



A LONG-RANGE SOLUTION FOR ARTILLERY BATTERY COMMANDERS IN THE CANADIAN ARMY

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JCSP 50

Service Paper

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A LONG-RANGE SOLUTION FOR ARTILLERY BATTERY COMMANDERS IN THE CANADIAN ARMY

AIM

1. The current version of the Artillery Battery Commander's (BC) course trains selected officers to conduct tactical-level operations but does not holistically train course candidates on their role as leaders within the Canadian Army (CA). The focus on fire planning and its integration into manoeuvre is a small aspect of the job of a BC, and one which most BCs will spend a limited amount of time doing (if at all) during their tenure in sub-unit command. This presents an opportunity for the Royal Canadian Artillery (RCA) to re-look at how it produces future leaders who can support the CA, the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) and its people at higher levels. This paper will discuss recommendations for the BC course to improve the courseware so that the RCA can produce leaders who are not only capable of leading at the tactical level but can also make valuable contributions outside the RCA.

INTRODUCTION

2. This service paper examines the current state of the RCA's BC course and the leaders it produces for the CA. The current focus of the BC course is tactical in nature – it produces officers who know how to conduct a fire plan at the Battle Group (BG) level in support of a manoeuvre force, and this is achieved through the instruction given by Royal Canadian Artillery course staff (and sometimes other students) and evaluated in a live or simulated environment. There is little focus on leading people, or how an Artillery officer can contribute outside the RCA.

3. The need for leaders who understand people and how to lead them is highlighted in the Canadian government's White Paper *Strong, Secure, Engaged*, as well as Line of Effort 2, Human Dimension, of the *Canadian Army Modernization Strategy*.¹ This paper suggests a comprehensive review be conducted on what a sub-unit commander in the RCA needs to be able to do, both in garrison and in a tactical setting. It will present several options that could achieve this, including allocating more time to understanding the human dimension of leadership. Additionally, this paper will discuss an approach to training that shifts from a focus on fire planning to a combined-arms approach. This includes allocating instructors from outside the Royal Canadian Artillery School. Finally, the context of annual business planning will be discussed to provide a more well-rounded officer output. This can contribute to staff and command beyond the artillery sub-unit level. Any changes made to the course must be relatively low cost, not add extra training days to the curriculum, and should limit staff effort where it relates to changing the Training Plan. The options proposed aim to achieve this but should not be considered an exacting list of changes required.

¹ Defence, "Strong Secure Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy," 12; "Advancing With Purpose: The Canadian Army Modernization Strategy," 37.

DISCUSSION

Focus on Leading People

4. In the Qualification Standard/Training Plan (QSTP) for BC's course, none of the 6 performance objectives (PO) focus on leading people at sub-unit or unit level.² Sub-unit commanders must be trained in conducting tactical activities, but their leadership duties within the sub-unit and unit require more time and attention. In fact, the challenges of leading in garrison life far outweigh the tactical aspects of an Artillery BC, which can be comparatively easier. By investing more time in developing leadership skills, we can help ensure that sub-unit commanders are truly prepared to lead their teams to success in any situation, not just on exercise.

5. The current course is taught by instructors of the Royal Canadian Artillery School (RCAS) who are either equal or subordinate in rank to the course candidates, and who may have no experience in leading soldiers at the sub-unit level. Tasking current and former unit and sub-unit commanders to teach the course would provide more opportunities for upcoming leaders to learn from those who have experience in garrison and on operations, conducting the jobs that the course candidates are expected to undertake. Allowing future leaders to learn from real-world experience would be a far greater experience for the course candidates, fostering a culture of mentorship and peer-to-peer learning within the training framework. Pairing candidates with experienced mentors who have successfully navigated the intricacies of command at both the unit and sub-unit levels can provide invaluable insights and guidance.³ This mentorship not only facilitates knowledge transfer but also cultivates a sense of camaraderie and mutual support among aspiring leaders. It also teaches upcoming sub-unit commanders how to reciprocate this mentorship to their future subordinates. It is acknowledged that assigning these senior officer mentors may divert resources away from their primary duties and may have impacts on readiness and effectiveness, the prioritizing of professional development of future leaders demonstrates a commitment to fostering a culture of excellence and continuous improvement, aligned with broader organizational goals and may contribute to long-term success. It is also acknowledged that there may be costs associated with bringing these leaders in, but this should be viewed as an investment in the future, cultivating a more capable and effective leadership cadre, ultimately benefitting the organization. Options such as a mix of in-person and virtual attendance options can also help mitigate travel costs while still providing valuable mentorship opportunities.

6. There is scope to expand PO 099, which is a standard PO across many courses conducted at the Combat Training Centre, to include the above-stated experienced leaders in conducting vignette-based training, based on real-world situations that they have encountered. This would expand the knowledge base of the candidates rather than relying on canned discussions that have pre-arranged solutions. While no two situations are likely to ever be the same, there is enormous value to be added by leaning on the lived

² "Training Plan - DP3 Battery Commander," 2-4/5-2-5/5.

³ Gleiman and Gleiman, "Mentoring in the Military," 67.

experiences of previous commanders. This PO offers a unique opportunity to take a proactive approach towards addressing harmful behaviours experienced by soldiers.⁴ By expanding the learning opportunities and educating the leaders about the available services, we can provide the necessary support to our soldiers in need. This would align with the Director of Artillery's Culture of Modernization focus area.⁵ Integrating scenario-based training can significantly enhance the cognitive agility of future leaders. By simulating realistic scenarios derived from real-world military operations, candidates can develop critical thinking abilities and refine their decision-making processes under the guidance of seasoned leaders. Moreover, exposure to diverse scenarios encourages creativity and fosters a proactive mindset, enabling leaders to anticipate and effectively address unforeseen challenges.

Combined Arms Integration

7. One of the aims of the BC course is to train selected officers with the skills necessary to provide advice to Battle Group (BG) commanders on the seamless integration of joint fires into their manoeuvre plan.⁶ This training is vital for ensuring effective coordination among various elements within the BG, particularly in supporting manoeuvres with fires. The Canadian Army vital ground is the ability to conduct combined arms training to enable the force generation of soldiers in a challenging, realistic training environment to deal with all possibilities of the future operation environment.⁷ For the BC course to have realistic training that aims to hold this vital ground, instructors from the Armoured and Infantry corps must take an active role in the development of future BCs, to ensure a realistic, combined-arms take on the integration of fires into manoeuvre plans.

8. Throughout the course, students engage in exercises where they are instructed and assessed by RCAS staff on executing a BG-level fire plan to support manoeuvre. These exercises are conducted live or in simulation and do not incorporate members of the Armour or Infantry in the development or executing phases. The evaluations are generally carried out by Instructor-in-Gunnery (IG) students, who are Captains who typically lack formal education on BG-level tactics. These evaluations are supervised by a BC course-qualified individual (another Captain or Major from the RCAS), who has the final authority on the evaluation. However, the absence of manoeuvre commanders, particularly those with combined arms qualifications and experience, during these exercises restricts the breadth and realism of the training.

9. To address these limitations, it is proposed that the BC course be re-scoped to include manoeuvre commanders (Combat Team Commander-qualified Armoured or Infantry officers), preferably those with Combat Team-level experience, during the exercise components of the course. By including officers from other trades with relevant qualifications and experience, the course can better simulate the complexities of modern,

⁴ "Training Plan - DP3 Battery Commander," 2-099-1/4-4/4.

⁵ Bouckaert, "RCA Modernization Narrative," 8-9.

⁶ "Training Plan - DP3 Battery Commander," 1-1/5.

⁷ "Advancing With Purpose: The Canadian Army Modernization Strategy," 19.

combined arms operations. While an RCAS instructor would still be expected to conduct the evaluation and uphold the expected standards, having the option to leverage the expertise of Armour and Infantry would significantly enhance the course quality and better achieve its intended objectives within aligning with the CA's vital ground. Courseware could also be adapted to include other domains and how they integrate into the battlespace, to include cyber and space. BCs must understand how each domain achieves effects, even at the tactical level.⁸

10. Restructuring the BC course to include manoeuvre commanders would be relatively low-cost and would not require a major overhaul to the TP and would greatly enhance the realism and effectiveness of training in the integration of fires with manoeuvre. This adaptation aligns with the CA's objective of conducting combined arms training in challenging environments to prepare for pan-domain operations. By addressing this limitation, the BC course can better deliver officers to the field force with the skills necessary to advise BG commanders, ultimately contributing to an enhanced and more effective combined arms grouping within the CA. While the integration of manoeuvre commanders into the BC course may require additional resources in terms of personnel and time, these must be weighed against the benefits to readiness and effectiveness, the exposure to the complexities of combined arms operations, and the changing character of modern warfare which justify the investment in change.

Annual Planning replaces Exercise Planning

11. Enhancing the BC course to include comprehensive training in annual planning, including financial management, holds immense potential for the institution as a whole. There is a need for Battery Commanders to understand the aspects of annual planning, as they will be involved in the creation of the unit annual plan and will then be required to conduct their own sub-unit plan.

12. One of the primary recommendations put forth is the inclusion of instruction and assessment related to annual planning. Currently, there exists a gap in the curriculum regarding the understanding and execution of annual planning responsibilities. Battery Commanders play a crucial role in the creation of unit annual plans and subsequently conducting their sub-unit plans. Therefore, future leaders must be adequately prepared to fulfil these duties. Incorporating a Performance Objective focused on annual planning would provide students with the necessary guidance and framework to develop effective plans that align with unit objectives and priorities.

13. The proposed evaluation component seeks to enhance practical learning by introducing a planning cycle exercise into the course. This would require students to develop sub-unit training plans based on realistic scenarios and resources provided, including unit operating plans, budgets, and command planning guidance. By engaging in this hands-on exercise, students would gain valuable experience in conducting comprehensive analyses and creating actionable plans that address the training needs of their sub-units. Moreover, the exercise could be conducted either individually or in

⁸ "Pan-Domain Force Employment Concept: Prevailing in a Dangerous World," 19–20.

teams, mirroring real-world scenarios where collaboration and teamwork are essential for mission success. A similar assessment already exists within other RCAS courses which could be used as a baseline in developing this module, reducing staff effort in conducting the modifications.

14. In addition to annual planning, the proposed enhancements also emphasize the importance of financial management education for leaders in the CAF. Despite the requirement for officers to complete online financial management courses, there is often an absence of contextual learning within the current courses. To address this gap, professional development sessions conducted by finance experts during the BC course are recommended concurrent to the above-proposed exercise. These sessions would provide future financial authority holders with valuable insights into the intricacies of financial management within a military unit. By integrating financial management education into the BC course, officers would be better equipped to manage budgets at the sub-unit level, thereby ensuring effective resource allocation and utilization. It is understood that adding finance lessons onto a course that is already full could potentially overload the schedule and detract from other critical areas of training and may strain low-density trades such as finance clerks (or their civilian equivalents). By carefully managing the schedule and capitalizing on space made available by finding efficiencies elsewhere through a review of the whole course, it is possible to ensure that officers receive this training within the course timelines.

15. Moreover, taking a holistic approach to educating future Artillery officers on annual business planning is expected to have a broader impact beyond the tactical level.⁹ As officers progress in their careers and assume staff and command roles at the operational level, understanding how operating plans are created and how budgets are managed becomes increasingly important. By equipping officers with comprehensive skills in these areas earlier in their careers, the proposed enhancements aim to produce more well-rounded officers capable of effectively navigating the complexities of a military career.

CONCLUSION

16. Enhanced investment in RCA majors promises numerous benefits as it provides future Artillery leaders with the necessary tools and resources to succeed in the military arena. The BC course should be designed to equip the officers with the knowledge, skills, and attitude required to lead effectively in today's complex and dynamic operating environment, and not just conduct a tactical-level activity. By making meaningful modifications to this course, the CA can expect to have a stronger and more successful cadre of officers capable of meeting the challenges of modern warfare.

17. Moreover, the proposed enhancements to the BC course represent an investment in the future of the CAF. These enhancements will ensure that the institution remains adaptive, resilient, and prepared to meet the evolving demands of the future operating

⁹ Eyre and Matthews, "CDS/DM Directive for CAF Reconstitution."

environment. The CAF is a dynamic institution that needs to keep evolving with the changing times to remain relevant and effective.

18. In conclusion, investing in the modifications to the BC course is a wise decision that the CA should pursue. It will not only benefit the individual officers who attend but also the entire institution. The CA can expect to have a more capable, confident, and effective team of officers who can operate and lead in a complex and dynamic operating environment.

RECOMMENDATION

Comprehensive Review

19. Conduct a working group that includes battery commanders and commanding officers from outside of the RCAS to gain feedback on what is required to know as a sub-unit commander in the RCA, with a focus on outputs that provide value beyond the RCA and the tactical setting of fire-planning.

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