



## FORGING PURPOSE: ALIGNING STRUCTURE, EMPLOYMENT, AND SOLDIERS WITHIN THE ROYAL CANADIAN ARMoured CORPS

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### JCSP 50

#### Service Paper

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# **FORGING PURPOSE: ALIGNING STRUCTURE, EMPLOYMENT, AND SOLDIERS WITHIN THE ROYAL CANADIAN ARMoured CORPS**

## **AIM**

1. This service paper highlights the importance for the Royal Canadian Armoured Corps (RCAC) to elicit a sense of identity and purpose that meets the needs of the Canadian Army (CA), as it re-aligns its structure, roles, and future employment of armoured units and subunits.

## **INTRODUCTION**

2. Through decades of task-tailored force employment (FE), de-synchronized force development (FD), and resource limitations, the RCAC lost its identity and purpose. Its ability to respond to large-scale combat operations (LSCO) has diminished. Leopard 2 centralization, delays in the acquisition of the Light Armoured Vehicle (LAV) 6.0 reconnaissance and surveillance system (LRSS) variant, and multiple changes to Army Reserve (ARes) FD have created further imbalances between armoured units across the Regular Force (RegF) and ARes. After acquiring the Tactical Armoured Patrol Vehicle (TAPV), the RCAC needed to develop a clear vision, while redefining its force structures and employment.<sup>1</sup> Operational and tactical commanders have grown uncertain regarding armoured employment, while armoured soldiers have no clear identity or purpose. Accordingly, the RCAC must create a unified purpose that supports the future needs of the Canadian Army (CA) and the Government of Canada (GC).

3. Finding purpose within the RCAC is not a new problem. From post-Second World War to the Afghanistan War, the RCAC has found itself with a hybrid fleet of armoured fighting vehicles (AFVs) and tanks. The Cougar AFV was adopted as a tank-trainer in the 1970s, permitting RCAC units and subunits to continue to train tank doctrine in a resource limited environment.<sup>2</sup> Prior to the Afghanistan War and with the CA too small to require divisional reconnaissance or cavalry, the RCAC was satisfied to focus on medium reconnaissance at the Brigade level and became experts in this role. In recent history, the Corps experimented with adopting cavalry concepts that were vehicle or platform neutral; though, these trials failed to acknowledge the distinctness between cavalry and armour, and that the two separate functions could co-exist within the RCAC.<sup>3</sup>

4. The Canadian Army Doctrine Note (CADN) 23-01 announces the Corps' shift from tank and reconnaissance centric employment to unified cavalry roles. It disseminates important changes to armour doctrine and set the condition for revisions to the Armoured Regiment in Battle, a supporting doctrine to Land Operations and Brigade

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<sup>1</sup> Vladimir Kessia, "The Role of Armoured Reconnaissance within the Canadian Army," *Canadian Military Journal* 22, no. 2 (Spring, 2022), 17.

<sup>2</sup> Bryce Simpson, "A Perspective on Cavalry: Re-Examining the Mounted Arm for the Future," *Canadian Army Journal* 19, no. 3 (December 26, 2022), 10.

<sup>3</sup> Bryce Simpson, "A Perspective on Cavalry: Re-Examining the Mounted Arm for the Future," 24.

Tactics.<sup>4</sup> While the CADN provides new terminology and outlines cavalry employment concepts, future doctrine will amplify the employment and capabilities of Armoured units and subunits. The CADN informs future FD, acquisitions, and the employment of cavalry within LSCO.<sup>5</sup> This service paper focuses on immediate and long-term structures, employment, and personnel aspects of CADN 23-01 that must be aligned to create a future RCAC that has purpose, is unified, and contributes meaningfully to CA operations.

## DISCUSSION

### Structures

5. Supporting doctrine, the Armoured Regiment in Battle and Ground Manoeuvre Reconnaissance, establish unique force structures across the three RegF units. Having never been resourced in practice, the structure of The Tank Regiment<sup>6</sup> and a Heavy Armoured Cavalry Regiment<sup>7</sup>, as per the CADN, are virtually identical. Although the reconnaissance unit structure is not explicitly outlined in Ground Manoeuvre Reconnaissance, the subunit structure of current doctrinal reconnaissance subunits is much different than what is specified in CADN 23-01; particularly, the adaptation of four cavalry subunits with four troops each, in lieu of larger subunits and troops within previous doctrinal reconnaissance units.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, having three identical RegF units within the RCAC creates unity.

6. The revised structure outlined by CADN 23-01 sees all three RegF units adopting a close to identical structure of four square armoured cavalry squadrons supported by a robust Combat Service Support Squadron and a Regimental Headquarters (RHQ). The only major difference corresponds with combat support elements, particularly close reconnaissance, multi-domain (including unmanned aerial systems), assault, and anti-armour troops.<sup>9</sup> In general, the force structures within CADN 23-01 set the conditions required to unify the RCAC, regardless of vehicle type or variant.

7. The aspirational order of battle (ORBAT) in CADN 23-01 cannot be resourced in the near-term and will likely falter in the long-term unless additional human, equipment, and financial resources are invested. Force sustainment (FS) is also a consideration given current limitations and the identified need to grow this capacity within both the RegF and ARes. An immediate increase in resources is unlikely to occur due to budgetary and political restraints. Recruiting continues to be problematic and will unlikely see the RCAC increase its trained effective strength (TES) beyond its current establishment. Further, limited funding is available for large scale procurement projects within the

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<sup>4</sup> Canadian Armed Forces, *Canadian Army Doctrine Note 23-01 The Armoured Regiment in Battle* (Kingston, ON: Army Doctrine Centre, 2023), 6.

<sup>5</sup> Canadian Armed Forces, *Canadian Army Doctrine Note 23-01 The Armoured Regiment in Battle*, 5.

<sup>6</sup> Canadian Armed Forces, *B-GL-305-001/FT-001 The Armoured Regiment in Battle* (Army Doctrine and Tactics Board, 1990), Figure 2-1.

<sup>7</sup> Canadian Armed Forces, *Canadian Army Doctrine Note 23-01 The Armoured Regiment in Battle*, 13.

<sup>8</sup> Canadian Armed Forces, *B-GL-394-002/FP-001 Ground Manoeuvre Reconnaissance* (Kingston, ON: Canadian Army Doctrine and Training Centre, 2015), 2A-1-1.

<sup>9</sup> Canadian Armed Forces, *Canadian Army Doctrine Note 23-01 The Armoured Regiment in Battle*, 11.

RCAC, as the CAF is prioritizing the development of capabilities in response to future pan-domain security threats and GC international obligations.

8. Strong Secure Engaged (SSE) identifies the need to invest in war-fighting capabilities including anti-tank guided missile systems; however, anti-armour weapons are not listed as a new investment initiative.<sup>10</sup> On the contrary, remotely piloted systems are included as a resourced initiative, specifically armed aerial systems that are surveillance and precision strike capable.<sup>11</sup> Not apparent within CADN 23-01 is the GC recent commitment for the purchase of armed Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS), or loitering munitions, along with portable anti-tank guided missile (ATGM) systems. These new capabilities are reportedly intended to reside within the RCAC. While the GC commitment to purchase portable ATGM systems for use in Latvia will bridge a capability gap<sup>12</sup>, it is not the modular or mountable system required of an armoured anti-armour troop. The GC also announced the purchase of armed aerial systems, but these are intended to be operated by the Royal Canadian Air Forces (RCAF)<sup>13</sup> and are not systems that are an ideal fit for the RCAC.

9. Allied and NATO nations have adopted a combined-arms approach to resourcing its cavalry units and subunits. The structure of the British Armoured Cavalry Regiments incorporates many of the same capabilities captured by the Light/Medium Armoured Cavalry Regiment at CADN 23-01; however, the British model is reliant on the infantry and engineers to force generate (FG) dismounted, sniper, and sapper capabilities.<sup>14</sup> The United States Stryker Brigade Combat Team Cavalry Squadron is another combined arms approach to cavalry that incorporates the infantry and artillery as part of its force structure.<sup>15</sup> Within the Canadian cavalry structure, the RCAC should consider looking to the other combat arms to source assault and UAV capabilities when required, versus doing so internally.

10. The RCAC should refine its structure such that the three RegF can meet the needs of the CA, with augmentation and interoperable groupings from the ARes. Operational outputs must be considered, both in support of short-term North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) obligations and what the GC and the CAF are likely to contribute in the future. Ideally, incorporating current capabilities and roles agnostic of vehicle platforms will also ensure that the RCAC of tomorrow can easily adapt to future vehicles regardless if they are light, medium, or heavy AFVs. This should inform the future ORBAT of the RCAC in a manner and gives soldiers a sense of purpose and direction, and unites the Corps where possible, as it works to achieve its desired end state.

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<sup>10</sup> Department of National Defence, *Strong Secure Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy* (2017), 36.

<sup>11</sup> Department of National Defence, *Strong Secure Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy*, 73.

<sup>12</sup> Department of National Defence, *Minister Blair Announces Measures to Strengthen Canada's Military Presence in Latvia* (2023).

<sup>13</sup> Murray Brewster, "Canadian Military Buying Armed Drones for \$2.49B," (CBC News, December 19, 2023).

<sup>14</sup> Bryce Simpson, "A Perspective on Cavalry: Re-Examining the Mounted Arm for the Future," 12.

<sup>15</sup> Bryce Simpson, "A Perspective on Cavalry: Re-Examining the Mounted Arm for the Future," 15.

## Employment

11. The employment of armoured units and subunits has varied across the CA. In recent years, armoured units have formed Battle Group HQ while on exercise and on operations. Employed in tank, reconnaissance, rear area security, direct fire roles, armoured subunits have filled many purposes during the past decade at the Brigade and Battle Group level. According to current doctrine, tank subunits are expected to conduct eight primary tasks<sup>16</sup> while reconnaissance subunits are assigned 11 primary tasks with numerous subsets.<sup>17</sup> CADN 23-01 has combined these tactical tasks into a comprehensive list of 19 tasks that armoured cavalry forces may perform.<sup>18</sup> If the intent of the cavalry model is to enhance fundamentals of employment such as dispersion and concentration, aggressiveness, or sustainment, then further transition is required as part of RCAC modernization. The risk is matching these concepts with current FE expectations, without simply adding two supporting doctrines to develop a combined cavalry concept.

12. With the expansion of Operation REASSURANCE from a Battle Group to a Brigade Group, the demand for RCAC commitments has increased.<sup>19</sup> The RCAC will be responsible to FG one tank subunit (minus) and one reconnaissance subunit (minus), for a minimum total of 160 armoured personnel on a persistent basis.<sup>20</sup> Although the structures of these subunits loosely align with those contained within CADN 23-01, the purpose of these subunits are not cavalry generic and align with those tasks contained in the current Armoured Regiment in Battle and Ground Manoeuvre Reconnaissance.

13. The Operation REASSURANCE tank squadron (minus) is capable of achieving its purpose with two troops of four Leopard 2 main battle tanks and a squadron HQ. The capability and employment of the medium reconnaissance squadron (minus) as a Brigade Group capability is hindered. Adopting the unified cavalry structure, the reconnaissance squadron (minus) is comprised of two troops of four Light Armoured Vehicles in addition to two UAS detachments in the TAPV.<sup>21</sup> The reconnaissance squadron has limited capacity to support more than four tasks at any given time. The reduced structure also limits its ability to complete most cavalry tasks as outlined by CADN 23-01. Pre-emptively changing armoured force structures and tasks has impacted FG for Operation REASSURANCE. At all levels, expectations differ between RegF Brigade Commanders, the RCAC, and NATO.

14. Applying Canadian Army TES metrics to include those who are non-deployable<sup>22</sup>, sustaining armoured FG for Operation REASSURANCE will be challenging. Using current TES statistics and assuming 20% ARes integration, Operation REASSURANCE would see 70% of the RCAC's total RegF and 16% of its ARes deploy every three years. If changed from current six-month rotations to nine-month rotations,

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<sup>16</sup> Canadian Armed Forces, *Canadian Army Doctrine Note 23-01 The Armoured Regiment in Battle*, 21.

<sup>17</sup> Canadian Armed Forces, *B-GL-394-002/FP-001 Ground Manoeuvre Reconnaissance*, 2-1-6 to 2-1-7.

<sup>18</sup> Canadian Armed Forces, *Canadian Army Doctrine Note 23-01 The Armoured Regiment in Battle*, 10-11.

<sup>19</sup> Department of National Defence, *Roadmap - Scaling the EFP Latvia Battle Group to Brigade* (2023).

<sup>20</sup> Marc Kieley, "20230720-U-FCE-eFP Bde TOE Draft" (January 22, 2024).

<sup>21</sup> Marc Kieley, "20230720-U-FCE-eFP Bde TOE Draft".

<sup>22</sup> Canadian Army, *Army G1 Metrics Trained Effective Strength (TES) by Branch* (January 31, 2024).

the percentage of the RCAC deployed every three years would fall to 48% and 11% respectively. Although increased deployments for RegF and ARes armoured soldiers will enhance their sense of pride and purpose, attempting to implement RCAC modernization efforts that are not aligned with the requirements of FE will adversely impact these positive gains for the officers and soldiers of the RCAC.

## People

15. The Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) has identified via exit and retention surveys several areas that have resulted in high attrition or low retention over the past decade. Among the top reasons for members choosing to leave the CAF include job dissatisfaction, career progression, occupation dissatisfaction, and lack of meaningful, satisfying, or challenging work.<sup>23</sup> As the RCAC modernizes its structures and roles, soldiers will be faced with many challenges that may impact their total fitness.

16. According to CADN 23-01, the three RegF units require approximately 1950 positions for armoured officers and soldiers combined, not accounting for institutional positions. The current TES of RegF armoured officers is 96% and 81% for armoured soldiers, and 1730 of 2060 RCAC positions are filled which include all RegF units and institutional postings.<sup>24</sup> Despite increased recruitment and retention efforts, the number of RegF officers and soldiers at TES is remaining stable, with limited growth. The ARes is experiencing a TES of 85% for armoured officers and 60% for armoured soldiers. Not to mention the unequal distribution of armoured ARes across the CA divisions, low ARes TES will impact their ability to sustain 20% integration for operations.<sup>25</sup> The number of personnel required to meet doctrinal ORBATs is not sustainable in the near future, especially given the tempo and personnel demands of Operation REASSURANCE.

17. Notwithstanding improved deployment opportunities as a job satisfier, increasing the requirement for the RCAC to FG further unique capabilities will lead to decreased unification and purpose within the Corps. Armoured officers and soldiers are the CA experts on mobility and firepower. This lends itself to tank, reconnaissance, cavalry, and mounted anti-tank roles and tasks. Conversely, tasks such as assault and multi-domain (UAS) are better suited for the infantry and artillery respectively, whose roles are more aligned with a combined-arms structure approach to cavalry. The RCAC must carefully choose to FG capabilities internally that do not align with current career progression and expectations; short-term, these niche opportunities may serve to motivate soldiers, but in the long-term it will hinder their development as mobility and firepower experts.

18. The CAF retention strategy involves synchronizing comprehensive force management (FM) policies such as revised CAF Human Resource (HR) strategies, Adaptive Career Path, Canadian Army Modernization Strategy (CAMS), and Full-Time Summer Employment.<sup>26</sup> The RCAC should leverage these strategies as armoured

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<sup>23</sup> Department of National Defence, *Canadian Armed Forces Retention Strategy* (2022), 69.

<sup>24</sup> Canadian Army, *Army G1 Metrics Trained Effective Strength (TES) by Branch*.

<sup>25</sup> Canadian Army, *Army G1 Metrics Trained Effective Strength (TES) by Branch*.

<sup>26</sup> Department of National Defence, *Canadian Armed Forces Retention Strategy*, 20.

doctrine is rewritten, new systems are onboarded, and armoured roles refined. Research within HR Management demonstrate that members will be organizationally invested if their work matters and they have a shared purpose.<sup>27</sup> Creating unity and a sense of purpose within the RCAC will enhance retention and reduce unhealthy attrition.

19. With differing streams and career paths within the future RCAC, HRM strategy will need to evolve to include a more robust and flexible system of talent management. Employee value can be created through eliciting growth as both a professional and person, and developing a sense of meaningful work.<sup>28</sup> A contributing factor to effective employee engagement and healthy retention, career management processes in the future RCAC must align with changes to armoured structures and employment, as well as the CA Managed Readiness System.

## **CONCLUSION**

20. Finding purpose within the RCAC is nothing new, particularly within a constrained environment where the CA finds itself needing to fill major capability gaps with fewer resources. As the Corps rewrites its doctrine and realigns its structures and roles, it is imperative that current and near-term FE needs are considered, and the impacts on its members are assessed in detail. RCAC modernization is essential to preserving the Corps' identity. The RCAC must create a unified purpose, while remaining cognizant of continued resource constraints and the requirements of the CAF and the GC.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

21. As the RCAC makes significant changes to its doctrine under the guidance of the Director RCAC, it should develop a long-term strategic outlook and business plan in parallel. Doing so will enhance the Corps alignment within the CA, its campaign plans, and SSE over a 10 to 15-year horizon. Specifically, this armoured modernization campaign design must analyze, synchronize, and incorporate future needs across all functional areas (FD, FM, FG, FE, and FS). While doctrine can remain aspirational in nature, the Director RCAC should initiate the development of this separate horizon planning document that captures the realities of resource limitations, operations, commitments to NATO, as well as the health of the RCAC and its members.

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<sup>27</sup> Jordan Turner, *Employees Seek Personal Value and Purpose at Work. Be Prepared to Deliver* (March 29, 2023).

<sup>28</sup> Jordan Turner, *Employees Seek Personal Value and Purpose at Work. Be Prepared to Deliver*.



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