12.

[33] C.P. Stacey, *Quebec, 1759: The Siege and the Battle* (Toronto: MacMillan, 1959 [reprint, 2002], 21. I use the qualifier "alleged" as there has been a reassessment of Pitt's performance and leadership during the war spearheaded by the likes of British historian Richard Middleton, *The Bells of Victory: The Pitt-Newcastle Ministry and the Conduct of the Seven Years' War 1757-1762* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) who believe that Pitt "was far from having a system for waging the war" and that his talents "though considerable, were not those of an administrator or even military planner." 211-12.

would be taking much firmer control of events in 1758 through direct involvement in the planning process and having operational commanders report directly back to him.

This chapter will first examine the operating environment of North America and briefly review the conduct of warfare and strategy in North America up to and including the commencement of war in North America by France, Britain and their proxy colonies. Then the development and formulation of a campaign design and theatre strategy for North America by William Pitt and his colleagues in 1758 will be examined, with special focus on his operational direction given to the senior officer on the ground, Major General James Abercromby. The subsequent orders would reduce the unfortunate Scottish general to an operational Commander-in Chief of North America in name only.

"CHRISTENING THE GROUND" – THE OPERATING ENVIRONMENT

> *In an American campaign everything is terrible; the face of the country, the climate, the enemy. There is no refreshment for the healthy, nor relief for the sick. A vast inhospitable desert, unsafe and treacherous, surrounds them, where victories are not decisive, but defeats are ruinous; and simple death is the least misfortune, which can happen to them. This forms a service truly critical, in which all the firmness of the body and mind is put to the severest trial; and all the exertions of courage and address are called out.*[34]
>
> *The Annual Register, 1763.*

It took several years for Britons unacquainted with the physical geography of North America to understand the vast distances and immense hardships faced by any army campaigning there during the Seven Years' War. First, there was "the face of the country" with its attendant climate that had to be conquered before one could actually face an opponent. To most British veterans

[34] *The Annual Register: or a view of the history, politicks, and literature of the year 1763*, 28-9. [journal on-line]; available from http://www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/ilej/image1.pl?item=page&seq=1&size=1&id=ar.1763.x.x.6.x.x.28; Internet; accessed 8 February 2010.

accustomed to soldiering in Europe's open countryside with its established road network, tidy towns and villages interspersed every few miles along the way to provide ready billets and fresh food, the North American wilderness was a rude shock.

War in North America for 18th century armies was essentially a massive problem of manouevre, communications and resupply, the principal task of effective generalship being the ability to move a force of moderate size into contact with the enemy. It was a task for which the aspiring commander needed a small highly trained army of experts or enablers, and, for those seriously contemplating any waterborne approach: boat builders, battoemen and sailors to build and sustain the capability to convey large armies along the inland waterways which served as the only highways through vast tracts of primeval forest. Long lines of communication also necessitated the building of well-garrisoned, defensible forts, depots and dockyards along the way, usually located on lakes or at strategic chokepoints where lakes and rivers narrowed.

In essence, a mastery of riverine warfare was required.[35] This type of warfare in North American history is not that well documented, and usually starts with discussions of naval warfare on the Great Lakes during the War of 1812 and on through to the subjection of the Seminoles in the Everglades and the operations on the Mississippi during the Civil War (1860-65).[36] But more than a

[35] **Riverine warfare**. A modern definition is "Operations conducted by forces organized to cope with and exploit the unique characteristics of a riverine area, to locate and destroy hostile forces, and/or to achieve or maintain control of the riverine area. Joint riverine operations combine land, naval, and air operations, as appropriate, and are suited to the nature of the specific riverine area in which operations are to be conducted." US Department of Defence, JP 1-02, *DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, (12 April 2001, as amended through 31 October 2009); [dictionary on-line]; available from http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/dod_dictionary/index.html; Intranet accessed 22 February 2010.

[36] For the most recent historical treatment of riverine warfare see R. Blake Dunnavent, *Brown Water Warfare: The U.S. Navy in Riverine Warfare and the Emergence of a Tactical Doctrine, 1775-1970*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003. The Viet Nam War and the strategic importance of the Mekong River in operations spawned a spate of riverine warfare literature in the Sixties, articles such as

decade before the American Revolution, riverine warfare was first conducted on a massive scale during the Seven Years' War in North America (1755-1760). The capture of Montreal in 1760 was occasioned by three waterborne British-American armies converging in ships and boats on the last stronghold of New France, each arriving within one week of another, a feat unequalled in North American military history.

The armies involved hadn't always been so proficient in "brown water" operations. It was a capability that simply did not exist in the British Royal Navy or provincial merchant marine at the outset of the war. Thus a basic riverine doctrine was born of operational necessity, then tweaked and tuned through trial and error until the British-American army and navy had it right. John Bradstreet was at the forefront in the development of that operational capability, and as will be seen later, a deft practitioner of riverine warfare.

Theatre Strategic Objective – "La Nouvelle France"

> *For defence, Canada was superbly equipped. The only unimpeded access by water lay up the St Lawrence itself, but for its protection the French relied upon Louisburg, which only a daredevil would leave unstormed in his rear; upon the hazards of river navigation, which they exaggerated; and upon the impregnability of Quebec. For offense on the other hand, Canada possessed no advantages. …If then, there was to be war in America, the British had to wage it. Theirs was the strategy of offense, the conducting of the siege of Canada.*[37]
>
> S.M. Pargellis*, Military Affairs.*

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Daniel J. Carrison "Riverine Warfare: A Forgotten Capability Redeveloped," *Data* 13 (December 1968): 29-31; William H. Cracknell, Jr., "The Role of the U.S. Navy in Inshore Waters," *Naval War College Review* 21, no. 3 (November 1968): 65-91; and Anthony Harrigan, "Inshore and River Warfare," *Orbis* 10, no. 3 (Fall 1966): 940-946. Modern discussions on this type of warfare include Robert C. Powers, "Beans and Bullets for Sea Lords." *US Naval Institute Proceedings* 96, no. 12 (December 1970): 95-97; Hillary M. Robinette, "Guerrilla Warfare and Waterway Control," *Military Review* 50, no. 2 (February 1970), 17-23. For excellent Canadian articles on 18th century riverine warfare see D. Peter MacLeod, "The French Siege of Oswego in 1756: Inland Naval Warfare in North America," *American Neptune* 49, no. 4 (1989): 262-271; and, W.A.B. Douglas, "Le Saint Laurent: Une Voie d'Acces Strategique," *Cap aux Diamants*, no.43 (Automne 1995): 19-23.

[37] Stanley M. Pargellis, *Military Affairs in North America 1748-1765: Selected Documents from the Cumberland Papers in Windsor Castle* [hereafter *MA*] (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1969), xiv-xv.

American historian Stanley Pargellis argues that New France was "condemned by their [geographical] position to fight a defensive war" and likens it to a giant fortress under siege. The principal settlements of New France were anchored on each end by the logistical nerve-centres of Quebec and Montreal, the former fortified town the western terminal of critical sea lines of communication with France, the latter an unfortified commercial fur depot and a collection point for the limited agricultural resources of the colony.

Interior Lines of Approach

Access to the hub of New France by British-American forces was only possible by utilizing lakes, portages, and rivers as highways (see Figure 3.1), and thus invading armies were restricted to two interior avenues of approach from the south and south-west. The first ran northwards from New York on the Atlantic to Albany on the

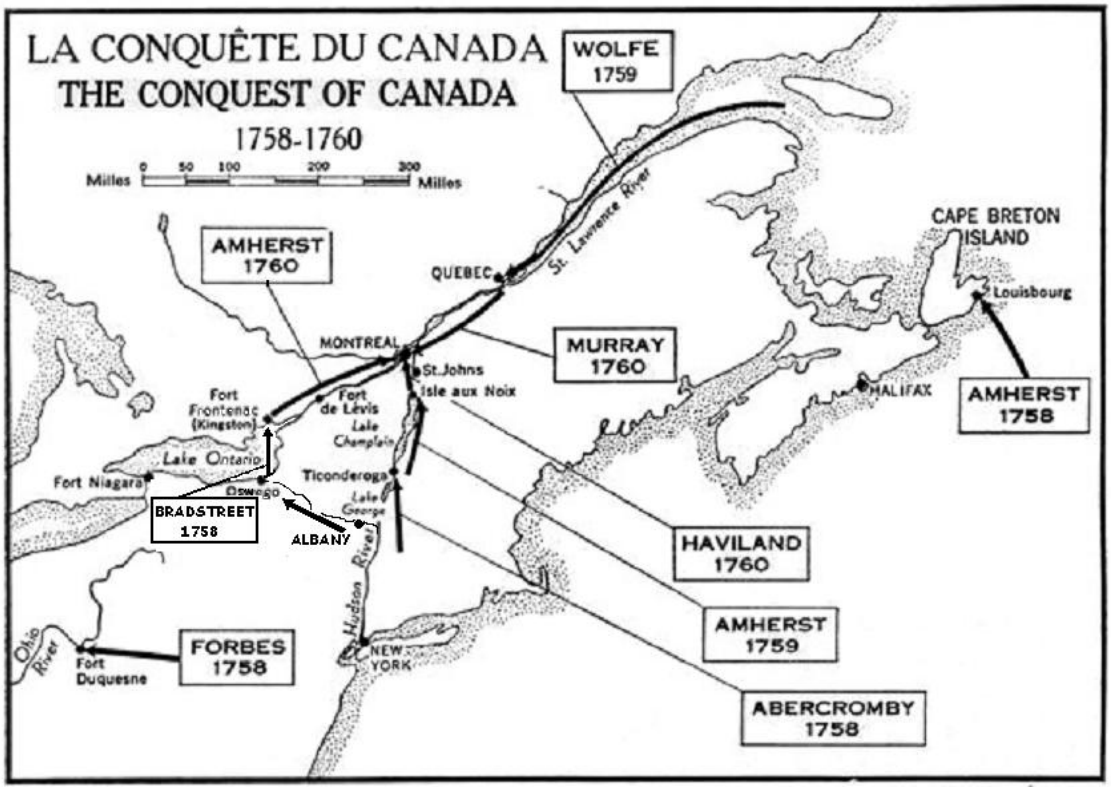

Figure 3.1 – Theatre of War 1758-60
Source: Stacey, *Military History*, 59

Hudson River. It had been used by native Amerindian tribes as a natural north-south highway for centuries. With a short portage over the Appalachian Mountains watershed into the Lake George and subsequently Lake Champlain lake systems, flotillas of boats could convey armies northward via the lakes and subsequently down the Richelieu River to the St Lawrence River valley and Montreal.

A variant of this approach linked to the second. It branched off the Hudson River just above Albany and led westwards up the Mohawk River to a portage over the Appalachian watershed located there (The Great Carrying Place), then down Wood Creek to Lake Oneida which drained via the Oswego River into Lake Ontario. This western branch of the first approach then formed a juncture with the second approach, which represented for the French their southwards line of communication with Fort Detroit via Fort Niagara located below the giant falls draining Lake Erie into Lake Ontario. The British could theoretically come up to Lake Erie through the Ohio country as the French had built a string of small palisaded forts (fortified trading posts) in the opposite direction to link with the recently-built Fort Duquesne (1755) at the Forks of the Ohio (the juncture of the Monongahela and Alleghany Rivers), which in turn, via the Ohio linked to the Illinois country on the Mississippi.

If one accepts Pargellis' metaphor of Canada as a giant fortress on the defensive, the forts that dotted the various lines of communication extending southwards like spokes from the centre can be styled as outposts, pinpoints on the map to denote sovereignty, each "in easy and direct communication with the centre."[38] None of these palisaded forts were ever designed to mount large operations or serve as forward logistical bases. Instead, they were more suited to acting as early warning posts or were

[38] *Ibid*.

sited to block or delay conventional operations like the fortification they built in 1756 at the southern end of Lake Champlain at Ticonderoga – Fort Carillon.

Pargellis argues that General Louis Joseph de Montcalm's two most successful military operations of the entire war - the capture and destruction of the British forts at Oswego on Lake Ontario in 1756 and Fort William Henry in 1757 on the southern end of Lake George - "must be regarded as moves wholly defensive."[39] Both forts, designed by the British to serve as forward operating bases, were razed by Montcalm's forces after capture instead of being occupied, the French forces then withdrawing to the *status quo* defensive line of their outposts. In essence, French theatre strategy was essentially one of delay along the interior lines of approach, their hope: to defer the conquest of Canada until the real war had been fought out on European battlefields and the diplomats had won the peace.

W.J. Eccles, the late doyen and expert on history relating to the French in North America, has taken Pargellis' terrain-centric fort analogy one step further. Elevating the fortress analogy to the strategic level, he argues that the *comte de* Galissoniere, Governor of New France (1747-49) at the end of the previous war had proposed the outpost system be established not only to promote and protect the sovereignty claims of France, but to establish closer contact with more Indian tribes and bring them into the French sphere of influence (and, through alliances, add their combat power to the French cause).[40]

The astute Governor reasoned that the English would not tolerate such a direct challenge to their own interests and would have to respond to such blatant encirclement by sending regular troops to aid their colonists. The obvious result would be to "soak off" British troop commitments in Europe and other parts of

[39] *Ibid.*, xiv-xv.

[40] Eccles, *France in North America* (Toronto/Montreal: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1972), 179.

the world. A simultaneous corollary effect would be that the powerful Royal Navy would have to become more decisively engaged in the North American theatre of war, thereby making them unavailable "for attacks on the French West Indies, or French maritime commerce, or to blockade the French [home] ports as they had done successfully in the past wars." In other words, he proposed an indirect strategy in which British military power would be diverted to a peripheral theatre of action and where, according to Eccles, "the role of the French in North America was to be that of a fortress, with a small garrison to tie down a much larger force of the enemy."[41]

Two other key factors besides terrain that "condemned" the French in North America to a defensive theatre strategy were the North American winter and their smaller colonial population *vis-à-vis* the thirteen British colonies that lay to their south. The climate in those latter environs saw snow and ice disappear earlier from roads and waterways allowing the British-American forces to mobilize their forces much earlier than their ice-bound adversaries to the north. French forts located on the most southerly lines of communication from Quebec and Montreal, such as Forts St Frederic (Crown Point) and Carillon (Ticonderoga) on the southern end of Lake Champlain, were virtually isolated and vulnerable to attack weeks before spring resupply or reinforcements from the north could physically occur. This advantageous reality for the British, however, was rarely exploited before 1759, as British planners and their commanders could never get organized or concentrate their forces in a timely manner prior to launching on campaign.

The logistical impact of weather was also significant. The St Lawrence River froze during winter which meant that resupply and reinforcement from

[41] *Ibid*. Also, see Eccles, *The Canadian Frontier, 1534-1760* (New York, 1969), 157-60.

France, if forthcoming, was dependant on the vagaries of spring and the ice break-up in order to get through. By contrast, all American ports were ice-free year round. Additionally, the growing season for essential foodstuffs in New France was limited compared to its American neighbors to the south who, in some cases, could harvest two crops. While the French needed significant grain and livestock imports from Acadia and France just to survive, the Americans typically produced robust surpluses with enough left over to ship to Britain's West Indian colonies.[42]

The French population in North America was small compared to the potential manpower that lay to the south of the St Lawrence but it had grown concurrently with the six fold increase to the American population between 1689 and 1755: viz. the French were still numerically outnumbered six to one nearly 70 years later, even with the addition of French regular troops to the equation. At the outbreak of the Seven Years War in 1756, the general historical consensus is that New France's ability to project combat power was actually weaker than it had been in previous wars due to a number of significant but subtle shifts and variables within its demography.[43]

[42] For a detailed discussion on New France's capability to be self supporting, as well as the impacts of food shortages and rationing on military capability as well as civilian and Indian populations, see G.F. Stanley, *New France: The Last Phase, 1744-1760* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1968), 191-6.

[43] Steele, *Guerillas and Grenadiers*, 70-1; on the reluctance of Indian tribes to go on the warpath unless the French supplied foodstuffs and other necessities for their communities see D. Peter Macleod, *The Canadian Iroquois and the Seven Years War*, (Toronto, Dundurn Press, 1996), 11-14; on the combat effectiveness of the *compagnies franche de la marine* over the 70 year period see two articles by W.J. Eccles: "The French Forces in North America during the Seven Years War" , *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* [hereafter *DCB]*, Vol. III (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974): xv-xxiii.; and, "The Social, the Economic and the Political Significance of the Military Establishment in New France," *Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. 52, no.1 (1971): 1-22.

The *coureurs de bois*, well inured to *la petite guerre* and major players in the wilderness fighting that had characterized the three previous wars, were fewer in numbers in 1755 and spread over wider distances that negated any ability to concentrate their force or capability for operations.[44] Secondly, the *compagnies franches de la marine*, the colony soldiers numbering some 30 companies with a nominal strength of 2760 men[45] , were also scattered over a very large area in a huge arc from Quebec southwards to New Orleans, providing small garrisons in the remotest parts of the *pay d'en hauts* along the farthest lines of communications and outposts. The ability to concentrate their combat power during the war would also remain problematic.

Perhaps the most dubious or uncertain source of manpower by the mid-18th century for use in French military operations had become the warriors traditionally provided by their Indian allies. Relations with the various Indian tribes had become more fickle and precarious by 1755, causing the first French commander of regulars to arrive in North America, Baron Jean-Armand Dieskau to exclaim in exasperation: "One needs the patience of an angel to get on with these devils!"[46] His successor's erudite aide-de-camp, Louis Antoine de Bougainville, was more specific as to their utility in conventional warfare, observing that their scouting and intelligence collecting abilities were still invaluable for successful operations. He wrote:

> I do not believe it is good policy in a defensive [operation] to send to the army at any one time a large number of Indians….They gather in mobs, argue amongst themselves, deliberate slowly, and all want to go together to make a strike and at the same place, because they prefer big war parties…Everybody must have time to get drunk, and their

[44] Steele, *Guerillas and Grenadiers*, 70-1.

[45] Eccles, "The French Forces in North America", xvii.

[46] Baron Jean-Armand Dieskau to the Marquis de Vaudreuil, dated 1 Septembre 1755, quoted in Francis Parkman, *Montcalm and Wolfe: France and England in North America*, Vol. I (London: Macmillan, 1899), 308.

> food consumption is enormous. At last they get started, and once they have struck, despite having taken only one scalp or one prisoner, back they come and are off again for their villages. Then for a considerable time the army is without Indians. Each does well for himself, but the operation of war suffers, for in the end they are a necessary evil. It would be better to have on hand only a specified number of these mosquitoes, who would be relieved by others, so that we would always have some on hand.[47]

Thus, from the outset of the Seven Years War in North America, French planners recognized the limitations of their operating environment dictated by their smaller population, longer lines of communication, harsh and lengthy winters, restricted ports and undependable allies, and realistically "adapted their strategy to their position."[48] Given these significant factors, it is clear that the French theatre strategy in North America was principally defensive in nature. Their best chance of success was to delay along their interior lines of approach with the aim of deferring the conquest of Canada until military efforts in Europe had been successfully concluded and diplomatic treaties settled.

British Theatre Strategy vs. French Theatre Strategy

> *What is of supreme importance in war is to attack the enemy's strategy.*[49]
>
> Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*.

By contrast, British planners' inept attempts to develop a theatre strategy that would actually identify and take advantage of French vulnerabilities were, according to Pargellis, summed up in one word - "notorious". Given British-

[47] Louis Antoine de Bougainville, journal entry, 20 October 1756, in *Adventure in the Wilderness: The American Journals of Louis Antoine de Bougainville, 1756 -1760*, Trans. & Ed. Edward P. Hamilton (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964 [Paperback ed. 1990]), 59-60.

[48] Pargellis, *MA*, xv.

[49] Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, 77.

American resources, climate and geographical location, he believes that the war in North America could have been won much sooner if the responsible planners had only understood the operating environment, and with that understanding, determined the critical capabilities they needed to muster or develop in order to exploit the weaknesses inherent in the French strategy. "It is notorious," writes Stanley Pargellis, "that Great Britain undertook an offensive war for which she was utterly unprepared and which she did not understand." He adds: "It is equally notorious that it took an unusually long time to win it."[50]

If New France, the core area bounded by Quebec at one end and Montreal at the other, was to be taken, then the all of the three main approaches leading to it had to be utilized simultaneously - the two interior approaches already discussed, as well as the direct maritime approach via the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of St Lawrence. This was necessary in order to prevent the French from concentrating their forces on any one approach. Early seizure of Quebec was essential to the whole as it offered the only lifeline back to the mother country, New France's primary source of troops, food supplies and materiel.

One significant limitation to British operational *manouevre* according to Pargellis was the near impossibility of using surprise "as an element of strategy…for the knowledge of every expedition reached the French either through colonials who traded with the enemies or through London offices."[51] He might have also added that the two main interior land approaches to New France traversed lands inhabited (and to a degree controlled) by the Iroquois, also known collectively as the Six Nations. The majority of the tribes, with the exception of the Senecas around the French fort at Niagara and several large

[50] *Ibid.*, xiv.

[51] *Ibid.*

settlements of "Christianized" Mohawks who had been resettled along the St Lawrence by French Jesuits in communities such as Akwesasne, Kanasetake (Oka) , Kahnawake and Oswegatchie, were favourable to the British cause or could be convinced to stay neutral. But news of any major British movements or pending attacks always reached the ears of the French long before they occurred because of the frequent communication between the Amerindian settlements and their longstanding tribal custom of shielding relatives and brethren from any of the white man's actions.[52]

British Theatre Strategy 1755-1757

Given then that British theatre strategic success depended upon massing and applying effective combat strength at the obvious points along the main approaches leading to the nerve centres of New France, successive campaign strategies from 1755 to 1758 can thus be examined and analyzed with respect to the above stated constraints and their attendant corollary actions. One approach or all approaches could be used and British failure over the course of the first three years of the war in order to achieve the ultimate unchanging theatre strategic *endstate* - the capture of New France - was consistently marked by their inability to decisively exploit these approaches with the correct applications of forces-time-space.

The 1755 British campaign occurred without any formal declaration of hostilities between Britain and France and should be viewed more as the

[52] For best account of how the Six Nations diplomatically played off both sides during the Seven Years War see Chapter Two "Parallel Warfare" in MacLeod, *The Canadian Iroquois*…., 19-36. See also Jon Parmenter and Mark Power Robison, "The Perils and Possibilities of Wartime Neutrality on the Edges of Empire: Iroquois and Acadians between the French and British in North America, 1744 – 1760," *Diplomatic History*. 31, no.2 (2007): 167-206.

preparations for war with the *objectives* limited only to those tactical fortresses or strong points deemed to be encroachments on British territory and therefore considered legitimate targets. Their capture would not only secure and strengthen British claims to adjacent territories but position British-American forces more favourably for the inevitable "declared war" that was looming.[53]

The British targeted four French *objectives*: the newly-built Fort Duquesne at the Forks of the Ohio which linked the Great Lakes forts via the Ohio to the Mississippi and the Illinois country; Fort Niagara on Lake Ontario below the Falls which was considered to have been illegally built on Iroquois lands; Fort St Frederic at Crown Point on Lake Champlain which had been used for decades as a jumping off point for numerous raids into New England during previous wars: and fourthly, Fort Beausejour on the Chignecto Isthmus adjacent to the British colony of Nova Scotia. Only the latter was successful: the other three would fail due to varying degrees of disaster or sheer incompetence.

By 1755, the British trading fort at Oswego on Lake Ontario sitting astride French lines of communication between Forts Frontenac and Niagara was seen by the French as a huge threat to their hegemony in the interior of North America, especially their monopoly on the lucrative fur trade and important Indian alliances it brought. French fears that it could be used as a secure base for mounting military operations against either Forts Frontenac or Niagara, as well as a dockyard for building British warships to gain naval superiority on the lake were ill-founded. Little attention had been paid to its defenses and it had no

[53] See "Sketch for the Operations in North America" dated 16 November 1754 that formed the basis for Major General Braddock's secret instructions. It reads in part: "*His Majesty's Intentions in sending the Forces to North America being to recover [emphasis in original] the Territories belonging to His Colonies there & to his subjects & allies the Indians, which the French have (most unjustly & contrary to solemn treaties subsisting between the two Crowns of Great Britain & France) have invaded, and possessed themselves of, and raised fortifications upon….*" In Pargellis, *MA*, 45.

ship-building or dockyard capacity to outfit a lake fleet to compete with the French for control of Lake Ontario.

Not surprisingly, the Niagara campaign never got off the ground due to the immense logistical problems of just moving men and materiel along the Mohawk-Oswego River corridor to Lake Ontario which had no road system. Added to this mobility problem were the significant inadequacies and weaknesses of the Oswego post itself to serve as a forward operating base without a lake fleet that could project a large force of men and siege guns ***over*** (author's emphasis) the lake.

The second expedition launched from upstate New York against Crown Point comprising a force of provincials and Indians led by the Superintendant of Indians, Major General William Johnson, ended in stalemate at the southern end of Lake George when pre-emptively attacked by French regulars and colony soldiers led by Baron Jean-Armand Dieskau. The former beat off the latter, but no further operations were conducted northwards that year by British forces with Johnson receiving a baronetcy for essentially maintaining the status quo in this sector. The third operation was an unmitigated disaster which saw the rout and massacre of a large combined force of British regulars and American provincials led by the newly appointed Commander-in-Chief, Major General Edward Braddock, marching alongside the Monongahela River a few miles short of their objective, Fort Duquesne.

In sum, while the capture of Fort Beasejour in 1755 served to secure the Nova Scotia frontier and awe an Acadian population from any further major participation in the war (as well as denying their food surpluses to the fortress town of Louisburg on Isle Royale) its operational and strategic worth was negligible in the full scale war that ensued from 1756 through to 1758. The campaign plans that charted the course of operations that constituted the

opening shots of the Seven Years' War in North America were thus strategically and operationally inept. Pargellis notes:

> For though they were sound enough on paper – the fall of the three interior forts [Duquesne, Niagara and Crown Point] would have begun the process of rolling up the approaches to Canada – the details of their execution were the product of colossal conceit and ignorance.[54]

With Braddock killed on the Duquesne campaign, Governor William Shirley took over the reins of planning for the ensuing year's theatre strategy which he limited to two operational approaches: a strike northwards by a large force of provincials under Major General John Winslow on the Lake Champlain approach to attempt the capture of Crown Point once again; and a simultaneous operation to be led by himself, launched from Oswego across Lake Ontario to take Fort Frontenac, with a *sequel* to this being the capture of the remaining posts and forts on Lake Ontario including Fort Niagara, Fort Toronto and Fort La Presentation. The planning for this operation was given to his capable adjutant-general, Major John Bradstreet, as a secondary duty, in addition to his primary duty of forwarding supplies to Oswego in 1756 and building up the riverine capability of the army in a massive bateaux building programme. His secondary duty would be the genesis of planning for Bradstreet's subsequent raid three years later.

Both major operations for 1756 however were inadequately resourced, led by amateur commanders and ultimately, became bogged down in logistical details and political infighting. On Lake Ontario, the French led by the newly arrived General Louis Joseph de Montcalm struck first, mounting a decisive pre-emptive offensive operation from Fort Frontenac against Oswego in early

[54] Pargellis, *MA*, xvi-xvii.

August. The latter locale's three poorly sited and incomplete forts were easily captured and destroyed and, more significantly, the entire fleet of British warships that were being built at Oswego (or had just been completed) were taken and assimilated into the existing French lake squadron.

The British not only lost their sole forward operating base on Lake Ontario, but they were forced back on the defensive along this portion of the New York frontier. With one stroke, Montcalm had denied this interior approach to the British for the foreseeable future and given the French undisputed naval mastery of the lake. This translated into complete freedom of action for Montcalm and his superior, the Marquis de Vaudreuil (who had arrived the year before), and enabled them to concentrate their resources defending the only other credible line of interior approach to New France, the Lake George-Champlain corridor.

Lord Loudoun, Shirley's replacement, arrived immediately after the Oswego debacle and his first command decisions were to order the cancellation of the Crown Point operation and all efforts redirected towards completing the defensive fort at the southern end of Lake George. This fort, subsequently named William Henry, he reasoned, could be used as a forward operating base the following year and he set about to improve infrastructure, roads and services that would enhance his capabilities to project forces the next campaign. The rest of the year, and most of the next, saw Lord Loudoun more pre-occupied with administration rather than any strategic planning and thus for 1757, Fort Frontenac was the least of his worries. As Pargellis puts it:

> Whatever faults Loudoun had…, he came in the course of time to learn some of the essentials a successful army would need. He unified the command…;set up a crown-owned transport system; he encouraged the formation of companies for special services; he improved the supply system up the Hudson River; he saw to it his regulars learned to march with safety in the woods. He insisted upon more and better engineers and adequate artillery for colonial sieges….Loudoun in time saw more clearly…that

> American conditions demanded experts, not numbers. He did what his predecessors should have done, and when he was superseded England lost the ablest administrator, in matters of detail, that the war produced.[55]

For the 1757 theatre strategy, Lord Loudoun decided to personally lead a combined operation against Louisburg, with a *sequel* plan to take Quebec, the French colony's vital link reaching back to its mother country. It was an ambitious and complex plan, and one which ignored the need to exploit the one interior land approach still left open to the British after the debacle at Oswego the year before. He did not even have to invade but at least should have made some motions along the approach to fix some forces of New France and prevent the reinforcement of Louisburg. Instead, Loudoun left a small force with an ineffective and timid commander to guard his centre at Fort William Henry, and, in doing so, handed the initiative to his adversary.

Montcalm seized on the opportunity and quickly exploited the situation, striking southwards while Loudoun's forces slowly concentrated at Halifax, Nova Scotia for their projected attempt on Louisburg. The newly built Fort William Henry at the southern end of Lake George was quickly besieged by superior French forces, captured, then razed to the ground. Montcalm then withdrew with large amounts of captured British artillery and valuable stores as he had done at Oswego the year before and strengthened the southernmost French fort, Carillon, at Ticonderoga on Lake Champlain.

[55] Pargellis, *MA*, xviii.

British Theatre Strategy 1758

> *I have proposed three Plans, to be carried into Execution this Year; the first, early, on Louisburgh, before the Enemy can be able to throw in Provisions or Succours, or get Ships into Harbour to strengthen the Place…*
>
> *The next plan I am preparing for, is an Attack on Fort Du Quesne, which I propose should be undertaken with two thousand of the regular Troops, and the Provincials of Virginia, Maryland and Pensilvania* [sic] …
>
> *The third Plan I am preparing for, is to Endeavour to push into Canada, by Lake Champlain, where I might expect the whole Force of that Country to deal with.*[56]
>
> Lord Loudoun to William Pitt, 14 February 1758

On the British homefront, William Pitt had appeared on the political scene early in 1757. His arrival was too late to change Loudoun's current operations of 1757 but stating his unequivocal intent to more closely control the conduct of the war from Britain for 1758. Loudoun was not impressed. After unseasonably bad weather and untypical French naval superiority (both factors outside his control) caused his major 1757 Louisburg campaign to be aborted (much to Pitt's chagrin) the Scottish commander informed Pitt that military *objectives* for the upcoming 1758 campaign should **not** be selected in London by ministers, nor the commanding general on the ground told "how" those *objectives* were to be achieved. Loudoun stated for the record that, if this was how the new Pitt-Newcastle ministry proposed to prosecute the war in North America, then he, as the Commander-in-Chief, would be left with virtually no latitude in his ability to plan and conduct campaigns, nor an ability to practice what, in modern day parlance, we call the *operational* art.

Lord Loudoun's fairly caustic response to Pitt in August 1757 (which probably was one of the factors in his subsequent recall) stated bluntly

[56] Lord Loudoun to Pitt, dated 14 February 1758, in William Pitt, *Correspondence of William Pitt…with Colonial Governors and Military and Naval Commanders in America*. Gertrude S. Kimball. ed., 2 vols. [hereafter *Pitt Corr.*] (New York: 1906 [reprint, New York: 1969]), I., 192-3.

> I think it is my Duty to observe to your Lordship, that without a Latitude is left in Orders at this distance, to make such Alterations in the Execution of them, as the change of the Situation of the things make necessary, The Country may be undone by a punctual Obedience to the most prudent Orders at the time they were given, or the Person that has the honour to command, must depart from them with a Halter about his Neck…[57]

But Pitt would persevere, causing American historian Pargellis to rightly observe that the minister's "avowal that he was the only person who could save England was justified in the end by victory" but that it really masked

> …the incongruity of a civilian minister dictating details of a military campaign three thousand miles distant of a country of which he knew nothing first hand. In the American Revolution this same plan, re-adopted, was to end in the disaster it deserved.[58]

Other historians, Canadian and British, have since echoed Pargellis' observations on the interference of Pitt, the "alleged" master strategist of Britain's first global war. Some, like Canadian historian John Cardwell, have gone a step further. In an excellent analysis of the mismanagement of the 1758 Ticonderoga campaign at the strategic and operational levels of war, he observes "that serious logistical and operational obstructions were created by Pitt's misguided efforts to manage the details of a wilderness campaign from Whitehall in 1758" adding that "operational planning and requests for troops or other military assistance from the colonies should have been entrusted to the military discretion of military commanders like Loudoun, the local commander "best qualified to define the appropriate provincial [military] role" and in [59]possession of "the most accurate intelligence concerning the current military

[57] Lord Loudoun to Holderness, 16 August-17 October 1757, quoted in M. John Cardwell, "Mismanagement: The 1758 British Expedition Against Carillon" *The Bulletin of the Fort Ticonderoga Museum* [hereafter *BFTM*], Vol XV, No. 4 (Ticonderoga, NY: 1992) : 241-2.

[58] S.M. Pargellis, *Lord Loudoun in North America* (Yale University Press, 1933 [reprint 1968]), 231.

situation".[60] He concludes that Pitt was "ignorant of the exigencies of frontier warfare, and arrogant enough to dismiss the counsel of his military advisors and American commanders."

Lord Loudoun, by contrast, learned from the 1757 campaign, and crafted a new realistic theatre strategy for 1758. The course of action he sent to London for approval proposed mounting four operations along all available approaches:[61] a major expedition against Louisburg using regular troops from Britain; a strike with a combined forced of regulars and provincials to capture Fort Duquesne on the Forks of the Ohio in western Pennsylvania in order to secure the western frontier; a major thrust up from Albany and Fort Edward to take Forts Carillon (Ticonderoga) and St Frederic (Crown Point) with regular troops including artillery and engineers; and, finally, a diversionary strike across Lake Ontario by provincial forces to destroy Fort Frontenac in order to fix and distract French forces opposing the advance on the Lake George-Lake Champlain corridor. For this latter expedition, he promised the command to John Bradstreet.

All thrusts, he argued, would be executed early in the year while the weather favored British-American forces and while their adversaries, the French, were constrained in their ability to react. More importantly, he noted, his strategy would force the French to disperse their combat power, unable to concentrate their forces on any one axis. His letter would cross paths with another letter coming the other way relieving him of command and giving specific instructions to his successor, Major General James Abercromby, on how the various campaigns would be conducted and with what troops. Pitt's theatre

[60] Cardwell, "Mismanagement…", 290. See also Richard Middleton, *The Bells of Victory: The Pitt-Newcastle Ministry and the Conduct of the Seven Years War 1757-1762*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), *in passim*.

[61] See Lord Loudoun to Pitt, dated 14 February 1758, in *Pitt Corr.*, I, 192-3. See also Pargellis, *Lord Loudoun…*, 356-7.

strategic plan would be very similar to Loudoun's but with some major changes and some rather significant ramifications in terms of time, space and forces for some of the commanders involved.[62]

The sea approach to Quebec (see Figure 3.1) proposed by Loudoun (and Shirley before him) would be used and the siege of Louisburg executed by a force primarily composed of regulars from Britain commanded by Major General Jeffery Amherst and supported by a strong Royal Navy fleet and merchant marine. The seizure of this fortress town before moving on to Quebec was predicated on the idea that it could not be left in the rear of any move on the capital of new France as it would leave any attacker's lines of communication vulnerable. What Pitt and his planners failed to realize, however, was that Louisburg was just a pile of stone and fishing quays without an actual French fleet anchored in its harbour. With French ports blockaded in Europe and a small British fleet stationed to watch over Louisburg itself, there were no valid reasons why a strong army and fleet could not bypass Louisburg and proceed directly up the St Lawrence against Quebec. As W.J. Eccles put it: "A year was wasted in the siege and capture of Louisburg. Without a navy based there, the fortress was useless, able to do nothing for the French, serving merely as a prison for its garrison." [63]

The second expedition to capture Fort Duquesne led by Brigadier General John Forbes (see Figure 3.1), was more a point of honour in the scheme of things rather than an attempt to seize a valid military *objective* whose capture would actually help British forces achieve the theatre strategic *endstate*. Canadian

[62] Pitt to General Abercromby, dated 30 December 1757, Whitehall, *Pitt Corr*., I., 143-151.

[63] W.J. Eccles, "French Imperial Policy for the Great Lakes Basin", in *The Sixty Years' War for the Great Lakes 1754-1814*, David Curtis Skaggs & Larry L. Nelson, eds. (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2001), 37-8.

historian George Stanley has rightly observed that "from the point of pure strategy, such an offensive was of little real moment. To [take] Fort Duquesne would not compel the French to abandon the Ohio; at best it would only erase the memory of Braddock." He concluded that "American pressure, rather than sound reasons of military strategy, determined that an army should be sent to the Ohio."[64] Charitably, it can be characterized as a shielding operation designed to try and secure the western frontiers of Pennsylvania and Virginia on which the French Indian allies were raising terror and havoc with colonists, though again, planners in Whitehall failed to grasp that seizing static European style forts in the wilderness were not necessarily the best means of stopping an elusive and asymmetric adversary who fought unconventionally.

Of the two main interior approaches to New France proposed for use by Loudoun in 1758, the strike across Lake Ontario to reduce Fort Frontenac, planned as a supporting attack with the aim of diverting French forces' attention from a simultaneous main thrust up the Lake Champlain-Lake George corridor, was cancelled by Pitt. To add insult to injury, Pitt's orders reassigned Bradstreet, to the Forbes expedition in the forests of western Pennsylvania where his talents as a riverine expert and leader of the "Battoe Men" would have been wasted. The transfer was mitigated for Bradstreet with a promotion to Lieutenant Colonel. Fortunately for Bradstreet, Abercromby considered the Nova Scotia-born colonel's services too invaluable and kept him on as his own deputy quartermaster general, assigning another officer to General Forbes' southern expedition in his stead.[65]

[64] Stanley, *New France*, 187.

Major General Abercromby was instructed by Pitt to instead concentrate all his assigned forces to move solely on the Lake Champlain approach; to take Ticonderoga and Crown Point successively; then, to exploit on to Montreal if possible, without the benefit of Bradstreet's diversionary raid. The overwhelming force given Abercromby to accomplish this task was the brainchild of Pitt – a provincial army of 20,000 men drawn from the nearest colonies which added to his regular army component numbering some 5000 men would make a grand total of 25,000 men. That it would take significant amounts of time to assemble, cloth, feed, arm, and move such a large levy from scratch seems, however, to have been completely overlooked by Pitt and his strategic planners.

While Abercromby's expedition on the Lake Champlain approach would end in a bloody repulse on the Heights of Carillon above Fort Ticonderoga and see his 15,000 man army (half of the provincials did not show up) precipitously retreat from Ticonderoga to regroup and remain for the rest of the campaign at their starting point at the southern end of Lake George, the other two major expeditions would both succeed. The *sequel* of exploitation after the capture of Louisburg would have to be curtailed however, as a portion of those forces needed to be diverted to reinforce the central approach on Abercromby's request. The expedition through western Pennsylvania would see Forbes' 5000 man army make a laborious approach march of several months before finally arriving at the

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[65] Bradstreet crowed to his influential agent Charles Gould in London: *"I find myself set down to serve this Campaign to the Southward but neither General Abercromby or any one else who are to serve this way are for letting me go fearing the great preparations necessary to be made to transport a large Number of Troops from hence to Canada cannot be executed in time by any other person …"* Bradstreet to Gould, dated 13 March 1758, quoted in Godfrey, *PPP*, 116.

Forks of the Ohio to take possession of their non-strategic prize, a smoking abandoned ruin once known as Fort Duquesne.[66]

Once again it would be shown that British theatre strategic success truly depended on seriously massing and applying effective combat strength along all the approaches (whether land or sea) leading to the vital nerve centre of New France – the Montreal-Quebec corridor. It has been shown that while Lord Loudon's draft theatre campaign plans catered for such a strategy, its subsequent modification by Pitt saw the offensive strike against Fort Frontenac(designed to split French forces) removed from the operational design. Taken in tandem with Pitt adjusting the forces on the Lake Champlain approach to include a massive, untrained and unequipped Provincial army, it can be clearly seen that Bradstreet's commander was forced to take longer time in his preparations to mount his operation and precede against his assigned objectives, and thus unable to move swiftly in order to exploit the British advantages of weather and mobility. His adversary was also given critical space and time to mass his own forces on the sole interior line of approach utilized by the British. The British operational objectives of capturing Ticonderoga and Crown Point were thus not achieved which had ramifications for the Quebec expedition as well. The *endstate* of the 1758 campaign would be operational failure yet again.

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[66] For detailed accounts of the 1758 Ticonderoga campaign, see: Ian McCulloch, "'Like Roaring Lions Breaking from their Chains': The Battle of Ticonderoga, 8 July 1758." In Donald E. Graves, ed., *Fighting for Canada: Seven Battles, 1758-1945*. (Toronto: Robin Brass Studios, 2000), 24-80; René Chartrand, *Ticonderoga 1758: Montcalm's victory against all odds*. (Oxford: Osprey, 2002); John Shy, "James Abercromby and the Campaign of 1758" (M.A. thesis, University of Vermont, 1957); and William R. Nester, *The Epic Battles for Ticonderoga, 1758* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2008).

CHAPTER FOUR - THE RAID: PLANNING & PROSECUTION

> Col. Bradstreet…immovably fix'd in his former opinion, of the practicability of reducing Cadaraqui [Fort Frontenac], destroying the enemy's shipping and depriving them of the dominion of the lakes; now renewed his applications for the necessary troops, artillery, &c. to prosecute the plan….[67]
>
> [Lt Colonel John Bradstreet], *An Impartial Account…*, 1759.

This chapter will examine the detailed planning that went into the Fort Frontenac raid over a period of three years. Rather than focusing on *how* it was conducted, it will instead examine *how* the raid fitted into operational planning and the intent (*why*) behind it: both General Abercromby's intent and the personal intent of John Bradstreet himself, in order to divine if any actual strategic goal or effect was expected. Bradstreet's intentions had been evident all along for anyone who had cared to listen. By late 1758, the tireless self promoter and ambitious officer, was waging his own personal propaganda campaign in the London newspapers and magazines, a *sequel* plan to his successful raid on Fort Frontenac. In what could only be characterized as an 18th century style information op, he had various officers in his employ sending letters to London newspapers lauding his leadership and virtues during the recent raid.[68]

[67] [Lt Colonel John Bradstreet]. An Impartial Account of Lieut. Col Bradstreet's Expedition to Fort Frontenac to Which are Added a Few Reflections on the Conduct of that Enterprize, and the Advantages Resulting from its Success by a Volunteer on the Expedition. [hereafter Bradstreet, *Impartial Account*] (London: 1759 [reprint Toronto: Rous & Mann Ltd, 1940]), 6.

[68] For examples see: "Letter written by a New York Officer to his Colonel" dated at Oswego, August 30, 1758, and, "Copy of a letter from Capt Peter Jacquet" dated at Oswego, August 30, 1758, both published in the *London Chronicle* 28-31 October 1758 [Jacquet was Bradstreet's senior "Battoemen" company commander]; also "Letter from an officer of a provincial regiment to a merchant in London" dated Albany, Sept. 15, 1758,: *Ibid.*, October 31-November 2, 1758; and "Extract of a letter from an Officer in Albany", dated Sept. 13, 1758, in *Ibid*., January 25-27, 1759. These, for the most part, anonymous letters (via unofficial channels) just happened to be published at the same time as General Abercromby's official letter advising

The ultimate exercise in self-aggrandisement appeared in London in 1759 when Bradstreet published, at his own expense, an anonymous and adulatory eyewitness account of his recent exploits the year before. He grandiosely entitled it "An Impartial Account of Lieut Col Bradstreet's Expedition to Fort Frontenac to Which are Added a Few Reflections on the Conduct of that Enterprize, and the Advantages Resulting from its Success by a Volunteer on the Expedition". For three years, starting in 1756, Bradstreet had extolled the advantages that would accrue to British arms if the French fort were to be "reduced" in his endless quest for promotion and preferment, and now he wanted to make sure the British public knew the effects his raid had produced in the overseas prosecution of the war. A modern historian has aptly described Bradstreet as "the persistent proponent of the scheme," a trait that spurred at least one contemporary commander to write privately to the Duke of Cumberland that the Nova Scotia-born colonel constantly needed to "be rode with bridel [sic]."[69] His sole modern biographer is the first to confess that Bradstreet's

> unbridled ambition, a willingness to openly plead his own case, and a penchant for elaborate justification of all his actions were bound to antagonize people. He was a man who constantly sought the rewarding applause of his contemporaries but his aggressive approach invited criticism.[70]

To put it mildly, Bradstreet was never averse to "sounding his own horn" at the expense of someone else. And while Pitt and other leaders in the British government took the least interest in Bradstreet's *Impartial Account…*, generations of influential historians beginning with Francis Parkman in 1886

Pitt of Bradstreet's victory on Lake Ontario, including Bradstreet's dispatch to Abercromby describing the raid in detail, both appearing in the 31 October edition of the *London Gazette* for 1758 and later in *Gentleman's Magazine* 28 (1758), 550.

[69] Pargellis, *MA*, 187-8. See note 2.

[70] Godfrey, *PPP*, ix.

have taken many of the controversial colonel's one-sided assertions at face value in their assessments of this operation's importance and its overall contribution to the war. It is therefore necessary to go back and examine other primary sources and perspectives, especially the correspondence and written orders of various commanders of the day on both sides, to actually deduce the strategic value of Fort Frontenac and whether its reduction actually caused any significant impact or effects on Britain's theatre strategic *endstate*.

The Objective

> *Fort Frontenac in truth was good for nothing….*[71]
>
> M. de Montcalm to Marshal Belle Isle, 9 September 1758.

Fort Frontenac, also known as Cataraqui, was the oldest French fort and settlement on the Great Lakes having been built in the summer-fall of 1673 on the western side of the mouth of the Cataraqui River and the egress of Lake Ontario into the St Lawrence River. The stone fort that Bradstreet would attack in 1758 however, was not the original. The first Fort Frontenac was partially destroyed and abandoned in 1689 during the Iroquois Wars (1638-1698), but on the return of the fort's namesake for his second term as Governor, the Comte de Frontenac in 1695, it was ordered re-established. Despite serious misgivings by many about the suitability of the site, especially its location which did not control or dominate the main outlet of the lake, the French rebuilt the new fort exactly where the first one had stood.[72]

[71] M. de Montcalm to Marshal Belle Isle, 9 September 1758, in *NYCD*, X., 831.

[72] Richard A. Preston and Leopold Lamontagne, *Royal Fort Frontenac* [hereafter *RFF*], The Champlain Society (Toronto, 1958), 3, 85-101, 186-187. For the events leading up to and including the construction of the first fort see various documents from pp. 22-25. The main criticism on Frontenac's

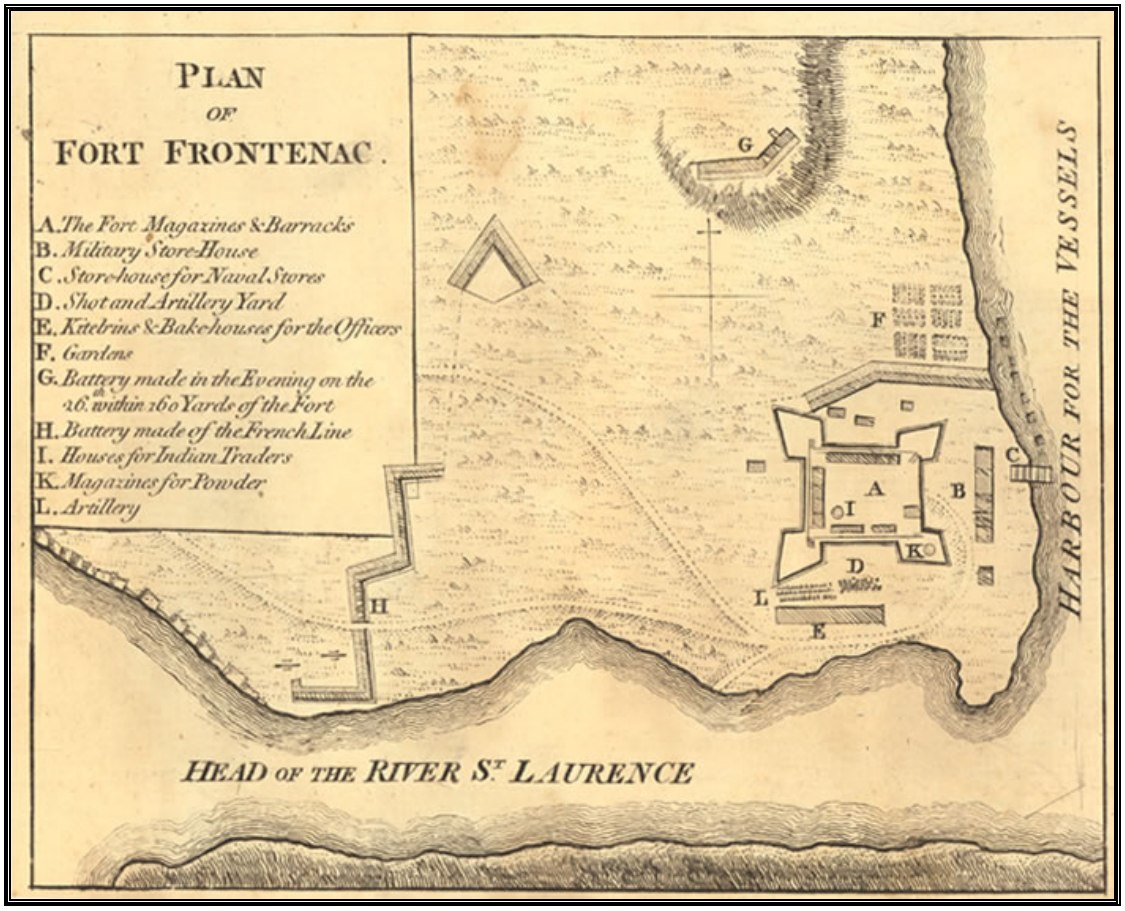

Figure 4.1 - Plan of Fort Frontenac, 1758
Source: The Massachusetts's Historical Society Online.

French regulars arriving in North America 80 years later to campaign for the first time in North America were not impressed by the small fort aping the large sprawling European fortresses inspired by Vauban. *Capitaine* le Comte de

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desire to re-establish the fort in its exact same location was voiced by Intendant Champigny to the Minister of Marine in October 1674, who said: "This establishment should be looked upon as useless, since the enemy can pass within gunshot without being afraid of the garrison, nor can we go there in wartime to re-victual it without totally exposing those sent on this task…". Count Frontenac's counter-argument was that the fort was "a base necessary during the [Iroquois] war for distant expeditions, which is used as a refuge for the bands of the Ottawas and the other nations above, who would come more freely and with much more confidence to harass the Iroquois in their hunting, and right up to the doors of their villages, if they were assured of a place to which they could withdraw if being pursued." In other words, Fort Frontenac was never sited nor built to withstand an European style siege, but to serve primarily as a mounting base for partisan raiders against Iroquoia. Plan shown at Figure 4.1 on next page mistakenly places the fort at the "HEAD of the RIVER ST LAURENCE". It should read "Cataraqui River." The land mass depicted at bottom of the map is now the campus of the Royal Military College, Kingston.

Maures de Malartic of the Bearn regiment pulled no punches when he wrote to the Count d'Argenson in 1755:

> Fort Frontenac which is esteemed the strongest in the country…consists only of four small stone bastions, the faces of which are no more than six toises, the flanks two and the curtains twelve. The walls are not two feet thick and have neither revetments nor terraces. The *terreplein* of the rampart is built of plank and masonry; when one of the guns on it is discharged the whole fort shakes. Generally speaking, its situation is very bad, as also is its construction, and it is of no use except for stores ….[73]

Viewing the defenses the following year, the Chevalier de la Pause, one of General Montcalm's principal staff officers, was even more succinct. He reported that the fort "on the west point of the Cataracouy Bay, a short cannon shot from the mouth , [is] built in this place contrary to all the rules of fortification for it is dominated by two positions a musket shot away." He then recommended, if it was considered important enough, that an extensive system of earthworks and redoubts was required to put the fort in a proper state of defense and concluded prophetically that, if no improvements were made, any enemy could take "it with the greatest of ease since they have no marches to make and can come with their bateaux and land on these shores in one night without being seen."[74]

After the destruction of Oswego in 1756, the French artillerist, Francois le Mercier, observed that Fort Frontenac, despite being "one of the worst posts one could see and the works which have been made there to the present could not keep a company secure," there was an acceptable risk of not improving the defenses as it did "not seem possible that the English could for a long time make

[73] Capitaine Anne-Joseph-Hippolyte Maures, Comte de Malartic to Count d'Argenson, Camp at Cataracoui, 6 October 1755, in *Ibid.*, 248.

[74] Capitaine Charles de Plantavit, Chevalier de la Pause, « Observation and Notes on Fort Frontenac » [1756] in *Ibid.*, 250-3.

an attempt on it since they no longer have Chouagen (Oswego)." He believed the only operational utility of retaining the aged fort was to use it as a depot and mounting base in case the British tried to re-establish Oswego, but also added the caveat that the key to its defense was the ability "to keep our barques [ships] well-armed"[75] and operating on the lake.

In 1757, the fort would remain a backwater, the British main effort under Lord Loudoun being directed against Louisburg via Halifax on the main sea approach to Quebec. Conversely, the French main effort was directed on the central interior approach against the newly-built Fort William Henry on the southern end of Lake George. The following year, 1758, the Marquis de Vaudreuil, Governor of New France wanted to raid New York colony via the Mohawk River corridor using Frontenac as a staging area, but the concentration of a large British army at the ruins of Fort William Henry in June convinced him to call off this operation in order to concentrate all available forces at Ticonderoga to block this dangerous northern thrust towards Montreal.

The key question to ask at this point is whether Fort Frontenac was still considered a strategic objective in 1758? The fact was that it was a small, poorly sited stone and wooden fort built to overawe the Iroquois in the 17th century seems to have been overlooked by British planners and ascribed capabilities it simply did not have. By the early 18th century its place as a strategic stronghold and interface on the extreme frontier of New France with Indian tribes had been replaced by Fort Niagara located at the SW end of Lake Ontario, built in 1726. By 1758-59, however, even Niagara, according to American historians Matt

[75] Capitaine Francois le Mercier, « Memorandum on the Artillery of Canada », Montreal, 30 October 1756, in *Ibid.*, 254.

Schumann and Karl Schweizer, "formed little more than a diversionary element in British planning."[76]

By the time of Bradstreet's raid in August 1758, Fort Frontenac was no more than a transhipment depot manned by a skeletal garrison of invalids and commanded by the sexagenarian commandant, *capitaine* Pierre-Jacques Payan, Sieur de Noyan, a gentle, well-respected officer.[77] His troops numbered a grand total of 57 aged and infirm officers, non-commissioned officers and soldiers drawn from over 27 different companies of the colonial marines. All able and "fit to serve" soldiers had been sent to Montcalm's army at Fort Carillon on Lake Champlain in anticipation of the large northward thrust expected by Abercromby's army. The remainder of the fort's complement included 23 women and children, one surgeon, 27 voyageurs, two storekeepers and 17 labourers (armourer, blacksmith, cowherd, coopers, carpenters, shipwrights).[78]

If anything "strategic" was located at Fort Frontenac it was perhaps three key enablers: the Indian trade goods used to secure the loyalty of the tribes of the *pays d'en haut* , as well as the munitions and provisions destined for the forts and defensive outposts of New France; and, the nine armed vessels that constituted the entire naval strength of the French on the Lake and used primarily to transport the previously-mentioned materials across the lake. This tiny fleet

[76] Matt Schumann & Karl Schweizer. *The Seven Years War: A transatlantic history* (New York & London: Routledge, 2008), 75.

[77] Pierre-Jaques Payen, Sieur de Noyan, (1695-1766). Born in Montreal 3 November 1695. Commandant at Fort Frontenac in 1721; at Detroit 1742; Town Major at Montreal, 1746; and King's Lieutenant at Trois-Rivieres, 1747. Assumed command of Fort Frontenac in 1757 and surrendered it to Bradstreet the following year. In 1762 stood trial in France with Vaudreuil, Bigot, Cadet and other accused war profiteers. Was sentenced by the court to be admonished and ordered to pay a token six livres. See *DCB* xxx for a fuller biographical note.

[78] This breakdown of the garrison's complement is taken from the parade state given in by the French commandant on surrender and does not include the Indians nor the boat crews which abandoned their ships and thus were not included in the terms of surrender. Preston & Lamontagne, *RFF*, 258-259.

comprised four French built-ships and five captured British vessels from Oswego for a total of 9 ships. At the time of Bradstreet's raid, only two were armed and rigged for sailing.

Naval "control" of Lake Ontario by this "fleet" however was chimerical at best given the lake's size and unpredictable weather. The two operable ships, it will be shown, were totally ineffective in preventing Bradstreet from making his coup. No one paid heed to Le Mercier's advice that the key to the fort's survival was maintaining a vigilant fleet on the lake or Chevalier de la Pause's recommendations that the fort's defenses needed a serious overhaul. Both were significant oversights and failures that aided and abetted the able and audacious Bradstreet.

Bradstreet as Planner

Bradstreet was a consummate planner (some would argue schemer) and ably performed the duties as one of the key logisticians for several successive campaigns mounted out of Albany during the Seven Years' War. While refining and developing a fledgling, then burgeoning riverine operational capability for the British forces in this role, Bradstreet was knowingly and simultaneously honing a core force of experts he could then utilize to execute his own pet project. He was also consistently gathering intelligence by his own private means and the network of Albany traders (some former smugglers) of conditions at Niagara, Cataraqui and the along the St Lawrence River.

His intent and desired *endstate*, if his sole biographer, Canadian historian William Godfrey, is to be believed, was entirely personal – promotion, profit and preferment – rather than strategic. Godfrey astutely notes while that Bradstreet was more attuned to colonial aspirations that most other British regulars of the

day, he suggests that Bradstreet's fixation with the raid can perhaps be explained by the fact that "the land and furs within the Great Lakes empire of the west" and "not fortresses at Quebec and Louisburg, were the primary and immediate focus of himself and other colonial expansionists." Fortresses and sugar islands were typical bargaining chips in European peace negotiations and could be traded or returned by the diplomats in the wink of an eye. However, possession

> …of the vaguely defined Great Lakes empire and a total restructuring of Indian alliances and trade patterns promised tangible gains to the colonies which the French would have difficulty countering even if the territory itself was eventually bartered away by England.[79]

With each successive commander from 1755 to 1758 – Shirley, Lord Loudoun and Abercromby – Bradstreet was relentless in his quest to persuade the local leadership of the raid's importance and his unique qualifications to lead it as well as to acquaintances and patrons back in England. In the process, he was constantly forced to stress the perceived operational or strategic advantages to be achieved by such an operation – advantages that would justify such an expenditure of effort and resources (money, manpower and materiel). But the original plan to take Fort Frontenac, and the attendant reasons for doing so, were not his initially.

The idea originated with his superior General William Shirley in September 1755. Unable to attack Fort Frontenac in 1755 as it was a legitimate fort on French soil, he wrote to the then Secretary of State Sir Thomas Robinson after hostilities broke out that he could not move against Niagara the following year without undertaking "The Reduction of Fort Frontenac in the first place (which must be the work of but a few Days, if attack'd early in the Spring with 4 or 5000 Men, and a proper Train of Artillery)…." He believed the static fort to be

[79] Godfrey, *PP*, 105

strategic because it allegedly guarded "the only Entrance which the French have from Canada into the Lake Ontario with Vessells or any kind of Boats" and concluded that "Fort Frontenac is as much the Key of the Lake to the French, as Oswego is the Key of it to the English". In fact, Frontenac, as already stated earlier by various professional French observers and landlords, did not control anything, and if the truth be told, neither it nor Oswego controlled anything. The true key to dominion of the lake lay in naval mastery: i.e. whoever maintained superior naval forces on the lake.

In a subsequent letter to Robinson dated 19 December 1755, Shirley identified the real key terrain that needed to be taken or controlled to prevent French shipping from operating on Lake Ontario: La Galette (near present day Ogdensburg, NY) located some 60 miles to the northeast of Fort Frontenac in the Thousand Islands and situated at the head of the first major set of rapids falling down to Montreal. He noted that the 60 mile stretch of the St Lawrence river from Fort Frontenac to La Galette was completely "navigable for Vessells of Force" and argued somewhat presciently that a robust British fort should be built

> …where Fort La Gallette now stands, or some Island conveniently situated for that Purpose in the River Iroquois near it, to secure that pass, from whence the Navigation of the River, near as far down as Montreal itself, might on Occasion be commanded by small Craft sent from thence, whilst the Fort would prevent the French from building any Vessells of Force at Oswegochi for the Navigation of the Lake.[80]

The only problem with seizing La Galette, as some members of his council pointed out, was its distance from Oswego and "the difficulty of supporting it against the strong Force, with which it must be expected, the French would,

[80] Prescient, in that the French built their own fort (Fort Lévis) on one of the islands near La Galette three years later, at the same time Oswego and Fort Ontario were being rebuilt by the British as a forward operating base during the summer of 1759. Shirley to Robinson, dated 19 December 1755, New York, *Shirley Corr*., I, 345-6. It should also be noted that the French "fort" at La Galette in 1755 was actually called *La Presentation*, a simple palisaded trading post and mission.

upon Favourable Opportunities attack it from Montreal; especially if there is a practicable road to it from Montreal by Land for transporting Artillery and Stores, as it is said… ." Thus Shirley knew that Frontenac was not really the key to naval control of the lake, but he went on in the same letter to confirm that he was "fully determin'd to begin Operations upon Lake Ontario by an Attack of Fort Frontenac alias Cadaraqui: unless I shall receive his Majesty's Orders to the Contrary…."

His correspondence with Secretary Robinson thus concluded, Shirley told Bradstreet that he could start planning the Frontenac strike over the winter of 1755-56 as he was the principal candidate for command. But, as seen in a previous section, the plans of the erstwhile Governor of Massachusetts were put asunder by the pre-emptive strike made by Montcalm against Oswego in the summer of 1756, and Shirley subsequently replaced by Lord Loudoun. Having been given the responsibility for the initial project however, Bradstreet took complete ownership of the expedition plans and never let them go, despite the disheartening loss of Oswego in 1756. Indeed, by 1757, he was lobbying influential personages back in England and claiming that he was the ideal candidate to lead any expedition against Canada going by way of Lake Ontario. He bragged to Sir Richard Lyttleton that

> Were it not owned by all degrees of People that no person in America is more capable of conducting an Inland Expedition in these parts than I am, I would by no means be so presumptious [sic] as to offer My self as a Candidate for the Command of that part of the Forces which should go by the way of Oswego as I now do to You should the Scheme be approved of.[81]

[81] Bradstreet to Lyttleton, dated 5 September 1757, quoted in Gipson, *The Victorious Years…*, 237n.

In early 1757 with the forward operating base at Oswego gone, a strike against Frontenac was not even considered by Loudoun as a key element in his 1757 campaign design. It was only Bradstreet's constant persistence to be allowed to execute the small boat raid, despite the lack of a base at Oswego, that finally wore the Scottish earl down after his return from the aborted Louisburg expedition. While sorting through the political, administrative and military muddles caused by the unfortunate loss of Fort William Henry in his absence, Loudoun read Bradstreet's detailed memorandum dated 4 January 1758 in which the latter offered to save the Crown some money and finance the entire Frontenac expedition out of his own pocket should it fail (and probably some of his Albany trading cronies' pockets as well).[82]

Loudoun agreed to the raid proceeding, but on the key condition Bradstreet did not neglect the construction of all the bateaux required for the next campaign. The actual scope and intent of the raid from Lord Loudoun's perspective was laid out in as follows in February 1758 to Pitt:

> Bradstreet…proposes to collect [Batteau] Men early, and with Eight Hundred, (such as he can raise at his own Expence [sic], and who will remain in the Batteau Service after this is over) to make an Attack on Cadaraqui, which he thinks, he can carry as soon as the Ice breaks up, or at least, to bring off or destroy, all the Vessels they now have on that Lake; and if he Succeeds, to be repaid his Expences, and be recommended to the King's Ministers, For their Favor and such Reward, as they may think fit his Services deserve. I am to furnish him with Boats and Provisions…[83]

Just as the plans to take Fort Frontenac had been placed on the back burner with Shirley's recall in 1756, Bradstreet's pet project was again put on hold with Lord Loudoun's recall in March 1758. A new set of "strategic" instructions issued by William Pitt arrived for Bradstreet's new superior, Major-

[82] See "Memorial" of Bradstreet to Loudoun, 4 January 1758, *Loudoun Papers*, LO 6895.

[83] Loudoun to Pitt, dated 14 February 1758, *Pitt Corr*., I, 194.

General Abercromby. Once the latter had digested his new remit, he was unwilling to detach Bradstreet on his cross-lake foray, especially given Pitt's very definite and prescriptive directives on the campaign at hand.

Bradstreet's biographer states that the frustrated logistician thus felt obliged to have his plan re-approved publically by the new commander for the upcoming campaign and that to that end a Council of War was convened in March 1758 at Albany. But strangely enough, the historical record does not bear this out, official British documents, various journals of key officers and diaries for the month of March, including Abercromby's personal correspondence, make no mention of any such council. The only document on which Godfrey bases this assertion is the very first page of Bradstreet's own "Impartial Account", published a year after the fact, and a somewhat dubious 19th century biography of Philip Schuyler by one Benson J. Lossing, a self-taught editor, engraver, writer, and amateur historian, whose work has been characterized as "precariously located somewhere between serious scholarship and 'popular scribbling.'"[84]

[84] Benson J. Lossing, review of *Benson J. Lossing and historical writing in the United States, 1830-1890*, by K.Blaser, *Choice* 34 no.1 (1996, September):195; Also see Harold E. Mahan *Benson J. Lossing and Historical Writing in the United States* (Greenwood Press, 1996), *in passim*; Godfrey's sole source for a March "Council" cites a very dubious and ambiguous passage in Lossing's colorful *Life and Times of Philip Schuyler*, Vol. I (New York: Sheldon & Company, 1872): 146; Major General James Abercromby reported to Pitt on 16 March 1758 from New York (*Pitt Corr.*, I , 208) that he only received news of his new command and instructions at Albany on 7 March 1758. On receipt, he quickly gave Lord Howe "*the necessary Orders relative to this Command; and immediately set out for this place, which from the depth of the snow, then beginning to melt, rendered the roads so difficult, that I was not able to reach it, till the 13th at noon*". Strangely Bradstreet's own correspondence to his agent Charles Gould and other patrons during this pre-Ticonderoga campaign period makes no mention of a council of war. If there was an alleged "council" convened in March 1758 to discuss Bradstreet's scheme as per biographer Godfrey's assertion (and alluded to Bradstreet's own "Impartial Account") then it would have had to have occurred between 7-9 March 1758. This author is of the strong opinion that Bradstreet's pre-Ticonderoga council is a fiction and that the story of Lord Howe's alleged removal of "every objection" to Bradstreet's scheme was used by him to embellish his account and to shamelessly take advantage of the popularity of the dead hero. It is a perfect example of 18th century self-serving propaganda done in cringingly bad taste and goes a long way in explaining the complete silence with which

In Bradstreet's *Impartial Account*, the self-promoting colonel states that early "in the spring of the year 1758, when the plan of operations for the then ensuing campaign was the subject of deliberation in our military councils" it was he who "judg'd an attempt upon Fort Frontenac (whilst the whole force of Canada was employ'd in opposing our incursion into their country on the side of Lake George) to be attended with the utmost probability of success." There is no mention of previous commanders' involvement or inputs to the plan, such as William Shirley or Lord Loudoun, nor any direct mention of the defeated James Abercromby, except in generic terms such as "commander-in chief" or "general". The only inference one could draw from Bradstreet's one-sided account at the time was that he, and he alone, was the sole progenitor and advocate of the daring, but more importantly, successful plan.

Cunningly, his 1759 *Impartial Account* played up unnamed mysterious naysayers to his 1758 raid, noting that, from the outset, many "objections were started, and many difficulties rais'd against it, as an unfeasible [sic] plan." But then, like a white knight, a champion who "excell'd in penetration and judgement" and thus "highly approv'd of the scheme" stepped into the light, "remov'd every objection, and obtained the assent of the general, to its being carried into execution as soon as our army had made an establishment on the north side of the Lake George."[85] The champion was a personage carefully selected to capture the attention of all who picked up Bradstreet's privately printed pamphlet and gauged to convince the meanest of sceptics of Bradstreet's obvious merit and ingenuity - the beloved Lord George Augustus Howe,

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his *Impartial Account* and his thinly-disguised opinions attached to it were received in London, as well as Pitt's perceived failure to reward his Frontenac triumph discussed at great length by Godfrey in Chapter VII of *Profit and Preferment…*, 142-174.

[85] Bradstreet, *Impartial Account*, 5.

tragically killed before the battle of Ticonderoga the previous summer. Conveniently dead, and thus unable to dispute the details of what actually transpired prior to the disaster at Ticonderoga, the message in the pamphlet was unequivocally clear – the sainted aristocratic hero had given Bradstreet's plan a resounding stamp of approval when no others would.

After the defeat of Abercromby's army on 8 July 1758 and its subsequent withdrawal to the southern end of Lake George, Bradstreet renewed his efforts to be allowed to launch his raid. His select "Battoemen" were standing by, as well as a large contingent of provincials who had not really been employed yet on the costly campaign, who, he argued, could very quickly deployed against Fort Frontenac. In his own words he

> ..was again oppos'd, and depriv'd of the aids of my Lord Howe (who unfortunate for these colonies, fell in the skirmish on the sixth of July) [and] in the greatest dilemma, least the influence of his opponents might occasion a rejection of his plan; he however desired a council of war, before whom he laid open his scheme, subjoining the strongest reasonings on the probability of success. Many after the warmest opposition, reluctantly approv'd, and finally by a majority it was carried in the affirmative, and a report drawn up in favour of the scheme.[86]

The council of war took place on 13 July 1758, but was **not**, as Bradstreet claims, solely for the purpose of discussing his "scheme". The two actual questions put to the council[87] are shown below in their entirety as they speak

[86] *Ibid.*, 6.

[87] Present at the council, besides Bradstreet, were Major General Abercromby, Brigadier General Thomas Gage, Sir William Johnson, Superintendant of Indian Affairs and five of the regular force commanding officers: Colonel William Haviland (27th Foot); Colonel Francis Grant (42nd Foot); Colonel Frederick Haldimand, (4th/60th Foot [Royal Americans]; Major Eyre Massey (46th Foot); and, Major William Eyre, (44th Foot). What is most surprising is that none of the provincial commanding officers whose regiments were actually tasked to accompany Bradstreet on his dangerous mission were present at the council, no doubt, a desire to keep the proposed "Enterprize" secret until the strike force had been completely assembled at the Carrying Place. "At a Council of War, Held in Camp on the Banks of Lake George on Thursday, the 13th of July, 1758", *Abercromby Papers*, AB 438, in Preston & Lamontagne, *RFF*, 256.

clearly to the "pre-mission" intent of Abercromby, rather than the post-mission "spin" presented in Bradstreet's *Impartial Account*:

> 1st… The Question being put whether under our Present Circumstances it is not advisable to detach a strong Reinforcement to the Mohawk River, to reinforce Brig[r.] Stanwix, - & that a fort be built at the Oneida, or what is commonly call'd the Great Carrying Place?
> It was unanimously agreed in the Affirmative.
>
> 2[nd]… Whether it is proper and adviseable [sic] to appear on Lake Ontario, and if possible, to attempt an Enterprize [sic] on that Quarter, in order to distress the Enemy, and to favour the Operations to the Southward, and if so, with what force?[88]

The resolution of this second question was not so clear cut as the first item of business and probably generated the most heated discussion of the council. It vaguely stated that the purpose of the "Enterprize" was "to distress the enemy" which would in turn, have the effect of "favour[ing] the Operations to the Southward". The resources of what could be made available for such an "Enterprize" were also on the table for discussion. In the end it was

> … agreed in the Affirmative, provided there is no Apparent reason to the contrary, when the Troops assemble at the Great Carrying Place: - & that the N. Yorkers, New Jerseys, Dotys, & the Rhode Islanders be destined for this Service, leaving always 2000 Men at the Great Carrying Place, for Carrying on the Fort.[89]

The same day, Abercromby wrote out Bradstreet's orders which gave some more specific direction as to "this Service" - the raid's objectives. It stressed first and foremost that "a strong reinforcement should be detached to the Mohawk River to strengthen Brigadier Stanwix and to build a Fort at the Oneida or Great Carrying Place." Only if there was no French attack pending in that quarter, Bradstreet would be allocated 3000 troops by Brigadier Stanwix

> …to advance to Lake Ontario, to watch the Motions of the Enemy and by giving them Battle, if adviseable [sic] prevent their intended Inroad on the Mohawk River; or

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[88] *Ibid.*

[89] *Ibid.*

> otherwise if found practicable, to attempt the reduction of Fort Frontenac, and destroy the Shipping at Cadaraqui, And in every Respect Endeavour to render the Retreat of the Enemy, sent this Spring to the Ohio, as difficult as possible.[90]

Bradstreet's instructions were thus very clear. There were several conditions to be met before he could launch on his raid to reduce Fort Frontenac. Bradstreet's biographer notes correctly that his instructions were "a realistic analysis of the situation in the Lake Ontario sector…designed to provide the flexibility necessary for the immediate defence of the area and the possible attack."[91] That the resources Bradstreet needed for the raid (in addition to his new authority to actually go) - troops, artillery, boats and provisions - had **not** been staffed or allocated beforehand was a clear indication that the raid was never intended as a *branch* or a *sequel plan* to Abercromby's operational design for the 1758 campaign. In effect, Bradstreet's scheme was never really a well thought out "plan" at all: merely an un-resourced and un-approved concept of operations.

Given that the priority task of Brigadier Stanwix was to erect a fort at what is now present day Rome, New York, it can be clearly stated that Bradstreet's Frontenac "diversion" was, in fact, a follow-on or *sequel* plan to Abercromby's realignment of forces in theatre to shore up the western defences of the New York frontier for the winter – a shielding operation *sequel* to his stalled and larger assigned task of moving on Montreal via Ticonderoga and Crown Point. Thus, rather than proceeding directly from the council of war with his long sought-after and much coveted, independent command of the war, Bradstreet was still very much the deputy quartermaster general of the army with a job to do until he got to the Oneida Carrying Place. This latter duty

[90] Abercromby to Bradstreet, Lake George Camp, 13 July 1758, *Ibid.*, 257.
[91] Godfrey, *PPP*, 125.

entailed Bradstreet marshalling all the forces destined for the priority task - fort building – then moving them quickly and efficiently to the Carrying Place where it would then be determined by Stanwix (based on intelligence and other factors) whether Bradstreet could launch his "diversion" or not.

Bradstreet very quickly became bogged down in the minutiae of transporting all the requisite stores, bateaux and men for the major shielding operation. Provincial regiments, troublesome at the best of times, had to be assembled, provisioned and marched to their assembly area at the Great Carrying Place. Invariably, there were inevitable delays as Provincial Colonels had not been included in the decision-making or planning processes. All Provincials believed they were being deployed to the frontier to build a fort and were kept in the dark as to any potential offensive operations.[92] Bradstreet also ran into problems getting enough wagons to transport needed supplies from Albany on the Hudson to Schenectady on the Mohawk River.

By 6 August he and General Stanwix with the Provincial troops had only reached Fort Herkimer, about 50 miles due west of Schenectady on the Mohawk River, but 30 miles short of their objective further west. Bradstreet reported to Abercromby that sickness and mass desertions were commonplace daily, adding that: 'never have people gon [sic] on Service with more reluctance than they in general have." He stubbornly added that after he had got all to the Oneida Carrying Place for the fort-building task, he still fully intended attempting his mission, even if reduced to a mere 1000 men. [93]

[92] Bradstreet himself boasted in his *Impartial Account* that "never was there an expedition undertaken, the destination of which, the individuals who compos'd the army, were more profoundly ignorant of; even the commanding officers of the corps were uncertain, at leaving the Oneida station, whether they were to be led against Niagara, Oswegatchie or Cadaraqui…", 27.

When all forces had concentrated at the site of the new fort by 11 August and it was apparent from recent Indian intelligence that there were no French forces in the sector, Brigadier Stanwix authorized the impatient Bradstreet to launch on his first real independent command of the war. Maximum secrecy as to the "diversion's" *objective*, with the exception of few key personnel such Sir William Johnson and Brigadier Stanwix, not to mention Onondaga scouts in Bradstreet's employ, had been maintained up to and including that moment. Therefore the main component of the force, the Provincials, needed to be briefed on the pending offensive operation, and understandably, all five regimental Colonels refused to serve under Bradstreet's command as they all outranked him. Stanwix solved the problem quickly by ordering detachments of each regiment designated to go, each to be commanded by their respective lieutenant-colonels.[94]

Next, the Indian allies had to be briefed and, as Bradstreet himself accurately recounts he held a council with "about one hundred and fifty fighting men from the different nations" and "inform'd them of his design." Only 42 warriors however deigned to join his raid while the remainder "who entirely depended on the magazines of Cadaraqui for their subsistence…artfully evaded being accessary [sic] to the reduction of Fort Frontenac, under the specious pretext of the impracticability of [it] succeeding." This disappointing lack of enthusiastic support for his raid caused Bradstreet to add an indirect criticism of

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[93] Bradstreet to Abercromby, dated 6 August 1758, Fort Herkimer, quoted in Godfrey, *PPP*, 127. The previous night, 119 New Jersey troops had deserted.

[94] Brigadier Stanwix wrote to Abercromby that: "*Colonel Bradstreet seem'd not a little offend'd that the provincial Colonels would not go upon his Enterprise under his Command, the King having given all these Ranck of Colonels which no provincial Colonels ever had before. As you did not settle this at the Lake I could settle it no otherwise than to send these* [Provincial troops*] by detachments without their Colonels….*" Stanwix to Abercromby, Oneida Carrying Place, 20 August 1758, quoted in Gipson, *The Victorious Years…*, 240n.

the incumbent Superintendant of Indian Affairs, Sir William Johnson: "A glaring proof this, of their general disaffection to our interest!"[95]

Now that British intentions to attack Fort Frontenac were out in the open, Bradstreet had to act swiftly, as surprise was a key element of his plan. According to his own *Impartial Account*, he had "the most accurate intelligence relative to the state of Fort Frontenac, and the condition of the shipping" directly from his "friend" and paid informant, "Red Head, an Onondaga chief: a man of high reputation and distinguished abilities" who was "remarkably attach'd to our interest." Bradstreet was confident that the fort had been stripped of all its able-bodied fighting men who had been "employ'd in opposing our incursion into their country on the side of Lake George."[96] Now he wished to move as rapidly as possible in order to strike before the fort's meagre garrison could be reinforced from La Galette or Montreal.

Operational security was compromised on 19 August before his force had even reached Lake Ontario, when four Mississauga Indians ambushed one of Bradstreet's scouting parties near the Oswego River Falls. Besides taking scalps, they found two written documents on one of the victims; one entitled "Colonel Bradstreet's Instructions to the Commander of a Scouting Party" and the other, "General Orders" which gave the breakdown of Bradstreet's strike force. The Mississauga scouts took them directly to the French commander at Fort Frontenac who thus discovered the size and composition of the British force

[95] Bradstreet, *Impartial Account*, 8.

[96] *Ibid.*

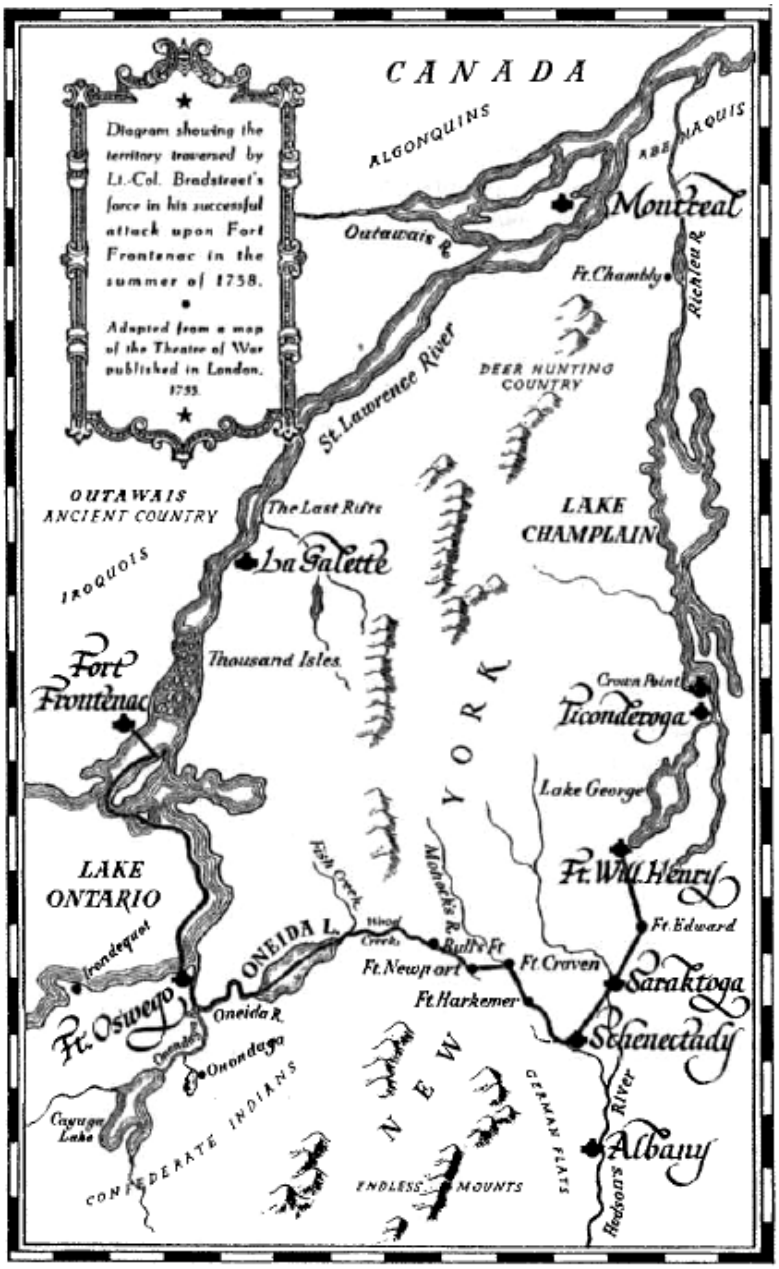

Figure 4.2 - Route of Bradstreet's Raid, 1758
Source: Bradstreet, *Impartial Account*, **4.**

headed his way and forwarded this information and the captured documents on the same day to the Marquis de Vaudreuil at Montreal. The latter says he received the warning of the British expedition on 26 August 1758 and subsequently dispatched a force of 1500 militia and colonial regulars upriver to

Cadaraqui over the next two days. These forces on reaching La Galette would learn the fort had already fallen on 27 August.[97]

By 21 August 1758, Bradstreet's force consisting of some 3100 men and eight pieces of small artillery, reached Lake Ontario after a gruelling overland march and several boat rides through the wilderness.[98] The following day he launched them from the ruins of Oswego in a flotilla of 123 bateaux and 95 whaleboats headed northwards skirting the eastern shore of Lake Ontario on their way to their objective. Three nights later on 25 August 1758, they landed unopposed a mile west of the fort.[99] The two armed French schooners stationed at Fort Frontenac that could have disputed his passage northwards and created havoc amongst his small flotilla were still riding at their moorings on the Cadaraqui River behind the fort because prevailing winds prevented them from taking either offensive or defensive action: sailing south to intercept the British-

[97] Vaudreuil to Massiac, 2 September 1758, Montreal, in Preston & Lamontagne, *RFF*, 263-4. See also *Bradstreet, Impartial Account*, 13-16. Bradstreet noted that the French fort was completely aware of their approach a full day and a half before his forces landed. "*On the 24th, at two in the morning, the report of four discharges of cannon, at Cadaraqui, were distinctly heard, our distance from thence being about fifteen miles. Some of the Indians that escaped us yesterday (we afterwards heard) had reach'd the fort, and given information of our approach; upon which the cannon was fir'd to alarm the adjacent Indians*."

[98] For the best and most detailed contemporary accounts of the raid proper see: Lieutenant Colonel Charles Clinton's Journal in the *The Bulletin of the Fort Ticonderoga Museum* [hereafter *BFTM*]. Vol. XV, No. 4 (1992): 293-315; Lieutenant Benjamin Bass. "Account of the Capture of Fort Frontenac by the Detachment Under the Command of Col. Bradstreet," and Ensign Moses Dorr. "A Journal of an Expedition Against Canaday by Moses Dorr Ensin of Capt. Parkers Company Roxbury May 25th 1758" in *New York History*, Vol. XVI. no. 4 (October 1935); 449-452; newspaper accounts cited at note 67; Bradstreet, *Impartial Account.* For best modern day accounts see Rene Chartrand; Bob Andrews; and, William Fowler.

[99] Bradstreet, *Impartial Account*, 16-17.

American flotilla; or escaping northwest down the St Lawrence River to La Galette.[100]

Bradstreet unloaded his artillery on 26 August and brought it as close as he could to the small fort in daylight, then waited until nightfall to construct two batteries. After a short bombardment at first light the fort quickly surrendered while the two armed sloops set sail and tried to escape to the open lake. The battery marked **H** on the map at Figure 4.1 sent a few shells into the lead schooner and both ships promptly grounded themselves on the far shore and their crews took to the woods.

Bradstreet's men went to work getting the two grounded vessels refloated so they could load them with loot – bales of furs, weapons, trade goods, gunpowder, even British field pieces taken at Oswego and Fort Duquesne. Everything they could not carry back, such as hundred of barrels of provisions and other trade goods, was consumed by fire. His men destroyed the remaining seven unrigged vessels of varying sizes, all the wooden warehouses, and knocked trunnions off French guns. They did not have time, however, to pull down the fort's stone walls.

Bradstreet gave permission for the tiny garrison to return to Montreal, ostensibly because of the age of the commander, de Noyan, and the many women and children they found inside the fort. In reality, he didn't want the logistical trouble and responsibility of transporting them back across the Lake to Oswego and thence on to Albany. There was also a belief they would slow him down on his return and make him vulnerable to French pursuit and retaliation.

[100] Vaudreuil to Massiac, 2 September 1758, Montreal, in Preston & Lamontagne, *RFF*, 264. Vaudreuil noted that he never expected the two biggest armed ships would be captured "*having in mind that if the winds had not permitted them to be sent to Niagara or to La presentation, that at least they should have been burned. This is the only reproach that I have to make to M. de Noyan, and the only thing that gives me real disquiet about Niagara which is destitute of men and supplies… .*"

Bradstreet's force unencumbered of prisoners was back at Oswego by 30 August, his round trip from there including the reduction of the fort, taking eight days in total. The following day, according to Lieutenant Colonel Charles Clinton of the New York Provincials, his men unloaded their "Plunder" from last two armed warships on Lake Ontario "And Set them both on fire Sails Rigging and Many Other Useful things of value, but We could not Carry them Nor secure them or these two fine vessels from the French and their Indians."[101]

Assessment of Design and Conduct of the Raid

Utilizing some of the key design concepts of campaign planning, it has already been clearly shown that John Bradstreet's raid did not really fit into the operational design for 1758. It was never integrated or synchronized within the original Ticonderoga campaign plan directed by Pitt or when the plan was subsequently amended and executed by Major General James Abercromby. Fort Frontenac was simply not considered a relevant operational *objective*, nor relative to the forces being applied on the central land approach or the main sea approach leading to the theatre strategic *objective* of New France located between Quebec and Montreal.

In fact, Bradstreet's "diversion" as it was styled, was doctrinally a *sequel* plan to another *sequel* operation that was designed to bolster the western defences of New York colony by building Fort Stanwix at the Oneida Carrying Place. As there was no intention of capturing or controlling Fort Frontenac on Abercromby's part, nor any will or resolve to re-establish Oswego on Lake Ontario, the raid was a tactical application of force to exploit a perceived French

[101] Clinton, journal entry, 31 August 1758, *Ibid.*, 312.

vulnerability: *viz*, a target of opportunity. Authorized by a desperate commander in defence mode, it was never really fully thought through as to what effects were to be achieved or how the raid could best support or help achieve his assigned operational objectives. Bradstreet with his post-raid observations in *Impartial Account* the following year that Niagara, the more critical fort astride the lines of communication to Detroit, had been ripe for the plucking (no doubt added to fend off Pitt's subsequent criticism of Bradstreet's raid) is a good example of this lack of operational awareness on the part of Abercromby.

Abercromby, it could be charitably argued, was using Bradstreet operationally to fix his enemy in place with a tactical "left hook", but this was a defensive manoeuvre vice an offensive one when considered at the operational level and therefore again, did not contribute anything towards the successful achievement of Abercromby's assigned operational objectives. From an OPP perspective there never was any doubt as to what Bradstreet's assigned objective was, or what his tasks were, once on site. As the tactical commander he was to reduce the fort and, in essence, destroy everything he found there – stores, weapons, trade goods- then return. It was a simple spoiling attack and therefore his orders did not state (nor imply) that he was required to achieve operational effects such as neutralizing Indian tribes or establishing naval control of the lake. These potential second order effects that might accrue from the raid, while part and parcel of his arguments he had personally deployed over the past three years in order to justify the attempt being made, were not part of Pitt's operational design assigned to Abercromby.

Accordingly, in 1759, when Bradstreet's independent sideshow was not receiving the appropriate attention or respect he thought it deserved from the home authorities in Britain, he started to claim in hindsight that the raid was

more than just a tactical victory. Indeed, he claimed, with some creative reverse engineering and unsubstantiated assertions, that his raid had achieved very important "advantages" or effects which were "undoubtedly…of the highest importance to the general interest of the colonies." Today, with the benefit of additional hindsight (in addition to that of Bradstreet), it is worthwhile to examine some of his multiple claims to assess whether they are actually true, and, if so, did they have any impact on the operational or strategic *endstates* of the 1758 campaign year. He alleged that

> the taking of Cadaraqui …has depriv'd the enemy of Lake Ontario; has frustrated their scheme of making an incursion into this province; has kept the Five Nations in a state of neutrality; has influenced the Indians on the frontiers of Pensilvania [sic], Jersey and Virginia to a peace; has facilitated the expedition against fort Duquesne; has broken the chain of attachment and interest, which subsisted between the French and the Indians on the Ohio, the lakes and the surrounding country.[102]

Some of the above claims are wishful thinking, such as the enemy being deprived of Lake Ontario, when, in fact, the French still had possession of the only two standing forts on the Lake Ontario-St Lawrence system (Niagara and La Presentation). Furthermore, by the time of the publication of the *Impartial Account* in 1759 the French were again "masters" of the lake having built two new 10-gun sloops at La Presentation over the winter and launching them that spring. Certainly raid certainly cramped the French capability to smoothly resupply their posts further west and temporarily neutralized their ability to maintain naval mastery of the lake by destroying their small fleet.

One could also argue that his raid had achieved something *indirectly* in the higher scheme of things though it was never stated anywhere in any of the planning. By neutralizing lines of communication on Lake Ontario, it could be argued that the destruction of Fort Frontenac was a *decisive point* for a potential

[102] Bradstreet, *Impartial Account*, 30.

line of operation *shaping favourable conditions* [authour's emphasis] for any commander tasked to operate on the following year: *ie.* a lake void of French warships would give the British a clear run at taking either Niagara, or La Galette, or both, while simultaneously disrupting the flow of guns, trading goods and supplies to the western Indians. But as noted in the previous paragraph, the raid did not actually neutralize French use or control of the lake as Bradstreet claimed, so such argumentation is speculative at best. In the absence of any physical proofs that his spoiling attack had gainfully contributed to the successful achievement of operational or strategic objectives, it is interesting to note that Bradstreet actually reverted to claiming intangible and immeasurable effects in the psychological plane such as "influencing" Indian tribes and aiding diplomacy efforts.

Furthermore, even if the effects or "advantages" as Bradstreet called them had been achieved in severing French lines of communications, they still had *no direct impact on* or *direct relation to* [author's emphasis] achieving the strategic *endstate* of taking New France. That said, the raid did have one indirect impact. Bradstreet's "diversion" soaked off 3000 Provincial troops from the main interior approach, as well as depriving Abercromby's army of their most able and dynamic administrator at a time of critical want and the need to reorganize for the priority operational task at hand.

In warfare, uncertainty and opportunity are situations that sometimes favour the more creative and mentally agile commanders and their ability to operate effectively at the operational level of war. The use of *manoeuvre* and *flexibility* as key elements of operational design by Bradstreet's immediate superior, Abercromby, can be said to have been sorely absent. That Bradstreet's raid did not represent *flexibility* at the operational level is borne out by the fact

that it was conducted independently of the original operational design (thus not a *branch* or *sequel* plan).

As to *manouevre*, Abercromby could definitely be termed attritionist and manouevrist on the physical plane as he unleashed his subordinate on Frontenac "to gain a position of advantage in respect to the opponent from which force can be applied or threatened." But a good indication of what level of war Bradstreet was really operating on, however, is found in the fact that his raid did not in the slightest "destroy the opponent's physical means to resist or...his capability to resist."[103] In essence, Bradstreet led his commander astray, convincing him to be a tactical opportunist vice a true operational manouevrist. While Abercromby would appear superficially to have been manouevring against an adversary's flank where he could not focus appropriate combat power or attention and thus perhaps operating at the operational level, in truth, *manouevre* in his stalled campaign was tactical *man oeuvre* for *manouevre*'s sake rather than any manifestation of mental agility or understanding on his part. Simply put, Bradstreet's raid was not a necessary *decisive point* on Abercromby's *line of operation* leading to the successful capture of his operational *objectives* – Ticonderoga and Crown Point – and thus achievement of his clearly delineated *endstate*.

In reviewing the detailed planning that resulted in the destruction of Frontenac in 1758 and the effects the tactical raid achieved relative to the overall design of Pitt and Abercromby for the Ticonderoga piece of the theatre strategy, Bradstreet's raid can be styled as a "nice-to-have" vice a "must have" in the overall scheme of things. Abercromby was ultimately outmanoeuvred by his own subordinate who led off him off his "critical path" and in doing so for

[103] *CFOPP*, 2-4.

personal reasons, siphoned off essential resources (including his own skills as DQMG) from the principal campaign. Abercromby never should have been sidetracked from his assigned operational objective, and his failure to mount a second attempt on Ticonderoga and Crown Point, then exploit to Montreal, can be laid, in large part, at Bradstreet's door.

CHAPTER FIVE: AFTERMATH & INTERPRETATIONS

Well has it been said that "on the actual day of battle naked truths may be picked up for the asking [but] by the following morning they have already begun to get into their uniforms."[104] There are always two sides to every story and every interested party involved or affected by the raid at the time, winner or loser, had something to say. A quick review of the contemporary "spins" or observations after the event are useful in trying sort out some of the "naked truths" and arriving at some conclusions.

Additionally, there is a third category of interpreters or "after-the-event" observers to be considered as well, albeit non-participatory – the historians. The various interpretations of Bradstreet's raid by a sampling of successive modern day American, British and Canadian historians will be reviewed in order to answer one question: did they slavishly adopt Bradstreet's own depiction of the event as a "strategic coup" as implied by his biographer in the third epigram, or have they somehow independently deduced and discovered that the tactically executed raid actually transcended the operational level of war and achieved strategic effects?

[104] Ian Hamilton, *A Staff Officer's Scrap-Book during the Russo-Japanese War*, Vol. I (London: E. Arnold, 1906), v.

The French, 1758

> *They found the fort easy of repair, some parts of it being scarcely at all injured; that the oven is entire as well as some of the buildings; that they have discovered six 12 pounders in good condition which the English, no doubt overlooked; that the others either have their trunnions broken or have been spiked.*[105]
>
> Adjutant Malartic, Bearn Regiment,
> *Journal of the Occurences in Canada, 1757, 1758.*

The French were certainly dismayed with news of the raid, one French logistician laconically stating in his report from Montreal to Marshal de Belle Isle in France that they had been "cramped in the direction of Lake Ontario by the unfortunate affair of Frontenac."[106] Montcalm and other regulars took the opportunity to snipe and profit at the Governor's discomfort of the moment for having accepted a little too much risk along his lightly defended lines of communication on the Lakes. The French regular wrote to the Minister of War: "You will find it difficult to understand, my Lord, why…our sloops were not kept armed and cruising. I can give no answer to your astonishment, except that I am, myself, as much surprised and astonished." He added that the small fleet "assured to us the superiority on Lake Ontario which we now lose. 'Twill be still worse should the enemy reduce Niagara, which is a strong post for this country."[107]

On receipt of the news that British forces were closing on Fort Frontenac on 26 August, the Marquis de Vaudreuil's reaction was swift. Over the next two following days the Governor dispatched a force of some 1500 colonial regulars, militia and Indians to the aid of de Noyan, but they were too late to reinforce the

[105] Adjutant Malartic, "Journal of the Occurrences in Canada, 1757, 1758," in *NYCD*, X., 854.

[106] M. Daine to Marshal de Belle Isle, Quebec, 17 October, 1758, *NYCD*, X, 834.

[107] M de Montcalm to Marshal de Belle Isle, Montreal, 9 September 1758, *NYCD*, X., 831.

doomed fort which surrendered 27 August. On confirmation of the surrender, Vaudreuil wrote to his superior that the real loss was not the fort, but "that of our two biggest barks, which are in the possession of the English." It was this turn of events that gave him "real disquiet about Niagara which is destitute of men and supplies, [its commander] M. de Vassan having sent a party to the defence of M. de Ligneries at the Ohio." He confessed that he had underestimated the British, strong in the belief that they "would not dare to enter the lake on which we had vessels," and placing too much trust in tribes of the Five Nations allied to the French cause to provide early warning. [108]

By the end of October, however, Vaudreuil was in a happier frame of mind. Any fears he had of the British exploiting the potential advantages they had gained with the capture of last two warships on the lake and perhaps seizing a weakly held Niagara had dissipated on the news that Bradstreet's force

> …had nothing more compelling [in mind] than to withdraw and even to burn the two large barks that they had captured. They fled with such haste that most of them abandoned their clothes and even their muskets, so that Colonel Bradstreet instead of striving to re establish Choueguen [Oswego] withdrew to the old Fort Bull [Fort Stanwix at the Carrying Place]."[109]

General Montcalm's dislike of the Governor stemmed from the latter's continual tactical fixations and his desire to maintain and man every French outpost on every line of communication, as well as his inability to clearly divine British strategic intentions. Montcalm was under no illusions that the key terrain and centre of gravity for New France, given the motions of Britain's armies and fleets in 1758, were the key cities of Quebec and Montreal. After the fall of Louisbourg and Frontenac, he was invited by a worried Vaudreuil to propose

[108] M. de Vaudreuil to Massiac, Montreal, 2 September 1758, in *RFF*, 264.

[109] M. de Vaudreuil to Massiac, Montreal, 30 October 1758, *Ibid.*, 271.

some new direction and guidance for planning future defensive operations of the colony.

With clear operational foresight, Montcalm did not hold back. He favoured bringing in all detachments from all the isolated forts on the Great Lakes ("the branches of the tree") and concentrating them with all the regular forces defensively at the three main entry points to New France: La Galette on the St Lawrence above Montreal in the west; Isle aux Noix at the foot of Lake Champlain in the south; and at the capital, Quebec, in the east. He announced:

> It is no longer the time when a few scalps, or the burning a few houses is any advantage or even an object. Petty means, petty ideas, petty Councils about details are now dangerous, and waste material and time; circumstances exact determined and decisive measures. The war is entirely changed in this part of the world according to the manner the English are attacking us; nothing less is at stake than the utter and impending loss of the Colony or its salvation, that is to say, the postponement of its fall…'tis the trunk of the tree that's attacked; whatever concerns the branches is of the greatest indifference.[110]

Also of note is that Fort Niagara remained in French hands at the southern end of Lake Ontario astride the line of communications between it and Lake Erie further south. On Vaudreuil's orders, Niagara was immediately re-supplied and reinforced by a convoy of 30 *canots de maitre* conveying supplies and 500 colonial marines. This movement across Lake Ontario went unchallenged as Bradstreet's firing of the two captured French warships had marked the end of his fleeting "appearance on Lake Ontario" as well his hasty exit inland to the Carrying Place and winter quarters.

Control of Lake Ontario – "dominion of the lake" - truly depended on which side maintained warships on it. The failure of the British to retain the two ships, combined with their postponement of re occupying Oswego until the following year, handed back any initiative or advantage that had been gained by

[110] Marquis de Montcalm, "Reflections on the Measures to be Adopted for the Defence of the Colony" [n.d.] in *NYCD*, X, 874.

Bradstreet's forces to their opponents. The French commenced building two new warships in November 1758 at Point au Baril near La Presentation, and by April the following year, had launched the schooner *Iroquoise* and the brig *Outaouoise,* each about 80 feet in length and armed with swivels and ten 12-pdr guns apiece.[111]

The British, 1758-9

> *By the demolition of fort Frontenac, the enemy have been depriv'd of their grand magazine, from whence their western territories, garrisons, and Indian allies were supplied with ammunition, provisions, and goods of all kinds. By the destruction of their fleet, the intercourse between Canada and Niagara, has in great measure been cut off, and the dominion of the lake wrested from their hands.*[112]
>
> Lt. Col John Bradstreet, *Impartial Account…,* 1759.

Abercromby, by dispatching such a large chunk of his combat power away from his assigned operational objectives for the Fort Frontenac raid two weeks after his major setback at Ticonderoga was, in some of his subordinates' view, acting rashly. Two weeks after the council of war that authorized Bradstreet's contingency raid, two of Abercromby's principal brigadiers at the Lake George camp drafted a letter pressing for him to resume the offensive and to launch a second attack northwards against Ticonderoga. In it, they hinted darkly that he might face censure at home for they could not:

> …see how you are going to justify to the Nation why you left our army without an Adjutant-General as well as severe understaffing in the rations, transport and hospital departments: an economy that will ruin the conduct of the King's business and gain you the blame of all people of good sense….We know Sir that you will provide a quantity of specious pretexts to justify the non-efficiency of the army and its unfortunate success: the lack of experience of regular troops in "woodland warfare"; the Provincials that we cannot trust and the lack of cooperation from the officers of the public departments

[111] Robert Malcolmson, *Warships of the Great Lakes 1754-1834*, (Annapolis, 2001), 16-17. The schooner *Iroquoise* and the brig *Outauoise* were about 80 feet in length and were each armed with ten guns and various swivels.

[112] Bradstreet, *Impartial Account,* 29.

The officers in question, Brigadiers Thomas Gage and James [Jacques] Prevost, were implying that the assigned operational objectives were being ignored at the expense of a tactical diversion.

The burning of the two captured French ships was the most contentious issue in the aftermath of the raid. When reaction from home was received back in North America the following spring, the anxious Bradstreet expecting some recognition of his small victory, heard instead that Pitt was "displeas'd at my not bringing all the Vessells and provisions to Oswego which I took last year at Frontenac."[113] Pitt had clearly seen what should been apparent to the most untrained of military observers in theatre: that by destroying the last two serviceable warships on Lake Ontario, Bradstreet had not only deprived the French of their mastery of the lake but had denied it to the British as well.

Other observers such as Lord Loudoun's physician, Dr. Richard Huck, who had remained in North America after Abercromby's predecessor had been recalled, observed to his Lordship that his hapless successor Abercromby had

> no settled Plan for profitting by the Success we had at Cadarqui [sic]. ---We might with the Like Facility have taken Niagara, … Or we might have preserved the Shipping and taken Post at Oswego. But except the Distruction of the Place, the shipping, the Provisions and Indian Presents, we reaped no other Advantage from it.[114]

Abercromby only belatedly realized on the receipt of Bradstreet's first communiqué reporting his success at Cadaraqui, including the capture of two armed ships and the destruction of the remainder of the fleet, that the possession of the only two remaining warships on the lake gave him a distinct and

[113] Bradstreet to Gould, 9 December 1759, quoted in Godfrey, *PPP*, 149.

[114] Dr. Richard Huck to Earl of Loudoun, New York, 13 December 1758, Loudoun Papers (American Series), *LO 5971*, Huntingdon Library.

immediate advantage over the French. On 18 September, when Bradstreet's forces were already at the Oneida Carrying Place dividing up their spoils, and the charred hulks of the two captured ships were sitting at the bottom of Lake Ontario, Abercromby instructed Brigadier Stanwix to tell Bradstreet

> …that if the two Vessels he brought to Oswego, be still afloat., I desire they may not be burnt or destroy'd; on the Contrary I shou'd have them well mann'd and keep the Lake as long as possible, constantly Cruizing [sic] and keeping the Enemy in continual Alarm, which may be productive of drawing off some of their Force from this Quarter and facilitate any Enterprize we may resolve on here.[115]

This is yet another example of how Bradstreet's stand-alone raid and assigned objectives were not integrated or synthesized with the original larger operational design of Abercromby's campaign. Bradstreet's reaction on receipt of this late decision to maintain the ships on the lake in order to disrupt French lines of communication is unrecorded, but when his actions were questioned at the operational-strategic level of command the following year, he was unwilling to be Abercromby's scapegoat or shoulder the blame for the operational blunder.

Instead of utilizing the "I was just following orders" defence, he went over onto the offensive in his letters home, imputing "the fault was in Genl. Abercromby" who was "in opposition to my best endeavours to get his leave to bring every thing I should take there [at Frontenac] to Oswego and establish myself."[116] In his *Impartial Account* he was even more critical of his former commander stating that if Abercromby had only listened to him "our advantages might have been multiplied almost beyond imagination" and portrayed himself

[115] Abercromby to Stanwix, Lake George Camp, 18 September 1758. Ironically, this letter was sent on the same day Pitt signed the letter of Abercromby's recall and appointing Major General Jeffery Amherst as the new Commander-in-Chief in North America. See "Pitt to Governors in North America", Whitehall, 18 September 1758, in *Pitt Corr*., 354.

[116] Bradstreet to Gould, 9 December 1759, quoted in Godfrey, *PPP*, 149.

with the benefit of hindsight as the more foresighted and astute officer observing that

> **If** [author's emphasis] only two thousand Provincial troops, which were kept unemploy'd at Lake George, had been order'd to follow us, and take post at Oswego, we might have thrown up some defensible works, and brought over and preserved all the shipping, artillery, ammunition and provisions fort Frontenac would have amply supplied us with. We might then have had it in our power to have taken Niagara and secured that important pass, long the object of the nations desire….[117]

But it was a big "If". The self-centred Bradstreet conveniently ignored that Abercromby's army of Provincials and regulars **were** "employ'd" at the time blocking Montcalm's army from moving southwards (though the latter gentleman had no intention of doing so), as well as making preparations for mounting a second attempt to move north on Pitt's assigned but not forgotten objectives. That 5600 Provincials had already been diverted to build Fort Stanwix (as well as allow Bradstreet to conduct his pet project) serve only to highlight the logistician's fixation on the Great Lakes region to the west. Bradstreet was blind to the fact that the capture of the capital of New France to the north would automatically secure all of this territory. In sum, an old idiom is apt: he was "the tail wagging the dog."

One last consequence of the raid was its impact on the Provincial troops that had executed it. Brigadier Stanwix reported to Abercromby that of the "5,600 men you ordered for these services only 2,750 remained fit for duty" with "near a thousand number's of which are dead & dying daily, for by all accts [the] Enterprize was perform'd with so much expedition and fateague [sic] that few could well bear it, & I believe [Bradstreet's] great success was wholly owing to it."[118] It makes Bradstreet's boasting claim the following year in his *Impartial*

[117] Bradstreet, *Impartial Account*, 31.

[118] Stanwix to Abercromby, Camp at Onida [sic] Station, 29 September 1758, in *RFF*, 267.

Account that his judgement and prudence in the attack had been done "without lavishing the lives of the men" ring somewhat hollow.[119]

The fact that Abercromby's stalled campaign had had a strategic affect on the entire tempo of the theatre plan was reflected in Dr Huck's further observations to the his former commander, the Earl of Loudoun, that

> Your Lordship will be disappointed, as will the whole Nation by the Inactivity of our Fleets and Armies after the Reduction of Louisburg…. The bad Behaviour of the French rendered Louisburg an easy Conquest, tho it is thought much more Time was spent upon it than was necessary. The Admiral is blamed, I do not know how justly, for not sending two Ships of the Line, and five or six Frigates up the River S^{t} Lawrence. This might have prevented that large Supply of Provisions which the French have received this Summer. I do not know what Ships of War the Enemy had at Quebec, but exclusive of that, the Reduction of that Place would have been as easy a Conquest as Cadarqui [sic]. They had no Troops there.[120]

British regulars were not the only ones critical of the year's stuttering missteps. Perhaps the last word on aftermath perceptions should go to the lowly Ensign Moses Dorr who watched the comings and goings of Bradstreet's force at the Oneida Carrying Place. Serving in the Massachusetts Provincials that stayed behind to build the new fort, Dorr ended his private 1758 journal with the telling words: "this Day the Last of the Year & the End of this Years Campaign and Not Canada Taken Yet."[121]

[119] Bradstreet, *Impartial Account*, 27.

[120] Huck to Loudoun, *Ibid.*

[121] Dorr, Ensign Moses Dorr, "A Journal of an Expedition Against Canaday by Moses Dorr Ensin of Capt. Parkers Company Roxbury May 25th 1758." *New York History.* Vol. XVI. no.4 (October 1935): 452.

The Historians, 1884-2010

> *With one brilliant stroke Bradstreet had severed the life line of the Great Lakes empire of the French…. The demolition of Fort Frontenac, the capture of French provisions, and the destruction of their vessels had significantly weakened the morale of the western Indian allies of the French and had also stopped the drift of the Six Nations towards the enemy. Thus it has been argued, Bradstreet's victory had generously contributed to the final defeat of New France. In his* Impartial Account *Bradstreet outlined these contributions and historians generally appear to have accepted all the points he made.*[122]
>
> William Godfrey, Bradstreet's biographer, 1982.

Francis Parkman, the first serious historian to write of the Seven Years' War in North America, had mixed feelings about John Bradstreet, especially his role during Pontiac's Uprising in the Ohio country and on the upper Great Lakes in 1764.[123] However his assessment and treatment of Bradstreet's raid as a brilliant masterstroke against Fort Frontenac has become the gospel for historians of the last three centuries. He was first to claim the fort to be of "strategic importance", which imbued Bradstreet's successful raid with having achieved "strategic" effects. But any balanced examination of contemporary French accounts or modern analysis of the raid within the actual strategic imperatives of the day, reveals such an assessment to be unpersuasive. Recent analysis of Parkman's style of writing and researching history has shown him to have been overly dependent on one or two journals of an event, parroting and paraphrasing

[122] Godfrey, *PPP,* 134.

[123] See Francis Parkman, *The Conspiracy of Pontiac*, (Boston?, 1888), *in passim*.

the statements and opinions made in them with little or no analysis as to their validity or relevance to other events occurring simultaneously.[124]

The late Canadian historian W.J. Eccles believes that Parkman's works should now be relegated to bookshelves as "romantic" Whig history, only to be consulted by "the student of American literature or historiography than by the student of history." His major complaint was that Parkman's works had fostered an unwillingness to challenge the master as "Parkman had said all that needed to be said about the history of New France and that there was no need to do any further research." This in turn, he argued, had engendered an unhealthy complacency amongst historians over the years that had been "been disastrous for the study of the history of Canada." Other historians have gone even further stating that Parkman was a liar and racist who conducted shoddy research, fabricated evidence, and deliberately misquoted sources to support his own biases.[125]

In his opus *France and England in North America* first published in 1884, Parkman claims that "the important post of Fort Frontenac…controlled Lake Ontario", a statement disclaimed by French military officers and civilian administrators of the day. For the most part, Parkman's account of the raid is a thinly disguised paraphrasing of Bradstreet's various versions of the event as well as some supporting excerpts drawn from Bradstreet's directed letter writing

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[124] Richard C. Vitzhum "The Historian as Editor: Francis Parkman's Reconstruction of Sources in Montcalm and Wolfe." *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 53, no.3 (December 1966): 471-486.

[125] W.J. Eccles, "The History of New France According to Francis Parkman" *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Series, Vol. 18, No.2 (April 1961): 174-5; Wilbur R. Jacobs, *Francis Parkman: Historian as Hero, The Formative Years* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991), 84; for a vitriolic assessment bordering on character assassination see: Francis Jennings, "Francis Parkman: A Brahmin among Untouchables" *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Series, Vol. 42, No.3 (July 1985): 306-28; or his book, *Empire of Fortune: Crowns, Colonies and Tribes in the Seven Years' War in America.* (New York: 1988); xvii, 442.

campaign to American and British newspapers. For example, compare this Parkman "analysis" to Bradstreet's hindsight on page 80 of this paper:

> If Bradstreet had been followed by another body of men to reoccupy and rebuild Oswego, thus recovering a harbor on Lake Ontario, all the captured French vessels could have been brought thither, and the command of this inland sea assured at once.[126]

Parkman's summary of the raid's effects is pure Bradstreet: "command of Lake Ontario was gone. New France was cut in two; and unless the severed parts could speedily reunite, all the posts of the interior would be in imminent jeopardy."[127] In the early 20th century, British historian John Fortescue in his 10-volume *History of the British Army,* leaned heavily on the works of Francis Parkman for details of the North American events in which the King's troops participated and thus, unsurprisingly, his take on Bradstreet's raid echoes Parkman almost word for word: "The command of Lake Ontario was lost to the French [and] their communications north and south were severed."[128]

Pulitzer prize-winning L.H. Gipson followed on the heels of Fortescue with his 15 volume *The British Empire Before the American Revolution* in which he styled the Seven Years' War as the *The Great War for Empire.* In his opinion "the French Empire in the New World had been shaken to its very foundations…by the destruction of Cadaraqui, the key to the entrance of [the St Lawrence] river as as well as to the Great Lakes region." He too would paraphrase Parkman and speculate on "what if" Bradstreet had "known that Fort Niagara had only a garrison of forty men"? Surely "he would doubtless have moved upon it and thereby added immeasurably to the laurels he and his troops had already won."

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[126] Parkman, *Montcalm & Wolfe*, II, 134-5.

[127] *Ibid.,* 132.

[128] J.W. Fortescue, *A History of the British Army*, Vol. II (London: 1910, Naval & Military Press, [reprint 2004]), 338.

But unfortunately, Bradstreet had not, and therefore had to be content in the knowledge that "the objective that he had had in mind had been attained without the loss of a single man".[129] Again, one is left with unsupported assertions with no analysis as to whether the raid was relevant, a good use of resources or even necessary for the successful attainment of Abercromby's assigned *objectives*.

French-Canadian historian Guy Frégault, always quick to disparage the regular forces of both mother nations in the conflict, is of the opinion that the destruction of Fort Frontenac was never a "master stroke" as James Wolfe styled it, but more of "a hit and run raid [for] Bradstreet beat a hasty retreat after burning the fort and the French ships in the port." Highlighting the positive actions taken by the Canadian-born Governor to ameliorate the situation at Niagara (sending immediate reinforcements and new supplies), Frégault disagrees with any portrayal that the colony was "cut in two" as the result of the raid. In his opinion, the colony was "weakened by the loss of Frontenac, but there still was Niagara."[130]

As Canadian historian Rene Chartrand has additionally pointed out, the rather fatuous contemporary British claims that the lifeline of the traditional French Great Lakes empire had been severed with the fall of a single static fort ignore the fact that

> …the Ottawa River-Lake Huron route was the main trade "highway" to the French posts on Lakes Huron, Michigan and Superior, and …to a certain extent…Detroit and Lake Erie. For the French, the loss of Frontenac was a disagreeable surprise but it merely was a temporary break in the Lake Ontario-upper St Lawrence route. It was not seen as a

[129] Gipson, *The Victorious Years…*, 238-9.

[130] Guy Frégault, *Canada: the war of conquest*. Margaret Cameron, trans. (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1969), 223.

> strategic or tactical disaster as long as the link was maintained and this is confirmed by the fact they did not even bother to restore Fort Frontenac.[131]

As pointed out earlier, the La Presentation fort with its storehouses at La Galette picked up the slack as the new transhipment depot for supplies destined for Niagara and Detroit. Not only was it closer to Montreal and more defensible, it lay within the cocoon of Cayuga Indian territory and thus had more security vis a vis early warning than Fort Frontenac on the lake.

A more modern 21st century assessment by Fred Anderson in *Crucible of War* imbues the doughty Bradstreet with "strategic insight" like Parkman and Fortescue, but rightly identifies the destruction of the fort as of little consequence. Instead, it is the destruction of "the whole of French shipping and naval strength on Lake Ontario" that he claims "would have a catastrophic impact on the Indian trade of the *pays d'en haut* as well as on the installations of the Ohio country to defend themselves."[132] However if one admits that these installations were little more than glorified fur trading posts and not strategic sites (mere "branches of the tree" in Montcalm's words), then again, Bradstreet's raid can be viewed in the proper perspective.

A contemporary of Anderson, Ian K. Steele, perhaps the most pre-eminent Canadian historian of the period still living today, agrees that the objective was not strategic, but astutely adds that "Abercromby violated Pitt's instructions and authorized a raid into untenable country…that did not offset the Fort Carillon [Ticonderoga] disaster."[133] Despite these recalibrated and

[131] René Chartrand, "Fort Frontenac: Saving Face after Ticonderoga", *Osprey Military Journal*, Vol. 3, no.2 (2001):14-22.

[132] Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 264.

quantified assessments of the perceived importance of Bradstreet's raid by two of the leading authorities, recent popular histories such as *The French and Indian War: Deciding the Fate of North America* (2006) by Walter R. Borneman or Frank McLynn's *1759: The Year Britain became Master of the World* (2004) are content to regurgitate Parkman and Gipson and maintain the myth of Bradstreet's raid as a brilliant strategic masterstroke.[134]

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[133] Ian K. Steele, *Warpaths: Invasions of North America*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 213-4.

[134] Borneman paraphrases Bradstreet's hindsight observations on Niagara just as Gipson and Parkman did before him but cannot resist in indulging in a little creative speculation on his own part: "Had the bateau man known that the French garrison there numbered but forty men, he might have relied on the odds of a speedy victory, raided without Abercromby's permission, and then simply begged forgiveness." When Abercromby, the operational commander finally returned to his senses and priorities, he denied Bradstreet's request to conduct another tactical raid against Niagara. Instead, he refocussed on his assigned operational objectives, drawing Borneman's ire who states that Abercromby was "clearly not recognizing the strategic coup that Bradstreet had just wrought", a perfect example of a historian not recognizing the difference between the tactical and strategic levels of war. Walter R. Borneman, *The French and Indian War: Deciding the Fate of North America* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2007) 143-50; Frank McLynn, *1759: The Year Britain became Master of the World* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Publishing, 2004), 47, 153.

CONCLUSION

British and American historians have been quick to parrot the words of Bradstreet extolling his raid as having achieved a strategic victory of significant proportions. American and British historians ranging from Francis Parkman, Sir John Fortescue, Lawrence Henry Gipson and Fred Anderson have appeared to have taken Bradstreet at his word without examining or analysing his raid in the context of his superior's assigned operational objectives, nor truly demonstrating any real understanding of the operational or strategic levels of war on their own part. Canadian historians such as Ian Steele, William Eccles, Rene Chartrand and Guy Frégault (with the exception of Bradstreet's sole biographer, William Godfrey) have never been truly convinced that the tactical level raid achieved anything more than causing the French High Command some ongoing concerns as to the vulnerability of their lines of communications. The 17th century fort was poorly sited for European warfare having been built to overawe the Indians and act as an entrepot for the fur trade by Count Frontenac. Furthermore, its remote location and defensive artillery did not actually control the outlet of Lake Ontario and, upon its "destruction" by Bradstreet in 1758, the French did not even bother reoccupying it though its original stone walls were found by French engineers to be still intact.

As there remains a genuine misunderstanding of what constitutes the strategic level of war in historical accounts of the various campaigns that were fought during the Seven years War in North America, this paper commenced by

defining the three levels of war to provide a common basis for discussion. While the levels of war were not espoused during the 18th century, they certainly exist from a modern conceptual perspective, and were thus used to orient and anchor the respective theatre strategies articulated by the French and British in North America during the Seven Years War. As a starting point, the New France-New England operating environment was examined. Critical problems facing planners on both sides such as weather, manpower and geography were identified and found to have significant planning implications by commanders attempting to balance and apply appropriate resources against time-space-force requirements. Given the identified factors, it was shown that the French theatre strategy was essentially one of delay along the interior lines of approach with the aim of deferring the conquest of Canada until the real war had been fought out on European battlefields and the diplomats had won the peace. By contrast, British theatre strategic success depended upon massing and applying effective combat strength at the obvious points along all the main approaches (whether land or sea) leading to the nerve centres of New France. The corollary affect of this was that their adversary would be unable to concentrate on one of the three approaches to the French centre of gravity.

The planning of the raid, and its genesis over a three year period, were critically examined next utilizing primary sources of the day, and a number of key concepts of OPP campaign design were discussed with a view to identifying whether or not they were present in the design and conduct of the raid. This analysis concluded that Bradstreet's raid was a good example of a tactical *coup de main* which owed a great deal to tactical surprise and good luck (wind prevented French warships from intercepting his flotilla) more than any serious application of "strategic" planning or the exercise of operational art. It was noted that Bradstreet's defeated commander failed to remain focussed on his operationally

assigned objectives of capturing Ticonderoga and Crown Point and exploiting onwards to Montreal. Instead, he allowed himself to be sidetracked by a subordinate's desire to see action and to execute a tactical raid against an objective which had questionable relevance to his task at hand.

Abercromby's decision had a knock-on effect for the other principal operation versus Louisbourg and Quebec, as troops had to be reallocated and rerouted to reinforce his stalled operation. The combined army-fleet at Louisburg was thus weakened and the important *sequel* operation exploiting onwards to Quebec had to be postponed to the following year. In spite of what current history books state, the raid, while a resounding tactical success of the moment for Bradstreet, was, in fact, an operational blunder for Abercromby and subsequently a strategic failure. The chapter concluded that the tactically executed raid **did** actually transcend the operational level of war, but not in the traditional historical view. When examined militarily against the two principal operations directed towards "the trunk of the tree" of New France, the raid can be said to have created the most spectacular negative effect on the strategic level of war for 1758. Bradstreet's raid prolonged the war by another two years.

Finally, the raid's aftermath was viewed through the contemporary lenses of the French and British participants to determine their immediate concerns and overviews of the operation, then followed by a short discussion of the various interpretations of the raid by modern day British, American and Canadian historians. The aim of the latter historiographical review was to identify whether they offered any important additional insights as to the "strategic" value of Bradstreet's operation. It was shown that most historians, predominantly American and British, had been content to accept Bradstreet's version of the operation's importance without truly examining it and its relevance in the operational and strategic contexts of the day.

When the Seven Years War ended in 1763, the neglected and much "despised" fort at Cadaraqui remained deserted, its only occupants weeds and rusting, trunnion-less cannon barrels, stark testament's to the fort's true strategic significance. In subsequent years, Bradstreet's 1758 objective became a quarry for cut stone, much of which found its way into the officer's barracks at Fort Ontario in faraway Oswego. The only trace of its existence today is an excavated portion of one of its former demi-bastions, displayed on the grounds of the Canadian Forces Land Staff College at Kingston which perpetuates the name of the original 1673 post – Fort Frontenac.

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ANNEX A - GLOSSARY

Terms and definitions are taken and, in some cases, adapted from the two following publications: Canada. Department of National Defence. B-GJ-005-500/FP-000, *CF Operational Planning Process*. Ottawa, ON: Department of National Defence, April 2008; and, Canada. Department of National Defence. B-GJ-005-300/FP-000, *Canadian Forces Operations*. Ottawa: Chief of the Defence Staff, 2005.

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Area of Operations

That portion of an area of war necessary for military operations and for the administration of such operations.

Assigned Forces

Forces in being that have been placed in an organization, or under the command authority of a commander, where such placement is relatively permanent.

Branch Plan

A type of contingency plan built into the basic plan for adjusting the ongoing operation if necessary to ensure the maintenance of the overall operational design.

Campaign

A series of military operations in one theatre of operations designed to achieve a specific strategic objective.

Campaign Plan

A plan for a series of related military operations aimed to accomplish a specific strategic objective, normally within a given time and space.

Capability

The state of having sufficient power, skills and ability to carry out a military activity or operation.

Centre of Gravity

The centre of gravity is that characteristic, capability, or locality from which a military force, nation or alliance derives its freedom of action, physical strength, or will to fight.

Command

The authority vested in an individual of the armed forces for the direction, co-ordination, and control of military forces.

Concept

A notion or statement of an idea, expressing how something might be done or accomplished, that may lead to an accepted procedure.

Concept of Operations

A clear and concise statement that expresses the military commander's intentions on the use of forces, time and space to achieve his mission, objectives, and end state.

Conflict

A struggle or clash between alliances, individual states or factions within a state to achieve political objectives. When military force is used, the conflict becomes an armed conflict.

Contingency

An unforecasted or chance situation which may require a military response.

Contingency Operation Plan

An operation plan for contingencies that can reasonably be anticipated in a specific geographical area. A mechanism to address a potential future event or circumstance based on known or assumed planning. See branch and sequel plans.

Course of Action

An option that would accomplish or is related to the accomplishment of a mission.
factors.

Culmination

Culmination is that point in an operation when the force can no longer successfully continue operations. It has both offensive and defensive implications.

Decisive Points

Decisive points are desired effects to be produced in time, space or in the information environment and are logically arranged along a line of operation so they can be successfully integrated and applied. The achievement of successive decisive points while result in the successful achievement of the objective.

Deliberate Planning

Deliberate planning is not subject to the immediate pressures of time or prevailing threats. Deliberate planning consists of initiating and developing plans in anticipation of a known or anticipated future event or circumstance.

Endstate

The political and/or military situation to be attained at the end of an operation, which indicates that the objective[s have] been achieved.

Flexibility

The ability to adapt to unforeseen factors ranging from pre-emptive enemy actions, lack of resources or evolving political direction. In planning this is catered to by incorporation branch or sequel plans into the operational design of a campaign.

Information Operations

Actions taken in support of national objectives that influence an adversary's decision makers by affecting other's information and/or information systems while exploiting and protecting one's own information and/or information systems and those of our friends and allies.

Intensity

The level of effort assigned in support of a commitment commensurate with its overall importance.

Lines of Operations

Lines of operations define critical paths of effort in time and space and are designed to sequentially and logically achieve desired effects or battle capabilities leading to a designated endstate. They help a commander ensure that the critical activities required to achieve objectives are fully synchronized and integrated.

Manoeuvre

To manoeuvre is to seek to attain a position of advantage in respect to the opposition from which force can be threatened or applied. At the operational level of war this refers to where an adversary cannot focus appropriate combat power or attention. It also speaks to the agility of a commander's mental faculties and how he applies his knowledge to leverage the operating environment to his best advantage.

Military Strategy

That component of national or multi-national strategy that presents the manner in which military power should be developed and applied to achieve national objectives or those of a group of nations.

Objective
A clearly defined and obtainable goal for a military operation and can involve seizing a terrain feature, neutralizing an enemy's force or capability or achieving some other desired outcome that is essential to the commander's plan and towards which the operation is directed

Operational Art

The skill of employing military forces to attain strategic objectives in a theatre of war or theatre of operations through the design, organization and conduct of campaigns and major operations.

Operational Command

The authority granted to a commander to assign missions or tasks to subordinate commanders, to deploy units, to reassign forces and to retain or delegate operational and/or tactical control as may be deemed necessary. It does not of itself include responsibility for administration or logistics. OPCOM may also be used to denote the forces assigned to a commander.

Operational Level of War

The level of war at which campaigns and major operations are planned, conducted and sustained to accomplish strategic objectives within theatres or areas of operations.

Operation Planning Process

A coordinated staff process used by a commander to determine the best method of accomplishing assigned tasks and to direct the action necessary to accomplish the mission.
Propaganda

Any information, ideas, doctrine or special appeals disseminated to influence the opinions, emotions attitudes or behaviour of any specified group in order to benefit the sponsor either directly or indirectly.

Requirements

A demand for new or changed equipment, maintenance of equipment, logistics support, information, or personnel.

Routine Operations

Routine operations are force employment activities that are normally recurring in nature and can usually be planned for and programmed.

Sequel Plan

A type of contingency plan based upon the probable outcomes of current operations and for which planning must be undertaken for the purposes of allocating and prioritizing resources.

Strategic Direction

Translation of policy direction into a framework for the application of resources needed for the defence of national interests.

Strategic Level of War

The level of war at which a nation or group of nations determines national or alliance security objectives and develops and uses national resources to accomplish those objectives.
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Support

The action of a force, or portion thereof, which aids, protects, complements, or sustains any other force.

Sustainment

The requirement for a military force to maintain its operational capability for the duration required to achieve its objectives. Sustainment consists of the continued supply of consumables, and the replacement of combat losses and non-combat attrition of equipment and personnel.

Synchronization

The arrangement of military actions in time, space and purpose to produce maximum combat power at a decisive place and time.

Tactical Command

The authority delegated to a commander to assign tasks to forces under his command for the accomplishment of the mission assigned by higher authority.

Tactical Control

The detailed and, usually, local direction and control of movements or manoeuvre necessary to accomplish missions or tasks assigned.

Tactical Level of War

The level of war at which battles and engagements are planned and executed to accomplish military objectives assigned to tactical units or task forces.

Task

An activity which contributes to the achievement of a mission.

Tempo

Tempo is the rate or rhythm of activity relative to the opposition, within tactical engagements and battles and between major operations.

Theatre of Operations

That area within a theatre of war within which operations are directed toward a common strategic objective.

Theatre of War

The continental territory, including adjoining sea areas and corresponding air space, in which a war is conducted. Operations in a theatre of war are invariably

joint and usually combined. A theatre of war normally comprises several theatres of operations.