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CANADIAN FORCES COLLEGE / COLLEGE DES FORCES CANADIENNES

JCSP 36 / PCEMI 36

MASTER OF DEFENCE STUDIES PROGRAMME

**RE-ENGINEERING ARMoured RECONNAISSANCE:**

**COUNTERINSURGENCY AND BEYOND**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Transformation of an armed force is no simple matter nor should it be taken lightly. Modern high-tech equipment is expensive to buy, expensive to use and expensive to maintain. Motivation for transformation is normally stimulated from either a new perceived threat, or antiquated equipment and doctrine. The Royal Canadian Armoured Corps entered the transformation world on the latter stimulus more or less kicking and screaming with the introduction of the Coyote Reconnaissance Vehicle. The vehicle was the latest in high-tech surveillance equipment and fundamentally changed the way reconnaissance was conducted. Essentially the dismount requirement of reconnaissance was replaced with the electro-optic ability to stand off at a distance in order to observe and report. The basic fundamentals changed, yet the doctrine and structure did not. The Armoured Corps has struggled with this issue for nearly 18 years. This paper will clearly demonstrate that the Royal Canadian Armoured Corps must transform its reconnaissance forces in order to maintain its relevance and exclusivity in the Canadian Army order of battle.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The debate to transform within the Royal Canadian Armoured Corps (RCAC) is hotly contested with both sides providing convincing, rational arguments. The issues surrounding this debate are complex and require decisions today that will potentially affect Canadian soldiers fighting wars decades from now. In order to properly understand today's climate and future trends, it is necessary to study the prevailing literature on the subject and determine what is the best way ahead for the RCAC. There

is tremendous debate within the United States (US) Army currently on force structures and future trends. The arguments stem from the US invasion of Iraq and its subsequent occupation. Basically, the large conventional force that was very successful in the invasion phase of the war had tremendous difficulty transitioning to security task, mentoring and nation building. Converting to a light mobile force was problematic and untimely and as a result, the enemy adjusted its tactics and inflicted a terrible toll on US soldiers and Marines. Chapter 1 of this paper will describe in detail the current debate on whether a force should transform in order to combat insurgency, or should it remain a conventional force.

Although the Canadian Army has been fighting a counterinsurgency (COIN) in Afghanistan for over seven years, there has been little new literature produced on the role of reconnaissance (rece) within a counterinsurgency. It is absolutely valid that the role of rece has evolved over the past one hundred years just as the nature of war has evolved. However, best practices and lessons learned of allied forces past and present provide an excellent starting point to examine the role of rece in counterinsurgency and determine, if any, what force structure needs to be adjusted. Any examination of COIN must be based on COIN theory, of which there is plenty. Chapter 2 of this paper will examine COIN theory fundamentals and how they relate to rece operations.

Finally, the rece element of the RCAC received a technological quantum leap when it was issued the Coyote Recec Vehicle in 1996. Essentially, the Army looked to the RCAC to provide surveillance instead of reconnaissance and unfortunately these terms stuck and became part of Canadian Army doctrine and a new lexicon was born.

Under the heading of surveillance, the RCAC struggled with its role and the human dimension of recce, specifically the dismounted element, was forgotten. The new recce soldier was labelled as surveillance, technologically bound and mounted. In 2008, the Chief of Land Staff (CLS) approved the excellent Ground Manoeuvre Reconnaissance publication, which refocused the RCAC recce element on the fundamentals of recce and finally dismissed the surveillance label with which the RCAC was branded. This work, however, was based on existing force structures and did not take into consideration the contemporary operating environment (COE) and present day threats prevalent in COIN. The current structure is based on a two-vehicle patrol being the basic manoeuvre element of any recce organization. The two-vehicle patrol is fundamentally wrong and tactically unsound in the COE as it does not have sufficient soldiers or combat power to operate effectively in isolation. Chapter 3 of this paper proposes a new force structure for RCAC recce sub-units maintaining the current manning cap and vehicle disposition. The new structure will incorporate new technology and capabilities that should be embedded in the RCAC to enhance its operational range.

Although this work is a requirement for the Master of Defence Study (MDS) programme, the motivation of this work is based on 22 years service in the RCAC with the majority of it in recce. The aim of this work is not to criticize past decisions nor minimize the excellent work of recce soldiers in both operations and training. It is the great hope of the author to stimulate professional discussion on the subject and to implement the necessary changes in order to ensure that the RCAC force structure and

operating doctrine are optimized for the COE and provide our soldiers with the greatest opportunity to defeat our nation's enemies in battle.

## **Chapter 1: Force Structure, Conventional Versus Irregular Debate**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Irregular warfare (IW) and specifically counterinsurgency (COIN) warfare has been a hot topic of debate within the military community for several decades. However, the discussion and debate has moved to the forefront since the attacks on the World Trade Center and the deployments of Western militaries to both Iraq and Afghanistan. Military thinkers, as well as academics, have written copious amounts of literature arguing a case on one of two sides of the issue. The core of the arguments is consistent and focus on whether a nation's armed force should be structured in order to combat insurgency or to fight conventionally. This debate is most active within the United States (US) military and all eyes seem to be focused on what, if any, transformation they will undertake.

This Chapter will demonstrate, using the prevailing conventional versus counterinsurgency theories, that the best way for the Canadian Army to meet seen and unforeseen threats in the future is to maintain a conventional force structure. This chapter will first discuss the basis of the existing theories and then focus on this issue in a Canadian context, addressing both the political and military aspects of the argument.

### **BACKGROUND**

One predominant theorist leading the charge for US Army transformation is John A. Nagl, who argues that the US Army was woefully unprepared for both the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts. Institutional foot dragging and slow incorporation of lessons learned only amplified his thesis that the US Army was unable or unwilling to

acknowledge that its structure and training for IW was severely lacking. Nagl notes that “[t]hese changes are hard won: they have been achieved only after years of wartime trials and tribulations that have cost the United States dearly in money, material, and the lives of its courageous service members.”<sup>1</sup> Nagl and his contemporaries, as well, argue that the likelihood of a state on state conflict is relatively low so maintaining a massive conventional army makes little sense. Furthermore, the US Army has had tremendous difficulty adapting its conventional force to operate in the COIN environment which has created a ground swell of criticism and calls for transformation. Any innovation within the army has been developed by bright officers and soldiers, essentially from the bottom up out of necessity and experience at the tactical level and has not been integrated into higher level tactical or operational doctrine. In spite of tremendous academic literature on the subject, the US Army remains subdued on implementing change from the top down. David Ucko reinforces the view that “[t]he US military has often adapted successfully in the field but has failed to institutionalize lessons thus learned at the operation’s close.”<sup>2</sup>

Conversely, Conventional Warfare (CW) theorists, lead by Gian P. Gentile, argue that in spite of the irregular nature of war with non-state actors, the threat of interstate war has not disappeared. The maintenance of a strong conventional force acts as a major deterrent for other nation states that threaten or coerce global peace.

Gentile’s concern is that the focus of potential transformation would shift the focus of

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<sup>1</sup>John A. Nagl, "Let's Win the Wars We're In," *Joint Forces Quarterly* 52 (2009): 20.

<sup>2</sup>David Ucko, "Innovation or Inertia: The US Military and the Learning of Counterinsurgency," *Orbis* (2008): 292.

the armed force from fighting to nation building and that would expose the United States to strategic peril. He states that “[t]his action is not only dangerous; it potentially neglects key aspects of US national security.”<sup>3</sup> It is for these reasons that a responsible nation “must maintain its dominance in interstate war fighting capabilities in order to deter and, if necessary, win such wars.”<sup>4</sup>

Another argument between the two sides is the very nature of battle and the risk of collateral damage. IW theorists argue that the CW way of fighting substantially increases the likelihood of collateral damage and civilian casualties, thus alienating the people from the legitimate government that the coalition is supporting. However, CW theory counters that the argument is a throwback of a gravity (dumb) ammunition era and is no longer appropriate or valid with the integration of precision weapons.

CW theorists argue that the sophistication of modern weapons and munitions that are available to insurgents or terrorists compels soldiers to be operating in platforms that provide the best means to achieve the mission and afford the most safety. The US Army spent billions of dollars retrofitting and up-armouring their light utility truck (Hummer) for operations in Iraq but the insurgents simply placed more explosives in their Improvised Explosive Devices (IED). The use of heavy conventional forces maintained freedom of movement and forced the insurgents to target more vulnerable troops, specifically the ones equipped for IW.

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<sup>3</sup>Gian P. Gentile, "Let's Build an Army to Win all Wars," *Joint Forces Quarterly* (2009): 28.

<sup>4</sup>Kenneth C. Coons and Glenn M Harned, "Irregular Warfare is Warfare," *Joint Forces Quarterly* (2009): 98.

The most compelling argument that the CW camp makes is that this issue is significant enough to merit professional study and debate. Gentile notes that:

The Army officer corps needs to explore this issue beyond the narrow bureaucratic lines of its doctrinal productions process and external influences. It needs to have a debate concerning future missions and structures.<sup>5</sup>

He argues that if there is to be any change, it has to be initiated from within the profession and is not the purview of politicians, theorists or academics.

Clearly, IW is the warfare of choice for insurgents fighting against modern Western nations. Insurgents are looking for the maximum effect for the minimum expenditure and this means attacks beyond the physical plane. Coons and Hamed note that in the 2006 Quadrennial Defence Review (QDR), it is identified that:

. . . our adversaries . . . employ a strategy of physical, economic, and psychological subversion, attrition and exhaustion to undermine and erode the power, influence and will of the United States and its strategic partners.<sup>6</sup>

This reinforces that this debate is not a simple one; that there are many more factors than just the threat itself, including time required to achieve transformation, cost, security as well as consideration of political ramifications should a nation find itself woefully unprepared for the next war.

The last argument in this debate is the concept of strategy. There are many theorists on both sides of the argument that profess that the strategy of CW and IW are

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<sup>5</sup>Gian P. Gentile, "Let's Build an Army to Win all Wars . . .", 28-29.

<sup>6</sup>Kenneth C. Coons and Hamed, Glenn M., "Irregular Warfare is Warfare . . .", 99.

fundamentally different and as such creates the impasse in which this subject has been mired. Colin Gray however provides sage strategic enlightenment on the subject:

War is war and strategy is strategy. The many modes of warfare and tools of strategy are of no significance for the nature of war and strategy...because war and strategy are imperially authoritative concepts that accommodate all relevant modalities, a single general theory of war and strategy explains both regular and irregular warfare.<sup>7</sup>

While the threat may be similar, the political and economic nuances differ from country to country, which reinforces the need for Canadians to examine this argument from their own national perspective, vice that of the US.

Until Canada became involved in Afghanistan, specifically southern Afghanistan, the people of Canada were very satisfied with the mantra of peacekeepers associated with their Armed Forces. It was a palatable role for even the most ardent liberal. Budgets were cut annually and major projects designed to modernize its combat capability were cancelled. In spite of international pressure to modernize and upgrade, the prevailing government allowed the state of its military to decay towards little more than an expeditionary constabulary in what retired Chief of Defence Staff General Rick Hillier has coined the “decade of darkness.”<sup>8</sup> Canada was moving towards a peacekeeping speciality and its combat capability, in both equipment and skills, was suffering. Afghanistan, however, changed all that.

The last five years of war has seen a tremendous acceleration of procurement of the necessary tools to fight in Afghanistan. New tanks, artillery and aircraft are just a

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<sup>7</sup>Colin S. Gray, "Irregular Enemies and the Essence of Strategy: Can the American Way of War Adapt?," *Strategic Studies Institute* (2006), 4.

<sup>8</sup>General Rick Hillier, *A Soldier First, Bullets, Bureaucrats and the Politics of War*, (Toronto: Harper Collins, 2009), 107.

few of the major conventional systems that were required in order to fight this insurgency. Canada was again seen as a country that was taking international security seriously and actively adhering to its multiple alliance responsibilities. Canada was carrying its share of the responsibility and risks in the international security arena and was reaping the benefit of strong relations with its alliance partners. Strong alliance and a positive reputation in the eyes of our largest trading partner can only benefit our economic prospects and thus benefit economic security.

The issue then, with regards to politics, is national strategic stamina. If Canada would transform its forces to specialize in COIN, then it is making the conscious decision to stay involved in a conflict over a period of years.<sup>9</sup> One of the fundamentals of COIN is that “insurgents are strengthened by the belief that a few casualties or a few years will cause adversaries to abandon the conflict.”<sup>10</sup> Staying the course is absolutely vital to success but most liberal democracies in the West become war weary very quickly. The fiscal cost of maintaining a force deployed as well as the physical cost in terms of lives lost and soldiers wounded places a tremendous burden on any elected government and the morale of its citizens. Canada, despite unprecedented support for its forces, cannot and will not be able to maintain the financial and human cost of a protracted conflict, especially if its own shores have not been threatened. From a political perspective then, transformation of the Canadian Forces is not an effective option.

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<sup>9</sup>Colin S. Gray, “Irregular Warfare: One Nature, Many Characters,” *Strategic Studies Quarterly* 1, no. 2 (Winter 2007): 49.

<sup>10</sup>Lt Col (Ret'd)Eliot Cohen, Conrad Crane, Lt Col Jan Horvath, and Lt Col John Nagl, "Principles, Imperatives and Paradoxes of Counterinsurgency," *Military Review* (2006): 51.

Although Canada is the second largest country in the world in terms of land mass, its population, and subsequently, its military force is relatively small. Small armies generally cannot provide the full gamut of capabilities that are inherent to large armies or superpowers. The problem with a small army is that Canada may strive to have every combat capability embedded within its CF, but its limiting factor would be the scale of asset and its ability to deploy and sustain each capability over a period of time. For example, if Canada bought attack helicopters, the scale would be relatively small. Consequently, the attack aviation community would be small and there would be an unsustainable strain on the community to maintain a functional capability overseas in operations. Therefore, small armies, like Canada, try to concentrate on basic capabilities as they are more sustainable.

Canada has established a good reputation for quality in certain capabilities, specifically combat arms troops, and as such, coalition partners do not normally expect nor ask for anything else. Consequently, Canada must rely on its coalition partners to provide certain capabilities while deployed on operations. Helicopter support, close air support and armed Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) are but a few examples of coalition support that Canada generally receives in operations. The coalition's partners understand Canada's limitations, both politically and militarily, but recognize that over time, Canada has also developed some unique unforeseen expertise.

Canada has inadvertently developed tremendous expertise in IW over the last 50 years while operating in the peacekeeping and peace-making business. The skills of dealing with locals and developing relationships at the lowest level are fundamental tenets of IW as well as peacekeeping. As John Ralston Saul notes, “[a] half century

ago, we [Canada] invented something called peacekeeping. It gradually evolved into something called peacemaking, which in turn evolved into dealing with irregular warfare.”<sup>11</sup> Canada has enjoyed tremendous success in this field and continues to develop this capability with the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) and Observer Mentor Liaison Teams (OMLT) in Afghanistan today.

Another key to this debate is the ability for a specific type of force to transition. It is much more efficient for a force that is trained and equipped conventionally to receive appropriate supplementary training in order to conduct counterinsurgency operations. It is virtually impossible to take a force that is solely trained and equipped for counterinsurgency, receive supplementary training, and conduct conventional operations against an aggressive state. The scale and costs of arming a conventional force is staggering and as such is not a viable option. Conventional forces, if necessary, can park the expensive platforms and retrain dismounted. It is for this reason that a multi-purpose, combat capable army is necessary to fill all the roles of potential future conflict, regardless of what the future threat assessment may be. Maintaining a conventional-based armed force is the only way that Canada has the flexibility to contribute in any meaningful way to allies in future conflicts.

If irregular war is the wave of the future and conventional troops are the way to train and prepare, then it is vital that a balance be struck between traditional war fighting skills, like offensive or defensive manoeuvre, and incorporate some fundamentals of COIN what Frank Hoffman calls *hybrid warfare*. Hoffman writes that

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<sup>11</sup>John R.Saul, "The New Era of Irregular Warfare," *Queen's Quarterly* (2004): 428.

“the adversary will most likely present unique combinational or *hybrid* threats specifically targeting [US] vulnerabilities.”<sup>12</sup> As sophistication of the enemy increases, there is no single doctrine or fighting philosophy that will be all encompassing. He notes that

. . . instead of separate challengers with fundamentally different approaches (conventional, irregular or terrorist), we can expect to face competitors who will employ all forms of war and tactics, perhaps simultaneously.<sup>13</sup>

Hybrid warfare bridges the gap between CW and IW advocates. If the next war will combine conventional, irregular and terrorist approaches as Hoffman suggests, then the fundamentals of conventional fighting are absolutely critical to maintain. In ISAF, the main roles of Western forces on the ground are to shape, clear, hold, and build, which are in line with the fundamentals of COIN and the NATO campaign plan. Naturally, it is not possible to achieve each task in every portion of the country simultaneously due to differing conditions on the ground. As such, these conditions necessitate different types of operations taking place throughout with varying degrees of support. If the campaign plan rests on this formula then it is absolutely vital to have the proper tailored force to conduct each task. *Shaping* and *clearing* require the means to overwhelm the insurgents and to utterly defeat them in all aspects of the physical plane. The aim is to place such a cost on their attempts to disrupt military operations that their

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<sup>12</sup>Frank G. Hoffman, "Hybrid Warfare and Challenges," *Joint Forces Quarterly* (2009): 35.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, 35.

losses are no longer sustainable. Loss of fighters and more importantly their equipment will reduce the insurgents to such a state that they will be forced to conduct their insurgency covertly. Subsequently, this produces less overt attacks which harm their legitimacy and their ability to influence, recruit and finance their operations. The heavy lifting, however, of clear and hold tasks remains the bread and butter of conventionally trained and equipped forces.

The difficult part from a command perspective is to identify when an area is sufficiently cleared to begin the COIN fundamentals of *hold* and *build*. In Afghanistan, the ideal scenario is the employment of the Afghan National Army (ANA) to assume this phase. The ANA forces, mentored by specially trained IW advisors, are ideal forces to take over responsibility for the hold and build portion of the ISAF strategy. However, if no forces are available, it is incumbent on the CW elements to assume this role. As there are barely enough forces on the ground to conduct this strategy in the major urban centers, it means that both IW forces working with the ANA, as well as ISAF CW forces will be required to conduct all tasks. The critical factor from a training perspective then becomes how quickly and efficiently a force can transition from conventional war fighting to COIN. Hybrid structure supported by doctrine and training allows for a more transparent conversion between CW and IW and this simplifies the ability for a force to operate across the entire spectrum of the contemporary operating environment. (COE)

## A SPECIALIZED CAPABILITY

The military strategy of developing nation building requires our soldiers to not only act as a constabulary to maintain the stability they fought to achieve, but also as advisors to develop the nation's military infrastructure. Their challenge, in many cases, is building something from nothing. Failing and failed states are notoriously short on military professionals schooled in the operational arts. That said, the lack of experienced senior officers and non-commissioned officers to fill critical positions means that it is again a matter of time to develop a credible force. The essence of time then becomes the strategic element of future conflict in that nation building, like COIN, requires tremendous commitment of time and resources. For example, the Canadian Army invested 29 years in Cyprus<sup>14</sup> and 13 years in Bosnia<sup>15</sup> in order to rebuild national capabilities. Conversely, if nation building is done haphazardly, i.e. forces are trained and equipped to a minimum standard; then the state runs the risk of returning to mayhem and chaos. Finally, if nation building forces stay too long, the host nation becomes too dependent on the false security, and the subsequent false economy that is produced. As well, the fiscal cost to Canada becomes prohibitive and the strategic endurance and national will to support the mission erodes.

The Canadian Army has developed and implemented a comprehensive program to train officers and soldiers on the finer points of mentoring a foreign military.<sup>16</sup> The benefit of this capability is that as the conventional forces are fighting to establish a

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<sup>14</sup> Veterans Affairs Canada. *In the Service of Peace 1947- Present*. March 30, 2006. <http://www.vac-acc.gc.ca/remembers/sub.cfm?source=history/canadianforces/factsheets/cyprus> (accessed March 23, 2010).

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* <http://www.vac-acc.gc.ca/youth/sub.cfm?source=history/canadianforces/factsheets/balkans>

<sup>16</sup> Department of National Defence. *National Defence and the Canadian Forces*. January 5, 2010. <http://comfec-cefcom.forces.gc.ca/pa-ap/ops/fs-fr/omlt-eng.asp> (accessed March 22, 2010).

secure environment, the mentors are already developing an indigenous armed force for the subsequent hold and build phase. This program has been highly successful<sup>17</sup> and serves as an example of the type of capacity that needs to become a permanent fixture to the Canadian order of battle. This capacity also bridges the gap between CW and IW and is a natural evolution of the current trend of conflict. The economy of effort significantly reduces the time factor mitigating national endurance and fiscal costs.

## **CONCLUSION**

All eyes on this debate are on the US Army and what they will do. Clearly any type of transformation they undertake will have a tremendous influence on the structure and training of modern Western armies. That said, based on the arguments of both sides, it is clear that a balance needs to be struck within the US Army to ensure that their fighting forces have the ability to conduct both IW and CW. IW specialization is a luxury that only large armies can afford, however, as even the US Army is experiencing, it cannot be at the expense of the CW component. They need to maintain a large conventional fighting force that provides the deterrence necessary for their strategic security.

With respect to potential IW transformation, Canada does not have the national strategic stamina for a prolonged involvement in an IW conflict. IW specialization requires commitment for the long term and Canada can afford neither the fiscal or physical costs of that type of commitment. Canada, as a small army, must maintain its own strategic security that a multi-purpose conventional force, within a coalition,

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<sup>17</sup> Kristina Davis, "OMLT: Slowly Working Themselves Out of a Job." *The Maple Leaf, Vol 10. Afghanistan Special*, July 2007.

provides. Alliances such as NATO and the North American Aerospace Defence Command, (NORAD) as well, augment Canada's strategic security. IW specialization does not provide the Canadian Forces any new capability but it does remove a significant war fighting capability. A hybrid approach, that is maintaining embedded specialized capabilities and the inclusion of COIN training and doctrine within our mainstream forces, is the only transformation that will be palatable to the Canadian public, both politically and economically.

## **Chapter 2: The Role of Reconnaissance and COIN Fundamentals**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The evolution of Armour reconnaissance tactics and doctrine has seen very little change in the last 60 or so years. Reconnaissance is about as ancient as warfare itself, however the modern manifestation of armour reconnaissance (recce) owes its origins to the mechanization of armies that clashed in World War II. Whether it was the invasion of Poland, France, North Africa, Sicily/Italy, or in the European Theatre of Operations (ETO) following D-Day, the fundamentals of light, highly mobile reconnaissance forces provided timely information on the enemy's disposition and manoeuvre. This type of work required soldiers to be cunning and able to think for themselves in the absence of orders. In many cases, patrols would be given rudimentary orders and then deploy for weeks on end covering the shifting battle lines and picketing enemy formations. The Special Air Service (SAS) origins are initially in this genre of work, however once it was discovered how easily a small and quick force could manoeuvre within the enemy's line of communications, SAS operations took more of a raid and disrupt role for which they are now famous. The relative symmetrical nature of warfare during WWII designed a tactic with which the conventional army was layered along semi-static lines. The role of reconnaissance would be to find the "seams," that is the weak points in the enemy's line in order to press the attack through these lightly defended areas. For all intents and purposes, recce doctrine has consistently followed these same principals ever since, specifically find and report on the enemy. Counterinsurgency operations

add several new dimensions to the battlefield, specifically asymmetrical battle space, indigenous guerrilla forces that are virtually indistinguishable from the population at large and finally environmental advantage. The nature of battle has fundamentally evolved, and as such the role, tactics and doctrine of mounted reconnaissance must fundamentally evolve as well.

## **INSURGENCY STRATEGY AND TACTICS**

In almost all cases of insurgency, the insurgents have a distinct advantage over the counterinsurgents in that they have intimate knowledge of the ground and are able to blend into the indigenous population.

“The strategy of an insurgent movement is built on three simultaneous and interlinked components: 1) force protection (via dispersion, sanctuary, the use of complex terrain, effective counterintelligence, etc.); 2) actions to erode the will, strength and legitimacy of the regime (via violence and political-psychological programs); and, 3) augmentation of resources and support.”<sup>18</sup>

This freedom of movement coupled with knowledge of ground produces the insurgent's most powerful offensive capability, which is the ability to strike at a time and place of their choosing. Ambush and the myriad of Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) are the most effective way in which small light forces can grind down conventional forces and achieve not only tactical gains but effectively weaken operational and strategic will. A good example of this was the Madrid bombing in

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<sup>18</sup>Steven Metz and Raymond Millen, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in the 21st Century: Reconceptualizing Threat and Response.*, (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2004), 6.

March 2004 where a relatively small cell operating at a tactical level produced profound national strategic effects on a population and government. In the end the collective will of Spanish citizens was so shaken by the bombing that the new government was forced to withdraw its soldiers from Iraq thus producing international strategic consequences as well.<sup>19</sup> Tactical application of force with strategic consequences is the main aim of any insurgency and is the most beneficial use of limited resources. Insurgent victory is based primarily “on the progressive attrition of their opponent’s political capability to wage war.”<sup>20</sup> The other advantage that insurgents have related to ground and freedom of movement is that they produce an asymmetrical threat. There are very few established battle lines in counterinsurgency wars in that unless the insurgency has established a known base of operations, like the Swat Valley for the Taliban in Northern Pakistan, then the possibility arises that combat can and will be sudden, violent, short and virtually anywhere. Asymmetric threats produce a second order of effect in that soldiers are required to maintain a high sense of vigilance and tactical awareness over longer periods of time. This requirement is mentally and physically exhausting and as such will degrade over time and produce tactical errors upon which the insurgents can capitalize. Errors such as using the same road over the course of a few days will almost certainly produce an IED strike and is a fundamental tactical error that is common when soldiers face exhaustion.

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<sup>19</sup> Lisa Abend, "Five Years After the Madrid Bombing." *Time*. March 11, 2009.

<http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1884231,00.html> (accessed June 09, 2009).

<sup>20</sup> Andrew Mack, "Why Big Nations Lose Small Wars." *World Politics*, Vol. 2, No. 2, (1975), 177.

Insurgent tactics rely on identifying some type of pattern in order to mass, strike and disperse as quickly as possible. In some cases, the original strike is only the bait to eventually strike the specialist incorporated in the first responders' packet.<sup>21</sup> Any advantage that the insurgents feel they have achieved will certainly lead to a protracted effort. The SEAL team experience in the mountains of Afghanistan in 2005 provides an excellent example of advantage achieved by the insurgents and a protracted assault. In June of that year a four-man team inserted into the mountains of Kunar province in order to kill or capture a known Taliban leader. After manoeuvring all night to close with the target area, they were compromised by local civilians and in short order were swarmed by Taliban fighters. A protracted firefight ensued for the remainder of the day as multiple extractions were attempted but each one ended in failure. By day's end, three of the four SEAL team members were killed in action as well as 16 other Americans during rescue efforts.<sup>22</sup> The Taliban were quick to identify the advantage achieved in this situation and mobilized a substantial force to overwhelm the small team. With our current doctrine, the SEAL team in this scenario could easily be replaced with a Canadian Army recon patrol, either Armour or Infantry.

The main building block of any recon asset is the patrol. In armoured recon that consists of two Coyote vehicles and eight soldiers, while in other arms it can vary. Infantry recon for example uses sections of four-to-six men conducting satellite patrols

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<sup>21</sup> For example, the multiple use of command detonated secondary and tertiary IED's in Iraq.

<sup>22</sup> Rich Motoko, *New York Times*. August 9, 2007. <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/08/09/arts/09iht-lone.1.7054545.html> (accessed June 16, 2009).

from a patrol base, while snipers patrol in groups of two or four depending on the mission. The main purpose of maintaining small units for recce is to reduce the footprint inherent in larger organizations and to establish and maintain stealth. Stealth is a recce soldier's greatest weapon and as such is why doctrine is built on it. However, in counterinsurgency, it is very difficult to establish stealth and maintain it over a long period of time. In Afghanistan for example, recce assets will depart at last light to patrol and establish an Observation Post (OP) during the night. By first light, they must be back within friendly forces perimeter or they will almost certainly become compromised. Locals are in tune with their environment and as such they know when someone from another tribe or village is in the vicinity of their town. Foreign soldiers, regardless of their skill have practically no chance of establishing and maintaining stealth in that environment over a sustained period of time. Like the SEAL team example then, the biggest threat to our recce forces is the potential of getting hit while operating at the patrol level. As mentioned above, armoured recce is two vehicles and eight soldiers. If the lead vehicle strikes an IED which produces four casualties, then the remaining vehicle with its four soldiers have a tremendous responsibility until the first responders arrive. A strike scene is emotional chaos. The leader has the responsibility of immediate physical actions such as site security, casualty extraction and first aid. As well, warning actions such as calls for situation reports and casualty evacuation allows the remainder of the force to vector assets to assist. First and foremost a strike scene cannot be secured with four soldiers and it is this type of advantage that insurgents are hoping to exploit. The possibility of an ambush or assault by superior numbers will certainly produce more friendly casualties, complete

destruction of the recce patrol or in a worst-case scenario, a soldier taken hostage by the insurgents. The tactical application of force in this scenario is exactly what insurgents are looking for, specifically the ability to strike at place and time of choosing and to achieve potentially devastating national strategic effects. National strategic effects weaken the national will and endurance and subsequently weaken its resolve to maintain troops in theatre. Consequently, the very foundations on which a coalition is built can become threatened and possibly collapse.

The present tactic for countering this threat is to double or triple the amount of patrols that operate in unison but this is only a temporary fix. IED's and ambushes have forced the Task Force Headquarters to implement standing orders that run contrary to our standing doctrine.<sup>23</sup> This produces the effect that insurgents are hoping for in that we need to improvise organizations in order to sustain operations against them. From a balance perspective, we remain off balance because we are not operating the same way we train.

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<sup>23</sup> For example, Standing Operating Procedures (SOP) and Commander Joint Task Force Afghanistan (JTFA) standing orders mandate a minimum of three vehicles for any manoeuvre or one F Echelon vehicle per three escorted vehicles within a logistic convoy.

## INTELLIGENCE-DRIVEN OPERATIONS

Another advantage the insurgents have over counterinsurgents is the luxury of time. As noted by General Kitson, “Insurgents start with nothing but a cause and grow to strength, while the counterinsurgents start with everything but a cause and gradually decline in strength and grow to weakness.”<sup>24</sup> Large conventional armies on operations spend millions of dollars daily and as such the tax payers back home are looking for quick results and tangible gains. The pressure on force commanders for action is immense but the timetable is clearly on the insurgent’s side. In that way, the insurgents have the ability to protract the conflict and simply wait for international attention to wane or for different national policies to shift.<sup>25</sup> Staying the course for a protracted war is fiscally difficult and as such a political liability. Unlike the quick conclusion of the Gulf War, counterinsurgencies tend to remain active for long periods of time and economic costs as well as human cost ultimately creates the condition of war weariness within a society. Vietnam provides an excellent example of the fiscal drain on an economy and was also the ultimate down fall of two presidential administrations.<sup>26</sup>

The outcome of a campaign should be determined by the campaign’s operational design. Therefore, intelligence collection needs to be driven by the same operational

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<sup>24</sup> General Sir Frank Kitson cited in John A Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam.*, ( Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 23.

<sup>25</sup> Canada, for example is prepared to leave the Afghanistan mission by 2011 as supported in Parliament 17 May 2006.

<sup>26</sup> Johnson failed to understand the power of the peace movement and continued to escalate US commitments which lead to his downfall as President. Nixon negotiated a prolonged process of “agreement on ending the war and restoring Peace in Vietnam,” which did neither. However it did provide the exit strategy for the United States to depart Southeast Asia. *US Department of State*. 2009. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/time/dr/17411.htm> (accessed June 6, 2009).

design. Operational design is vital to identifying an enemy's vulnerabilities or centre of gravity. Centre of gravity is defined as "characteristics, capabilities or localities from which a nation, an alliance, a military force or other grouping derives its freedom of action, physical strength or will to fight."<sup>27</sup> If operational design is conducted properly, then the intelligence requirements that perpetuate from the process provide the intelligence questions that need to be answered. In order to properly combat insurgents, operations are command led but intelligence driven and must be executed in very quick time. Intelligence driven operations simply means that "during the intelligence cycle, intelligence staffs identify the information and intelligence requirements on behalf of all staff branches and analyze how to obtain it."<sup>28</sup> Command led means that operations staff, under the authority of the commander, usually lead the coordination effort and issue the appropriate orders tasking units in the collection process. The information derived from the collection process is then provided to the intelligence cycle or targeting process to be processed and disseminated.

The process of intelligence gathering and processing is long and tedious and by its very nature, not open to public consumption. There are large gaps in operations with which an uninformed population (and in some cases politicians) perceive as wasted time or lack of forward momentum. Technology has produced several capabilities for dissemination of intelligence within a master network however this network needs to expand to the sub-unit level in order to allow operations to be conducted more efficient.

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<sup>27</sup>Department of National Defense. *B-GL-005-500/FP-000, The Canadian Forces Operational Planning Process*. Kingston: Joint Doctrine Branch, 2008. 2-1

<sup>28</sup>Director Army Doctrine. *B-GL-394-002/FP-001, Ground Manoeuvre Reconnaissance*. Kingston: Army Publishing Office, 2008. 1-26

At the Squadron level, there needs to be an intelligence component to the Squadron Headquarters (SHQ) which can process the raw data that is reported from recce soldiers and fused with the requirements of the intelligence world. The present construct has this fusion at the Battle Group level but with five or six manoeuvre sub-units operating over the spectrum of an entire province, there is little hope for timely feedback on raw intelligence and as such the potential for a lost opportunity to kill or capture a key enemy figure is amplified. Intelligence operators can also participate at the coal face with respect to interactions with locals (Human Intelligence or HUMINT) while on patrol and provide advice on intelligence gathering opportunities. More importantly, they provide a window into the higher intelligence network and as such can provide early warning when potential local operations may either augment or interfere with higher established surveillance or sources. The net benefit is a more synchronized intelligence apparatus that is better suited to support quick launch, intelligence driven operations.

### **INDIGENOUS RECCE CAPABILITY**

The use of indigenous forces is renowned as a measure to combat insurgents. In Malaya, for example, the British used several indigenous battalions as part of their conventional force but also resurrected the resistance organization they implemented during Japanese occupation.<sup>29</sup> The incorporation of indigenous forces into the recce team has incalculable benefits.

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“These men... were able to read such signs as bent twigs and turned leaves- things that were meaningless to the European unfamiliar to the jungle. Regardless of topography, this local ability to read the signs provided a powerful tool for the counterinsurgency forces to avoid being ambushed, to close with, and to destroy the insurgents. The effectiveness of well supported native irregulars however goes beyond mere recce and tracking, and their close combat skills should not be under estimated.”<sup>30</sup>

The most important aspect of garnering indigenous support is displaying rectitude towards civilians and prisoners.<sup>31</sup> Using defectors or prisoners under a form of amnesty will weaken the insurgent’s capability and support. Augmenting indigenous recce sections with defectors will increase the understanding of insurgent’s techniques and better allow for observation and potential interdiction. The greatest contribution of indigenous forces however, is their ability to interact with locals in order to determine the general atmosphere towards the insurgents. The nuances of certain cultures, specifically tone and body language, are relatively lost on foreigners but are loud and clear to indigenous troops. This ability to observe and identify potential insurgents in a crowd of civilians enhances our ability to feed the intelligence system. Identifying a Taliban in the crowd and then tracking his movement might produce the intelligence required to launch an operation and capture an entire cell or potentially a high value target. A second benefit is the intimate knowledge of the ground and climate that locals have. Using indigenous troops as recce guides may produce unique perspectives to

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<sup>29</sup> 350 000 soldiers of the Malaya home guard. Robert O. Tilman, "The Non-Lessons of the Malayan Emergency." *Asian Survey*, Vol.6, No. 8, (1966), 417.

<sup>30</sup> Robert M. Cassidy, *Counterinsurgency and the Global War on Terror.*, (Santa Barara, CA: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2006), 140-141.

<sup>31</sup> Anthony James Joes, *Resisting Rebellion, The History and Politics of Counterinsurgency.*, (Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2004), 237.

tactical problems. Knowledge of the ground coupled with detailed cultural awareness may develop patterns of life that are vital in determining the intelligence picture as well as implementing a potential strike package.

### **RECCE ROLE IN ISOLATING INSURGENTS**

Isolation of insurgents is critical to the success of any counterinsurgency.<sup>32</sup> The ability to minimize foreign influence as well as logistical support significantly hinders an insurgent's ability to conduct operations. In places such as Afghanistan, support from the Al Qaeda network in terms of money, supplies and technical skills enhance the capability of the local Taliban. Most support is staged out of Pakistan and crosses into Afghanistan along the completely undefended border similar to the support network that sustained the Mujahedeen during the Soviet occupation. Without this outside support, or "input denial"<sup>33</sup> the Taliban would be reduced to using remnants of war for its explosives and old ammunition with a substantially high failure rate. Furthermore, combat losses of men and material cannot be replaced nor is there a "safe haven" for the Taliban to rest, train and integrate new members. "If across-the-border supplies to guerrillas cannot be interdicted, or at least limited, then no level of counterinsurgent commitment on the part of the ruling regime is likely to be adequate."<sup>34</sup>

Recce operations are capable of covering long distances and are sustainable for long periods of times if they are properly manned and supported. The ability of the

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<sup>32</sup>The Briggs plan cited in Nagl, 77.

<sup>33</sup>David T. Mason, "Insurgency, Counterinsurgency, and the Rational Peasant," *Public Choice*, Vol.86, No. 1/2 (1996), 76.

<sup>34</sup>Joes, 236.

technical packages, specifically radar and electro-optic are best served observing large swaths of land which is exactly the terrain along the Pakistan border. This capability, coupled with indigenous recce forces would allow for a more robust ability to identify crossing sites, lay up points or even depots along the border. Gaps along the recce screen should be patrolled by dedicated long range, higher controlled ISTAR assets in order to complete the screen. This ability would lead to interdiction and disrupt the flow of supplies into the province greatly influencing the Taliban's capability to conduct or sustain operations.

Intelligence cooperation with the Pakistan Army through the intelligence net would produce a more refined observation area, allow for concentration and produce a higher probability of success. This cooperation, if it exists, is politically sensitive and negotiated at the highest strategic/diplomatic levels and as such would not necessarily be available to daily operations but would most certainly trigger a large deliberate operation.

## **CONCLUSION**

In all the contemporary literature on the subject of counterinsurgency, there are several theories or tenets that are absolutely vital for success. Having a clear understanding of the advantages that the insurgents have within a COIN environment is key. Fundamentals such as terrain domination, asymmetric attacks, time advantage and a secure support bases and lines of communication all require military planners to set operating procedures to mitigate these advantages. Adjusting the content and size of our basic recce element will allow troop leader or patrol commanders to remove the

distraction of constant regrouping of the basic fighting element and codify chain of command, tactics, training and doctrine. The increased size will also provide sufficient combat power to counter the advantage that insurgents are looking for, specifically the ability to strike at a place and time of their choosing on an inferior size force. The second order of effects will also remove their ability to achieve strategic success with tactical means. The increased size will allow for prolonged operations associated with isolating the enemy and reduce the effects of burnout linked with asymmetrical threat and constant high readiness. The enhancement of intelligence operators at the squadron level will allow for quicker interface with the intelligence network and thus enable commanders at all levels to reduce the decision-action cycle and enhance our intelligence driven operations capability. UAV embedded into the squadron will inevitably boost the recce ability and further expand the observable area of operations vital in the difficult task of isolating the enemy. Finally, using indigenous forces, specifically defectors to operate in conjunction with recce will bring a better understanding of enemy tactics, methods and procedures which will undoubtedly improve our success rate.

## Chapter 3: Restructuring and Retraining Armour Recce

### THE NEXT BOUND

The RCAC has recently developed its plan to realign the Corps based on an equal manning, unequal equipped structure.<sup>35</sup> First and foremost is the maintenance of a robust Regimental Headquarters (RHQ) in order to meet the challenges of Battle group command across the spectrum of conflict. From a manoeuvre perspective, the idea is to have one tank squadron and three recce squadrons per regiment. Due to the training area requirements to support combined arms training, as well as the small number of platforms, the bulk of the platforms will be permanently garrisoned in two locations, Canadian Forces Base (CFB) Gagetown specifically the Armour School and CFB Edmonton, with the Lord Strathcona Horse (Royal Canadians) (LdSH). The other two regiments, the Royal Canadian Dragoons (RCD) and 12 Regiment Blinde du Canada (12 RBC) will maintain a tank fleet of 10 Leopards in order to maintain skills and provide the basis of combined arms training to their respective brigades. For larger collective training events, the LdSH will provide the required augmentation of tanks for the Canadian Manoeuvre Training Center (CMTC) and the Armour School will do likewise to support RCD and 12 RBC training in CFB Gagetown. This plan ensures that Commanding Officers have the appropriate resources to maintain tank and combat team skills within the confines of small garrison training areas such as Petawawa and Valcartier. As well, the units have the required vehicles to be self sufficient in

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<sup>35</sup> Major-General M.G. MacDonald, *3000-1 (DArmd) Armoured Corps Senior Leadership Perspective on Corps Issues*. Memorandum, Director Armour, December 2008. Annex C

producing trained tank gunners and drivers and thus maintaining the critical mass for Force Generation. (FG) It is, however, critically important with this model that the regiments maintain a tank capacity in garrison or the tank FG capabilities of the RCAC will be in peril. Insufficient platforms however will hamper the ability for crews to train in garrison in order to maintain the necessary baseline tactics, drills and skill.

As mentioned, the RCAC will align its recce element equally between the three regular regiments. The plan is to have three recce squadrons per regiment. Two squadrons, A and B, will be completely manned with three troops of seven vehicles each. The patrol will remain a two-vehicle manoeuvre element with the troop leader's support vehicle (G) not being manned.<sup>36</sup> The third squadron, C, will be a reduced manned squadron incorporating three troops of five vehicles and a reduced Squadron Headquarters (SHQ) and echelon. From a recce perspective, the plan does not detail the disposition of remaining Coyote recce vehicles to the different regiments, however based on the current distribution within Canada, 159 Coyotes are available for training throughout the Army. These numbers include the three regiments,<sup>37</sup> the Armour School and CMTC. The remaining vehicles are deployed to Afghanistan (10), the Logistic (Log) stock in Canadian Forces Supply Depot Montreal (25), the Electrical Mechanical Engineering (EME) School at CFB Borden (3), Defence Research and Development Canada (DRDC) (1), Area Support Unit (ASU) London (1), Canadian Forces Support Unit (CFSU) (1) and finally Director General of Land Equipment Program Management (DGLPEM) (2) for a total of 202. It is unknown at this time how many Coyotes, as well

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<sup>36</sup> The intent is for this vehicle to be manned by reservists

<sup>37</sup> Including the 8 Coyotes presently in 2 RCR as part of the optimized battle group study (C Sqn RCD).

as Long Range Surveillance Systems (LRSS), have been destroyed on operations as well as platforms that have been declared beyond repair due to combat damage as the information is classified and not available for publication in this work. From a planning perspective, 159 coyotes are available for manoeuvre training within the CF. Presently, the RCAC has 55 LAV III vehicles allocated to training in three different variants: Infantry Section Carrier, Command Post and TOW Under Armour. (TUA)

Finally the latest RCAC structure was updated 27 April 2009 with a Corps strength of 2022 all ranks.<sup>38</sup> This number includes only the personnel currently serving in the three line units which means a unit standing strength of 674.

## **PROPOSED FORCE STRUCTURE**

This section will provide an alternate model for the re-engineering of the RCAC reconnaissance squadron structures. This proposal is not designed with future combat systems like the Tactical Armoured Patrol Vehicle (TAPV) in mind. It is designed for the constraints of the present RCAC with the platforms available within the current manning cap. That said, future systems should be able to incorporate the structure, training and doctrine changes this study proposes.

The conditions which preclude large tank/combined arms training in small garrisons like Petawawa and Valcartier do not affect wheel-based reconnaissance. Reconnaissance squadrons have the capability to train virtually anywhere in Canada as long as the

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<sup>38</sup> Major-General M.G. MacDonald, *3000-1 (DArmd)*...Annex C

appropriate land-use permissions are obtained. Recce, as well, operates over large expanses of terrain and as such the command and control aspect of operations is unique from any other combat arm sub-unit. Training in civilian land creates the command and control challenges, as well as realistic time and space concerns that cannot be replicated within the confines of a small manoeuvre area. Unlike tanks then, it is absolutely vital to maintain appropriate training platforms at garrison locations in order to maintain the skills necessary to conduct operations.

The RCAC structure currently has a strength of 60 PY allocated to three Tow Under Armour (TUA) troops distributed among the three regiments. It is uncertain at this time as to whether the Canadian Army will divest in this capability.<sup>39</sup> Another capability that is in the optimal Corps structure but not sourced in the RCAC structure is Assault Troop. This capability used to be a part of every recce squadron in order to give the squadron commander the ability to mass dismounts as necessary, as well as mobility/counter-mobility tasks in the absence of combat engineers. Finally, its utility for counter recce, specifically vehicle ambushes, provided an excellent mechanism for deception and shaping operations.

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<sup>39</sup> Interview, 09 February 2010, with Col Lowell Thomas, Director of Armour 2007-2009

## FIRST PRINCIPLES

As alluded to in Chapter II, the basic issue with the current structure of the RCAC recce elements is that it is built on a patrol foundation of two vehicles. This patrol structure is the root in which all doctrine, and subsequent force structure is built and it fails to be relevant in either a CW or IW conflict. This failure is apparent in present operations in Afghanistan where it is against regulations, and basic common sense, to send less than three vehicles outside the wire. Even if not mandated, the threat imposed by modern munitions and direct fire weapons which are readily available to insurgents requires the responsible commander to have sufficient combat power to scene manage as well as fight. A minimum of three vehicles with sufficient dismounts are absolutely critical in order to maintain the flexibility and combat power to manoeuvre in the COE regardless of its CW or IW nature. The RCAC still structures and trains its recce forces with the two vehicle patrol model even though it has operated for over two and a half years in Afghanistan with a three or four vehicle patrol. This antiquated structure thus forces the RCAC recce element to fight different than it trains which is fundamentally wrong. If Armoured Recce is the “mainstay task of the Corps and will remain so for the foreseeable future,”<sup>40</sup> then the structure of the patrol and troop needs to be restructured to meet the needs of the COE, as well as give the recce leaders and soldiers a relevant force structure to accomplish their missions. The solution lies in the re-engineering of our basic Table of Organization and Equipment (TO&E). The most credible threat as discussed is ambush and IED strike and as such the basic

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<sup>40</sup> Major-General M.G. MacDonald, *3000-1 (DARMD)*..., 1.

requirement of a recce patrol is manpower. Having enough soldiers on the ground at an incident site allows for collective security as well as other activities to take place concurrently. The addition of a third vehicle into a patrol, (Annex C) specifically a troop carrier with a small section, or the troop being the basic manoeuvre element will provide the required manpower to counter the effects of fatigue, site security and insurgent advantage. The flexibility of extra manpower will give the patrol commander or troop leader the ability to sustain operations over a longer period of time and reduce the fatigue effects associated with asymmetrical threats. Scene management is also more flexible in that the troop leader or patrol commander can effectively achieve a cordon and begin treatment on wounded soldiers almost concurrently. This adds precious time to the *Golden Hour* so prevalent in emergency medicine.<sup>41</sup> Finally, the troop leader or patrol commander will also have sufficient combat power to discourage any notion of advantage that the insurgents might presume. This simple re-engineering of the basic component of recce, the patrol, or the troop will stop the practice of stacking patrols, regrouping on the fly and codify patrol chain of command. More importantly, the soldiers will be able to train, develop techniques, tactics and procedures (TTP's) in the controlled environment of training and then operate with confidence in a theatre of war as they have been trained to do.

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<sup>41</sup> Golden Hour is the time required from point of wounding to advanced trauma medicine. The chances of survival are exponentially higher if the golden hour is achieved. Guy S. Strawder, "The Golden Hour Standard." *Joint Force Quarterly*, (2006), 60.

## **HYBRID CANADIAN RECCE SQUADRON**

This course of action (COA) structure for the RCAC recce element basically is an enhancement of our current structure. Annex A shows that there is no change in the regimental structure nor manning cap except for the removal of the non-resourced Assault troop. The major changes are the loss of one squadron and the increase size and structure of the remaining two. The fundamental changes are at the patrol and troop level.

The patrol, as demonstrated in Annex C, has three vehicles vice two with one vehicle being a troop-carrying variant. The addition of four dismountable soldiers to this carrier enhances the security footprint of the patrol as well as its operational endurance. Finally, the troop leader's patrol is augmented exactly as the others. History has clearly demonstrated that troop leaders are not immune to the risks of combat and require the same level of protection as the remainder of the troop. Thus the troop consists of three equal manoeuvre elements and manning has increased to 45 all ranks.

The SHQ element, articulated in Annex B, is as well a manoeuvre/fighting element within the squadron. The asymmetrical nature of the modern COE does not allow for fixed battle lines where a command post complex can be set up to stage an operation. The lines are blurred, if there are any at all, and so the SHQ element must be equipped to manoeuvre, fight if necessary, all while maintaining situational awareness and command and control. This is only possible if they are equipped with command post variants of fighting vehicles. Finally, the squadron commander has appropriate security in order to manoeuvre throughout the battlespace.

The echelon must be able to move and fight as well while conducting resupply on the battlefield. The issue confronting the Squadron Sergeant-Major (SSM) in the hybrid model is that although less OP's to resupply, there are more soldiers to feed and thus even greater bulk combat supply demands.

All aspects of the squadron are manoeuvrable, able to fight and defend itself, and are sufficiently manned for mounted or dismounted recce operations, scene management and sustained operations.

The primary advantage of this COA is that the basic fundamental of training as we fight is met. The force structure that we instruct and train our soldiers to operate within is relevant and the same that will deploy in any theatre of operation, whether CW or IW. The Government of Canada will always pressure the Department of National Defence (DND) to maintain a force structure that is fiscally responsible yet able to deploy internationally. International deployments always come with restraints such as troop number caps. As recce is an enabler and not a primary combat capability, it is usually one of the first elements to be reduced in scope and rarely does it deploy in doctrinal strength. That said, the hybrid model is in fact modular in that any component can be added or removed in order to suit the mission requirements. All aspects of the recce squadron are designed to be a singular entity able to manoeuvre and fight, including SHQ and the echelon. This 'plug and play' hybrid model allows for flexibility within the RCAC to provide tactical recce at the unit, battle group level up to formation recce to Brigades or Divisions without fundamental change to structure, doctrine or more importantly, training.

There are numerous other advantages of the hybrid model. The troop and patrol concept allows for sufficient mounted combat power and dismounted security to operate in all phases of war for a sustained period of time. In situations where one element is hit or destroyed, the model has enough combat power to fight, extract or prosecute scene management as applicable. The dismounted troops available at the patrol and troop level provides a more secure footprint to Observation Posts (OP) in the screen as well as a covert OP capability that has been sadly missed in the last 18 years. Finally, the extra soldiers in the patrol allow for sustained and prolonged operations, which are key in recce tasks such as defining pattern of life or point target surveillance. These soldiers augment the capacity to observe over longer periods of time and reduce the effects of surveillance burnout and fatigue, thus expanding recce tactical stamina.

From a FG perspective, the basic manoeuvre element remains the patrol and the number in a mission can increase or decrease based on mission cap numbers. A squadron has nine recce manoeuvre elements in order to screen a BG while the regiment provides the brigade 18 recce manoeuvre elements. The RCAC force generates 54 recce manoeuvre elements. Troop size can be increased by adding a third manoeuvre patrol if the FG package calls for a sub-sub unit recce commitment or an extra troop can be added to the squadron should they be required to act in a capacity supporting a formation level organization.

The RCAC has proposed a recommendation to amend the FG plan for armour sub-units to re-align FG along regimental lines.<sup>42</sup> For example, if the 12 RBC is to FG a

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<sup>42</sup> Major-General M.G. MacDonald, *3000-1 (DArmd)...*, Annex C

recece squadron for a battle group, it would also FG the tank squadron. This synchronized approach will give the commanding officers the ability to focus their entire regiment in high readiness for a specific timeframe and not have the awkward practice of different sub-units in different levels of readiness. If this recommendation is accepted, then the road to high readiness will be significantly reduced from a support perspective. Furthermore, the deployment cycle will move from regiment to regiment versus squadron to squadron, as such the six squadrons will be sustainable as only one recece squadron per regiment will deploy per cycle. Finally, while on cycle, the regiment still maintains a recece squadron in garrison to provide support to the brigade, domestic operations, collective and individual training and finally rear party.

## **THE ROLE OF RESERVES**

The role of the reserves in the RCAC has always been a bone of contention. That is, the reserves have not been commonly equipped as the regular force since the retirement of the Cougar AVGP. From a recece perspective, it has been significantly longer. The RCAC reserve regiments are now completely converted to recece and are equipped with the G-Wagon patrol vehicle and follow the same tactics and doctrine as the regular units. That is they are a medium recece organization with identical tactical baseline as the regular force. The issue then is one of integration of reservists into the regular units for operations or training. The issue is one of skillset training, specifically driving, surveillance and gunnery on the Coyote vehicle. This has proven to be problematic in the road to high readiness so most reserve augmentees end up providing

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support to the echelon. This practice is fundamentally wrong and does not provide the RCAC reserve soldier with any incentives whatsoever. The ability for a reserve soldier to augment a regular troop or patrol in training other than high readiness is virtually nil. The consequence is that reserve soldiers are missing out on the ability to train with their regular force counterparts at the level and position where they need to develop experience and expertise. Without this integration at the basic manoeuvre element, there is no mentorship, exchange of experience or integration of best practices.

The three vehicle model, Annex C, allows for better integration of reserve soldiers at the patrol level, either with or without Coyote skillsets. Furthermore, if the reserve units follow the same structure, then dismounted augmentation will be seamless as there will be no training delta.

This plan however does not mitigate the fundamental flaw within the RCAC which is equipment disparity. In order to truly develop a recce reserve component, then reservists have to be commonly equipped and trained. Not only will this allow seamless transition for augmentation but substantially boost reserve recruitment and retention. The Tactical Armoured Patrol Vehicle (TAPV) programme, which will eventually replace the Coyote fleet, will hopefully take into consideration this disparity and finally put an end to this regular/reserve divide.

## **ENHANCED CAPABILITIES**

Supplementary capabilities will only enhance the RCAC ability to project beyond the next bound. Mini Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) for example at the troop level allows for a broader expansion of a troop area of influence. As well, it can act as a force multiplier in that it can over watch specific flanks of concern to the troop leadership. Finally, mini UAV's can watch corridors that are deliberately left open as part of recce shaping operations. For example, in COIN operations, the insurgents have the benefit of intimate terrain knowledge. In situations like that, it is virtually impossible to achieve stealth or covert OPs for any period of time. A work around is to establish overt OPs with a specific corridor intentionally left open. Thus the recce screen has shaped the insurgents with a passable corridor which is monitored by either troop borne UAV or a higher asset UAV as part of the ISTAR plan.

Having a troop carrying capacity within each patrol allows for integration and cooperation with indigenous troops. Indigenous troops are a combat multiplier in the realm of recce operations as they have tremendous intelligence gathering capability. Indigenous forces mounted in our vehicles not only enhance our security footprint, but it fosters a sentiment of loyalty and camaraderie that is essential in capacity building. For example, joint patrolling in Coyotes and LAVS while the ANA patrol in Ford Ranger pick-up trucks does not balance the risk factor nor necessarily foster a mutually respectful environment. Integration of these forces allows for a mutual mentoring environment, as recce soldiers can always learn from each other.

The issue with time and space in the realm of recce operations has always been constrained by the limits of combat net radio (CNR). Recce elements are trained to work independently of chain of command over watch, but distance from the coordinating headquarters is always based on the ability to maintain the communications link. In the past, radio rebroadcast elements would be attached to the brigade recce squadron but this asset had to be protected and as such the squadron would lose a portion of its combat power. The introduction of satellite communications to the RCAC has removed the constraints previously imposed by CNR by its physical range. This enhanced capability provides theatre wide communications and expanded bandwidth so both voice and data information is transferable virtually anywhere. Positional battle management software and color surveillance pictures and video will be able to be sent to and from the patrol in order to accelerate the commander's decision cycle and further enhance the targeting decision process.

Further to this, the incorporation of intelligence personnel permanently attached to SHQ will enhance the intelligence picture and allow for better situational awareness with the intelligence loop. Having this asset will produce more tangible results with regards to data collection and provide low-level analysis on the information being generated at the squadron level. The most important aspect of this enhanced capability is the access to the intelligence network and the direct fusion of information to and from it. This fusion will significantly reduce the time to disseminate intelligence and allow for a quicker reaction for recce assets to prosecute a target. Intelligence queued

operations require a reduced decision action cycle and pushing this function down to sub-unit level reduces this critical reaction time.

The aim of these enhanced abilities is not to create information overload in the command post or to overburden it with process. The intelligence capability is rudimentary in order to conduct the first level of intelligence fusion. As a minimum, squadron intelligence should reach back to the All Source Information Cell. (ASIC)

The lack of fighting vehicles with SHQ runs contrary to COIN fundamentals. Generally speaking, insurgents decide when and where fighting will take place and as such in asymmetric warfare, all elements must be ready to fight. The capabilities within a mobile command post that is also a fighting vehicle allows the command element to once again manoeuvre across the battlefield in a secure, effective manner. The fluid nature of CW or opportunistic nature of IW necessitates the requirement of rapid deployment of all components of a recce force. The enhanced fighting ability of SHQ thus allows for better articulation of the recce commander to move about the battlefield, establishing a position of influence in order to more effectively command.

## **RE-ESTABLISHING THE CAN-DO CULTURE (Recce Spirit)**

As the Canadian Army became more committed to the war in Afghanistan the force structure naturally grew. Capabilities that were not part of the Canadian order of battle were created or augmented. Examples of this force structure escalation include the establishment of the Observer, Mentor, Liaison Teams (OMLT) and Canada's commitment to train the Afghan National Army (ANA). There has also been growth in UAV, police mentoring (POMLT) and the size of the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) and their affiliated security detachments. With so many diverse parts of the force structure, it has been virtually impossible to synchronize the army's Managed Readiness Plan to a point where force generation can be associated with a single area, and subsequently, from a RCAC perspective, a single regiment, for a rotation. Without synchronization, the legacy created in the RCAC is that collective training is virtually impossible. Regiments are unable to conduct any training outside of high readiness as in most cases each recce squadron is in a different portion of readiness. For example, a regiment could have a squadron in training, one deployed, and one on leave or at reduced capability due to operational tempo<sup>43</sup> restrictions. It is for this reason that the Managed Readiness Plan must be synchronized between the units in order to have a regiment hit the high readiness point every 18 months. This gap between rotations is vital as it allows for professional courses, postings and promotions but more

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<sup>43</sup> Op Tempo are restrictions placed on soldiers deploy ability once they redeploy from an operational theatre. The restrictions are classified but basically are designed to protect the soldier from time away from family and ensure that some quality of life is assured.

importantly, allows for units to conduct field exercises, maintain skillsets, implement lesson learned and establish a steady state level of competence.

A regiment presently holds sufficient vehicles and equipment to sustain one recee squadron training at a time. The road to high readiness is of such duration that any squadron selected will dominate the demand for Coyotes the better part of a year prior to deployment. This demand then relegates the remaining squadrons to training support or other such tasks. The culture that has manifested from this practice is akin to the haves and have not's. In spite of good intention and vehicle management, the supporting squadrons, essentially the have not's, conduct very little manoeuvre training during a high readiness cycle as the equipment is quite rightly in high demand. As such, the supporting squadron's skills are allowed to erode and in some cases, tragically, this period defines a leader's command tour. In some cases, young officers arrive at the unit as troop leaders and leave three years later without having had the opportunity to command a troop on a manoeuvre exercise let alone have the time to develop any semblance of experience or expertise. Command experience, from troop leader to commanding officer is suffering.

Another issue that arises from this present trend is that the RCAC is not maintaining a minimum level of readiness and thus the squadron selected for operations enters the high readiness cycle and begins training from a cold start. Establishment and strict adherence to a minimum level of readiness is critical in order to maintain any momentum within a training cycle but more importantly reduces the strain of a long arduous training regime that leads to operational readiness. The road to high readiness,

or commonly referred to in soldier terms as the road to weariness, has arguably claimed more casualties than the mission itself due to its duration and specifically the time soldiers are required to spend away from their families. Maintaining a more robust minimum level of readiness as an annual baseline for all recce squadrons would eliminate large portions of training and eliminate the pain that a cold start creates. In order for this to be possible, it is essential that each regiment have two squadrons worth of recce vehicles and the RCAC develop a minimum level of readiness that is mandated annual training. For example, with two suites of vehicles, it is possible for a unit to have one squadron in high readiness and the others able to maintain its trade skillsets of manoeuvre, gunnery and communications. The second order of effect is just as important, as it allows troop leaders a chance to design and execute training plans, develop Battle Captains (BC) in the art of training coordinating and command post operations and allow new squadron commanders the chance to command in the field. Finally, it gives RHQ, and CO's a chance to again manage multiple subunits in a complex field exercise environment and not just on a command post exercise (CPX). All these skills have been severely lacking due to the culture that has been created by the road to weariness.

Synchronizing the managed readiness plan and mandating annual training objectives will go a long way in re-establishing the can-do culture of recce squadrons within the RCAC. The ability to maintain two mounted recce squadrons at all times will have a tremendous effect in the maintenance of expertise within the RCAC and will produce experienced young leaders. More importantly, it will stop the legacy of the

current manage readiness plan which is a culture of cold start high readiness training only with little resources' available to the rest. These simple changes will also allow for commanding officers to be more proactive in the training cycle of their regiment instead of reactive to a unbalanced Managed Readiness Plan. Instead of waiting for High Readiness to provide the impetus to train for war, the RCAC needs to better manage its notice to move (NTM) in that the shorter the distance from steady state to operational ready, the more relevant the RCAC is in the Canadian Army order of battle.

## **TRAINING AND MAINTENANCE**

The recruit soldier presently serving in the RCAC must master several complex technical systems as well as tactical art in order to be effective in the contemporary operating environment. (COE) For example, the Development Period (DP) 3B qualified NCO has to be proficient in gunnery, driving and maintenance, surveillance, TCCCS and satellite radio and finally the next generation of battlefield management system. (ie, Land Force Command and Control Information System (LFC2IS) or Blue Force Tracker) Furthermore, with advanced training courses, they become a subject matter expert (SME) in some or all of these systems. These systems are sufficiently complex that any prolonged absence from hands on training will create a significant skill fade. It is this skill fade that must be addressed within the Army and RCAC with regards to training resource allocations. If a unit commanding officer is to maintain these skill sets at the soldier and junior leader level, then it is absolutely vital that the appropriate vehicles are allocated permanently to the unit in order that training plans and unit training can be prosecuted.

Presently, the Royal Canadian Dragoons (RCD) and 12 Regiment Blinde du Canada (12 RBC) constitute the armour recce component of the regular force. These units have allocated 34<sup>44</sup> recce vehicles in order to maintain effective training and force generation of six squadrons. A full strength squadron requires 26 Coyotes to man its three troops and SHQ. Naturally, with Afghanistan presently the main effort, the demands on these vehicles are tremendous as both regiments have either a squadron beginning its training cycle to deploy, or just finishing. The vehicles are essentially handed off from one squadron to the other in every possible state of repair. In some cases, vehicles are borrowed between regiments in order to offset critical shortfalls. The effects of constant use on these limited vehicles are such that there is little time for routine maintenance, inspection or repair.<sup>45</sup> The priority for parts is rightly Afghanistan; however in Canada the squadrons placed in the high readiness stream as well have a high priority for maintenance and parts. Because the army Managed Readiness Plan (MRP) is out of synch, a brigade may have several sub-units or an entire battle group to FG and train, in some cases back to back tours.. The command element allocates priorities within the brigade for either high readiness vehicles or vehicles that are necessary to facilitate supporting high readiness training. It is the latter case that creates the problems as there is a finite amount of time for mechanics to keep the primary priority vehicles fixed and inspected and as such the remainder get left behind. In many cases, vehicles are awaiting labour, or inspections but there are high priority vehicles to maintain an as such some vehicles are essentially in a state of perpetual uselessness.

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<sup>44</sup> Equipment distribution spreadsheet obtained from Land Forces Central Area Headquarters, J4 Equipment.

<sup>45</sup> Conversation with Major Derek Adams, Regimental Second in Command, The Royal Canadian Dragoons, October 10, 2009.

Hot bedding vehicles without dedicated crews, broken vehicles, awaiting parts or labour for months at a time and resources allocated to barely meet the commitments of high readiness training are contributing to the erosion of skills, tactical acumen and morale of the recce element of the RCAC. It is the lack of dedicated equipment, and maintenance support that has created the conditions of commanding officers unable to conduct training outside the high readiness stream.

The current short falls of equipment within the RCAC exacerbates the difficulty that commanding officers have in maintaining skill sets with their soldiers. The constant moving of vehicles, coupled with the operational tempo, allows for only sub-units that are in the deployment stream the necessary tools to train effectively. The remainder of the Corps must do without, and for a platform-based Corps, this practice is counterproductive. For any structure to work properly, then the units must be manned and equipped to its proper strength. Creating vehicle pools at training establishments can work if there are sufficient crewmen to implement the proper routine maintenance and exercise of the vehicles. Armoured vehicles do not do well sitting idle for long periods of time and must be used in order for them to work properly. As the Coyote is nearing the end of its service life, there is little reason to maintain a logistic stock stored in a hanger in Montreal when the vehicles could be serviced and used by the line units to train. The RCAC would have to accept risk however that a future operational deployment may diminish unit stock but the vehicles would be in a better state of repair and serviceability. Finally, most commanding officers would most likely prefer to accept this risk given the reward of properly equipped squadrons.

## COMMAND BILLETS AND LEADER SUCCESSION

The loss of a squadron in the proposed RCAC restructure model may cause concern from a command billet or succession perspective. One less squadron means less squadron commanders all the way down to troop leaders. This creates a second order of effects in that the RCAC generates fewer qualified troop leaders every year. The fact of the matter is that within the Managed Readiness Plan, unless a troop leader is fortunate enough to be in the high readiness stream, they are troop leaders on paper only. They do not have a full complement of troops, no vehicles and finally, little opportunity to train. The third recce squadron presently is little more than a partial SHQ with a small troop. As mentioned, it is not uncommon for troop leaders to complete their first regimental tour without having a proper troop or even deploying to the field. In the proposed model, both recce squadrons are manned and equipped at all times regardless of what stage of MRP. This provides the RCAC with actual experience for its junior officers versus the current situation. Although fewer billets for troop leaders, the throughput can be managed at the unit level as lieutenants get one or two years, based on performance, in the job. Successful lieutenants can assume advanced jobs such as liaison officers, training officer, assistant adjutant or transport troop leader while others may require a second year in the job. Another way to mitigate the throughput reduction would be to have assistant troop leaders in troops commanded by a seasoned officer. This is a throw-back to earlier times in RCAC history however it ensures practical experience and fosters mentorship. The underlying fact remains that in today's construct, there exist the conditions that the RCAC is producing quantity over

quality with regards to its junior officer production. Using the restructure model and either one of the mitigating strategies mentioned above, newly promoted captains that depart the regiment for their first extra regimental employment (ERE) tour do so much more experienced, confident and prepared. Those departing for employment as instructors at the Armour School arrive with more legitimacy and credibility. As well, they are better suited to observe, mentor and evaluate potential junior officers in the training process, which in turn, ensures quality. Natural attrition, specifically junior officers who decide to reclassify or officers not selected for further regimental service, will continue no matter what structure the RCAC has. Second tour captains, with which there always seems to be a shortage, will need to be managed based on age and slot availability. For example, if a captain is older in age, then perhaps their ERE tour is two versus three years. As the RCAC is still very much managed at the regimental level for junior officers, the individual officer's career cycle may vary but the endstate should remain experience, competence, quality and professionalism.

## CONCLUSION

The decision to transform all or part of a force is a complex problem that must be viewed from many perspectives. The argument of what type of force structure alone is a multi-billion dollar commitment that will affect Canadian soldiers for decades. The current debates being waged by soldiers and academics on future trends, threats and force structures in some cases only blur the scope of the issue. Although Canadian Forces have been involved in a counterinsurgency for the last five years or so, it has been our conventional forces that have carried the bulk of operations. Enhanced capabilities, such as OMLT, POMLT and strategic staff advisors have contributed significantly to the nation building line of operations for the ANA and ANP. Canada, as a small army, does not have the luxury of maintaining an irregular warfare trained and equipped force as well as a conventional force. The solution then is to continue to train and operate a general- purpose combat capable force while maintaining the skillsets that have been developed in the mentoring task of Afghanistan. In that way, Canada is better prepared for any contingency in any theatre around the world.

Regardless of the transformation and force structure debate, most scholars agree that irregular warfare will be the most common threat to Western armies in the foreseeable future. In order to understand the role of recce in IW, and more specifically COIN, it is necessary to fully appreciate the theoretical foundations. COIN fundamentals such as asymmetric conflict, isolating insurgents from their base of operations, incentives for defectors, winning hearts and minds, and the use of defectors and indigenous forces are all proven methods that our allies have used successfully in

other conflicts. Understanding and implementing these proven fundamentals into recce operating procedures are essential for success in the COIN environment.

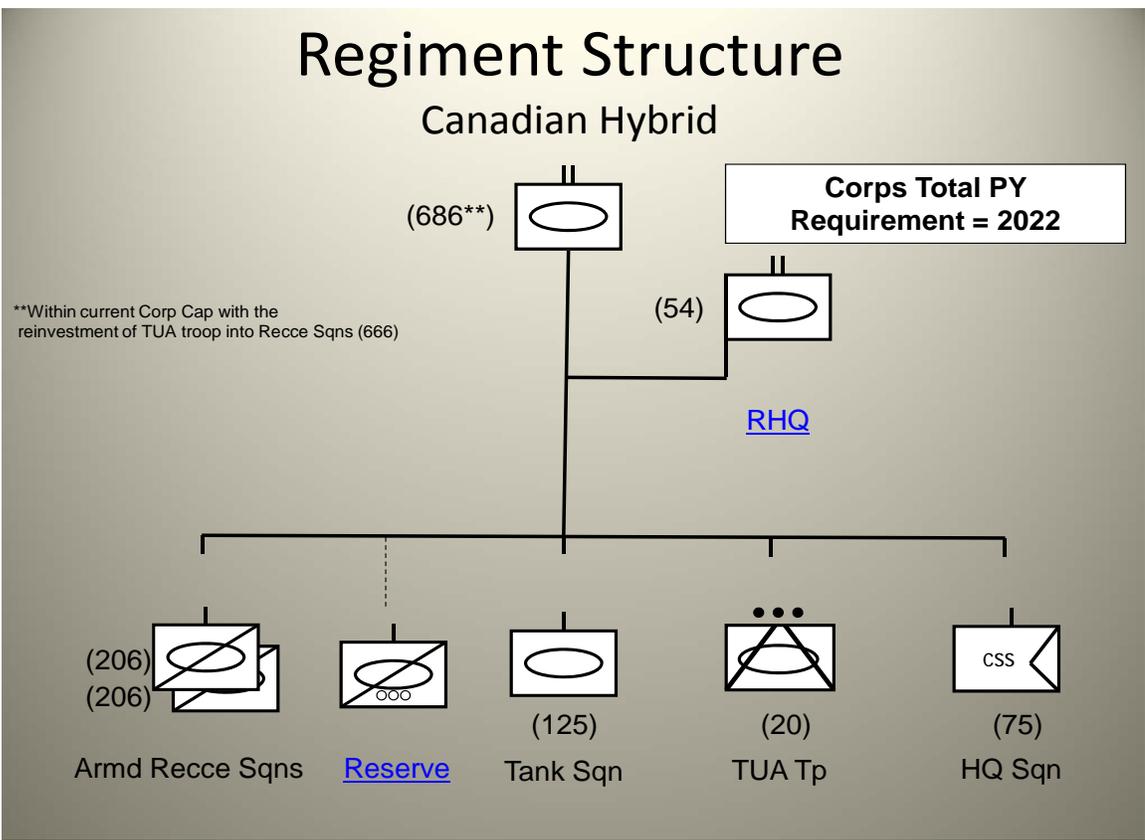
The RCAC has transformed its recce elements significantly in the last dozen years or so but has not taken a serious look at its recce force structure. The basic building block of a two-vehicle patrol has been proven time and again in Afghanistan to simply not work, and is quite frankly dangerous. The problem stems from the fact that there is not enough combat power, specifically soldiers, to provide security as well as operational stamina to a patrol. Recce operations take time to complete properly and eight soldiers sitting on a distant outcrop will lose their effectiveness, and consequently their situational awareness, in relatively short order. The proposed hybrid model takes into consideration all the lessons learned in Afghanistan and provides a third vehicle, as well as dismounted soldiers to augment the current patrol structure. In this way, a patrol has enough combat power to scene manage as well as plenty of people to increase the operating range and stamina of the patrol. Finally, the patrol has the ability to provide local security to its observation posts, and most importantly, it again has the ability to patrol dismounted while protecting its patrol base. Finally, the fundamental error in our present construct will be corrected, that is, the RCAC will finally fight as it trains.

Canadian recce squadrons have been operating in Kandahar province since 2006 when the mission shifted from Kabul and yet there has been no concentrated or collective effort to identify and correct shortfalls with regards to our force package or operating procedures. There has been no substantial professional debate within the

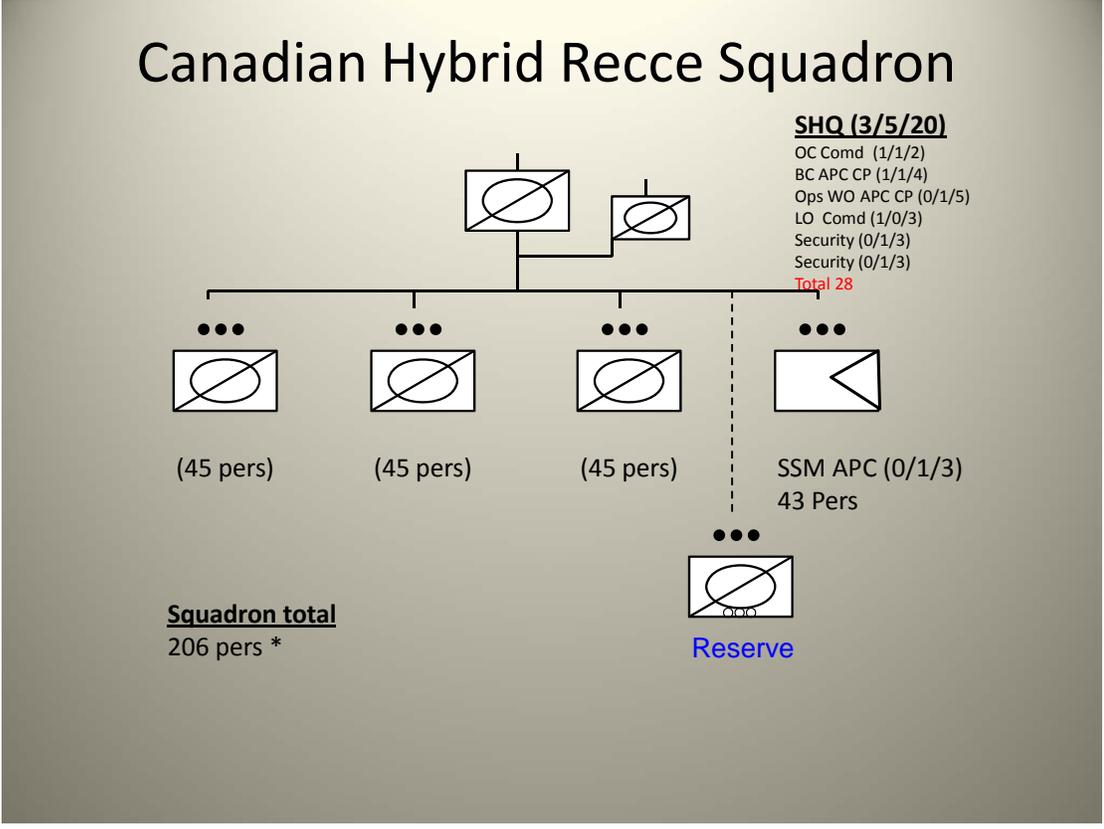
RCAC with regards to force structure issues, sustainability or war fighting. Seven reconnaissance squadrons have deployed to war in the last five years and unfortunately virtually nothing has been committed to print. Professionalism and courtesy has ensured that lessons learned and best practices are distributed among the units of the RCAC but there has been little in the way of codifying these practices, or more importantly, incorporating these lessons into the schoolhouse curriculum. Without this debate, the lessons will be potentially lost. Combat experienced leadership, which is vast and current in the RCAC at this moment, will diminish over time and the opportunity will be lost.

It is the intention of this thesis to spark professional debate within the RCAC and leverage the tremendous combat experience at all levels towards making armoured reconnaissance relevant, exclusive and sustainable in the contemporary operating environment. The basic requirement of a professional army is to train as it fights and after five years of war, we, in the reconnaissance business, are not.

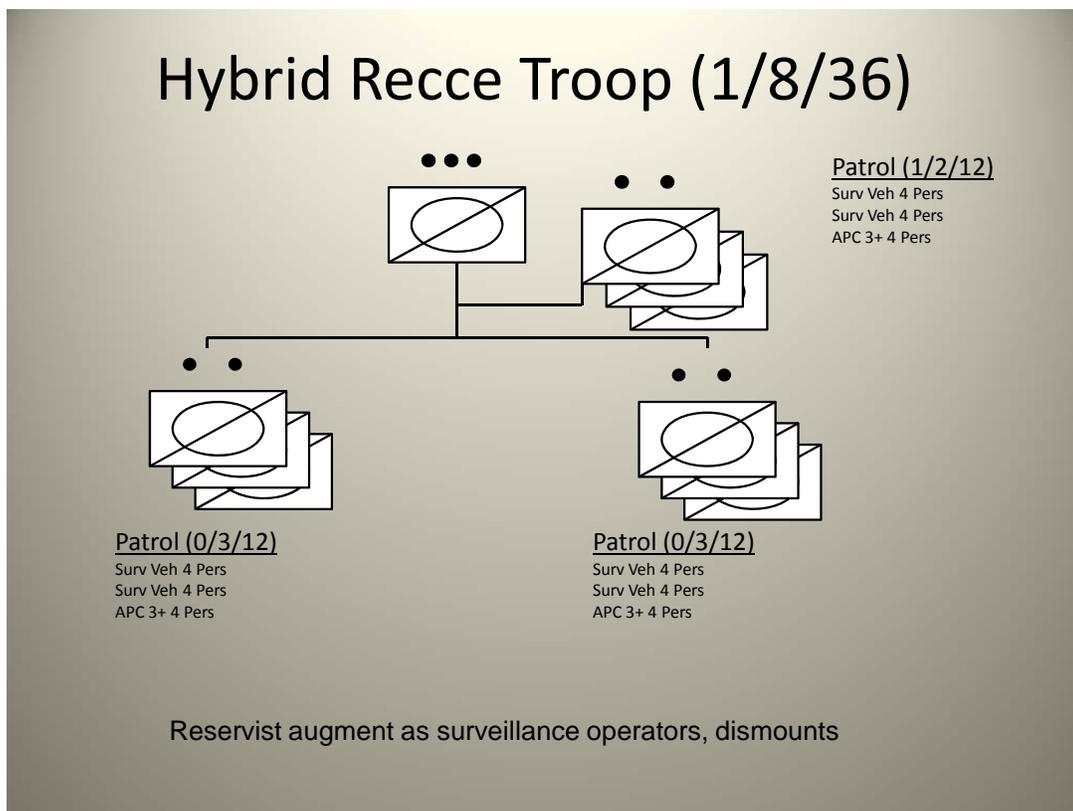
Annex A



Annex B



Annex C



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