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RELINQUANT REDITUT – AN ALTERNATE APPROACH TO RCAF RETENTION AND RECRUITING

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Exercise Solo Flight

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Maj Erik Rozema-Seaton

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RELINQUANT REDITUT – AN ALTERNATE APPROACH TO RCAF RETENTION AND RECRUITING

Over the past several decades the growth of the global economy has fueled the expansion of the aviation industry several fold. As markets develop and new routes open to meet increasing transportation demands, more people will be required to ensure the industry is able to achieve its operational goals. It is estimated that over the next 20 years there will be a global need for over 500,000 pilots alone. Within Canada, it is projected that 55,000 aviation industry workers will be needed by 2025 to meet projected growth and replacement pressures. In addition to pilots, aircraft mechanics, avionics technicians, air traffic controllers, and aerospace engineers will all be in high demand.¹ This situation is significant to the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) as it will be in direct competition for this talent and workforce.

Historically, attracting a sufficient number of applicants interested in employment within the RCAF has not been a sizeable challenge. Free training, education, and experience associated with a career in the RCAF has traditionally been sufficient to attract applicants; however, over the past several years recruitment efforts have fallen short of target levels.² Compounding this situation, the retention of personnel has been more difficult as RCAF personnel have become increasingly more attractive to large commercial airlines and other organizations within the aviation industry. In order to address a number of these recruitment and retention challenges, a series of personnel policies have been implemented by the RCAF since the mid 1990's.

Recruitment and retention bonuses, mandatory service, and increased compensation are a few of

¹ Canadian Council for Aviation and Aerospace, *Labour Market Information Report: Aviation and Aerospace Industries March 2018* (Ottawa: Canada Council for Aviation and Aerospace, 2018), 5-12.

² Canada. Office of the Auditor General of Canada, *Report 5 - Canadian Armed Forces Recruitment and Retention – National Defence* (Ottawa: Office of the Auditor General of Canada, Fall 2016), 2-10.

the efforts that have been used as part of the RCAF human resources management (HRM) strategy.³ While senior RCAF leadership has been engaged with these issues, identifying people as the priority within the most recent defence policy, many challenges still remain. If current trends continue, the recruitment and retention efforts of the RCAF will not be sufficient to overcome industry competition and sustain the RCAF personnel requirements in the long term.⁴ Mission success will be dependent on alternative solutions being implemented to augment the existing personnel management strategies.

While several of the retention and recruitment policies mentioned have been successful in meeting a number of personnel staffing demands, more is required in order to support the future operational requirements of the RCAF. Challenges remain as several personnel policies have not sufficiently evolved to address the range of core issues and needs of the modern workforce. To deal with these concerns, senior leadership needs to look beyond the current retention and recruitment policies and adopt a new approach to the employment structure within the RCAF. Specifically, this paper will demonstrate that the RCAF should implement a more flexible and creative reserve employment policy to compliment recruiting and retention initiatives.

In order to place the discussion in context, an overview of traditional personnel recruitment and retention theories and practices will be outlined. This paper will then relate these principles to the human resources management situation within the RCAF and discuss selected actions taken. Subsequently, the argument for taking an alternative approach will be presented

³ Canada, Department of National Defence, B-GL-005-100/FP-001, *Canadian Forces Joint Publication: Military Personnel Management Doctrine* (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2008); Canada, Department of National Defence, B-GA-407-001/FP-001, *Air Force Personnel Doctrine* (Canadian Aerospace Warfare Centre, 2010), Chapter 5; Canada, Department of National Defence, *CF Mil Pers Instruction 05/05 – Terms of Service* (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2018).

⁴ Office of the Auditor General of Canada, *Report 5 - Canadian Armed Forces Recruitment and Retention – National Defence* (Ottawa: Office of the Auditor General of Canada, Fall 2016); Canada, Department of National Defence, B-GA-407-001/FP-001, *Air Force Personnel Doctrine...*, iii, 5-1 to 5-9; Canada.

using proposed changes to the reserve employment model within the Air Mobility Operational Training system for illustration. Finally, this paper will address several counterarguments and examine potential consequences to the RCAF.

Common Theories and Practices

One of the key human resources management principles held within civilian organizations is that personnel should be viewed from an investment perspective.⁵ The premise of this philosophy is that the costs incurred during the process of improving an employee's skills, knowledge, and well-being will result in a greater benefit to the company. The rationalization being that the expense will provide a return in the form of increased productivity, motivation, efficiency, and commitment. With this in mind, the cumulative effects of an employee's knowledge, education, training, skills, and expertise are increasingly recognized as an important competitive advantage. Achieving this advantage takes time, money, and resources to recruit, develop, and mature the right employees.⁶ Turnover can considerably negate the benefits of these investments if sufficient time has not passed to realize the advantages of the process and offset the expenses involved. Furthermore, additional costs will be required in order to repeat the

⁵ Monica Belcourt, Kenneth McBey, Ying Hong, and Margaret Yap, "Aligning HR with Strategy," Chap. 2 in *Strategic Human Resources Planning*, 6th ed. (Toronto: Nelson Education, 2016), 31-32; Charles R. Greer, *Strategic Human Resource Management: A General Managerial Approach*, 2nd ed. (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2001), 1-6.

⁶ Larry Bossidy, and Ram Charan, *Execution: The Discipline of Getting Things Done* (New York: Crown Business, 2002), 7, 154-179; Gary Dessler, Nita Chhinzer, and Nina D. Cole, *Human Resources Management in Canada*, 12th ed. (Toronto: Pearson Canada, 2014), 2, 416; Monica Belcourt, Kenneth McBey, Ying Hong, and Margaret Yap, "Aligning HR with Strategy....", 32.

process for replacement employees. While there are a variety of ways an employee can depart an organization this paper will focus on the issues associated with voluntary turnover.⁷

The overall financial impact to an organization is more than the cumulative costs associated with finding a replacement and training of a new employee. Turnover imposes separation costs related to administrative functions within an organization such as exit interviews, processing release paperwork, and accounting for separation or severance pay. Costs are also associated with vacant positions such as increased overtime while a replacement is found, the hiring of temporary workers, lower productivity or lost sales.⁸ Additionally, turnover has the potential to be disruptive to business operations. Resources are required to train new employees, output may be reduced if a replacement is not immediately available or while new starters are on their learning curves, and internal and external teamwork and business relationships can be impacted.⁹ On many occasions the effects of employee turnover can have a disproportionate effect on an organization, particularly since the personnel a business usually wishes to retain are often the ones most likely to leave. As a result, organizations place a premium on efforts to recruit the right individuals, as well as retaining their talents.¹⁰

In an effort to address these issues there are multiple incentives available to employ within an organization's recruitment and retention policies. The effectiveness of these incentives relies greatly on a variety of factors. In most cases, analyzing the situation is complicated as

⁷ John Leopold, and Lynette Harris, *The Strategic Managing of Human Resources*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Pearson Education Ltd, 2009), 250-256; Gary Dessler, Nita Chhinzer, and Nina D. Cole, *Human Resources Management in Canada...*, 416-425.

⁸ Michael Armstrong, *Armstrong's Handbook of Human Resource Management Practice* (New York: Kogan Page, 2017), 290; Gary Dessler, Nita Chhinzer, and Nina D. Cole, *Human Resources Management in Canada...*, 418.

⁹ John Leopold, and Lynette Harris, *The Strategic Managing of Human Resources...*, 286-287; Michael Armstrong, *Armstrong's Handbook of Human Resource...*, 290.

¹⁰ Michael Armstrong, *Armstrong's Handbook of Human Resource...*, 289; Gary Dessler, Nita Chhinzer, and Nina D. Cole, *Human Resources Management in Canada...*, 416-418.

many factors are inter-connected and influenced by others. This makes a suitable course of action difficult to determine as each factor can carry a different weight and meaning for each employee. Combined with personal ambitions and differing career goals, developing and implementing effective recruitment and retention policies can quickly become an extremely complex, if not a wicked problem.¹¹

In order to better appreciate how these factors influence policies, they can be separated into three broad main categories: quality of work, quality of life, and quality of leadership. While not an exhaustive list, the following are main factors that play key roles in influencing an employee to join, or stay with an organization. Quality of work includes factors such as job satisfaction, work enjoyment, opportunity for advancement or promotion, work tempo, and a sense of pride in accomplishments and recognition. Quality of life incorporates factors such as pay and compensation, education opportunities, time at home, access to health care, a sense of financial security, gender and minority issues, personal values, and schedule stability. Quality of leadership encompasses factors such as the leadership abilities of senior management within the organization, the quality of leaders within an individual's direct reporting chain, and the overall status or how the organization is perceived within the industry.¹² While these factors present many challenges for an organization to address, there are a variety of means available to employ within a recruitment and retention strategy.

In the process of developing an effective recruitment and retention strategy, all organizations are restricted in their ability to take certain actions due to the limited resources they have available. With this in mind, priority is usually given to those actions which it is

¹¹ Brian Head, and John Alford, "Wicked Problems: Implications for Public Policy and Management," *Administration & Society* 47, no. 6 (2015): 712-718.

¹² Vasile Sminchise, "Military Retention: a Comparative Outlook." *Journal of Defense Resources Management* 7, no. 1 (2016): 85-89; Michael Armstrong, *Armstrong's Handbook of Human Resource...*, 289-290.

believed will provide the most overall benefit by either addressing a larger group within the organization, or focused on groups representing critical capabilities. While there are a variety of actions that can be taken in order to influence employee motivation and behaviour, they can be narrowed down into three categories: financial, social, and human resources measures. Each element has a varying degree of effectiveness on an individual depending upon their personal, professional, and desired future situation.¹³

Several of the most common financial measures used are bonuses. These can be in the form of increased pay for performance, specialty skills, and recruitment and retention purposes. With the goal of attracting future employees or, for current employees to commit to staying with the firm for a longer period of time, bonuses, when employed properly, can be a beneficial tool.¹⁴ In order to be effective, pay related benefits don't necessarily need to be competitive with other organizations; however, higher cumulative long term compensation or availability of other benefits are usually needed in order to offset the pay differences.¹⁵ Social measures are commonly used to augment financial benefits and meet this requirement.

Financial compensation receives a large amount of attention in relation to recruitment and retention strategies; however, many of the most influential actions an organization can take are in the form of social policies.¹⁶ These measures have been found to be more effective at attracting and, more importantly, retaining talent within an organization. While there are multiple means

¹³ Charles R. Greer, *Strategic Human Resource Management...*, 18-30; Michael Armstrong, *Armstrong's Handbook of Human Resource...*, 292-296.

¹⁴ Philip Hoglin, Angie Sturrock, Phil Brezzo, and David Goble, "Military Retention Bonuses: Fact and Fiction." *Australia Defence Force Journal* 186 (2011): 38-48.

¹⁵ Charles R. Greer, *Strategic Human Resource Management...*, 14-17; Gary Dessler, Nita Chhinzer, and Nina D. Cole, *Human Resources Management in Canada...*, 323-350.

¹⁶ Tom Morris, *If Aristotle Ran General Motors: The New Soul of Business* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1997), xiv; Canada, Department of National Defence, *Chief of the Defence Staff Guidance to Commanding Officers and their Leadership Teams* (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2017), 10-41 to 10-43; Charles R. Greer, *Strategic Human Resource Management...*, 14-17;

available, the most effective actions focus on: demonstrating that the organization values its employees (i.e. recognition programs, awards, public praise), providing opportunities to improve skills and education (i.e. training programs, attending professional conferences, funding graduate level studies), promoting diversity and reducing stigma (i.e. recognizing gender differences, disability support and accommodation), eliminating harassment (i.e. awareness and intervention programs, no tolerance policies, reporting and investigation programs), developing social ties within the organization (i.e. hosting social functions, team-building activities), fostering a sense of personal well-being (i.e. positive reinforcement, constructive performance feedback, stress management services), implementing family related support services (i.e. providing on-site daycare, family therapy and psychological support), supporting open communication (i.e. explain what is happening within the organization, why certain actions are being taken, ensuring employee voices are heard), and improving work-life balance (i.e. flexible work schedules, allowing time for personal engagements, respecting standard working hours). Social related policies may draw substantially on an organization's resources, which can be challenging to rationalize without a direct impact on operational output; however, they do have a significant amount of power in influencing employee's job satisfaction and for that employee to remain with the company. Cumulatively, social factors have the greatest effect on the overall culture within an organization and, when combined with appropriate human resource measures, can form an extremely effective recruitment and retention strategy.¹⁷

While social measures are usually seen as the "right thing to do" for employees, human resource measures focus on the employment and the legal rights of personnel.¹⁸ Commonly within civilian organizations these measures include: job design and task allocation (i.e. focused

¹⁷ Charles R. Greer, *Strategic Human Resource Management...*, 18-30; Michael Armstrong, *Armstrong's Handbook of Human Resource...*, 292-296.

¹⁸ Vasile Sminchise, "Military Retention...", 92-93.

tasks to maximize skill variety, autonomy, task significance), employment management (i.e. job stability, regional stability), career advancement opportunity and procedures (i.e. fairness, transparency), formal performance assessment programs (i.e. fair qualitative and quantitative focus vs. subjective, timely reporting, clarity), eliminating unpleasant working conditions (i.e. ergonomic work stations, following local safety laws and regulations), and a career schedule (i.e. terms of service, pension plan). While human resource measures by themselves may resolve many recruitment and retention issues, incorporating them with aspects of financial and social measures will provide a more robust and effective strategy.¹⁹

Overall, irrespective of how extensive a recruitment and retention strategy is employed, turnover will still occur. With limited resources available, most strategies will be unable to satisfy the requirements or desires of all personnel and there are limits to what an organization can do. Even with the best of intentions, there are instances when an employee may feel their needs have not been suitably met by an organization. Whether these feelings have been caused by a real event, or the perceived deficiencies of the employer, the situation will usually result in the employee leaving the organization. While these instances may be unavoidable, it is in the best interests of the company for management to minimize their occurrence. Ultimately, the most powerful factor influencing turnover is the market itself. It is widely believed that in the modern business environment that regardless of how pleasant and rewarding an organization is to work in, “it is impossible to shield your people from attractive opportunities and aggressive recruiters.” With this in mind, the modern recruitment and retention policies need to shift from the traditional goal of minimizing employee turnover to influencing who leaves and when.²⁰

¹⁹ Charles R. Greer, *Strategic Human Resource Management...*, 18-30; Michael Armstrong, *Armstrong's Handbook of Human Resource...*, 292-296.

²⁰ Michael Armstrong, *Armstrong's Handbook of Human Resource...*, 293.

Focusing on the management of turnover rather than its elimination should be the main goal of any recruitment and retention strategy. It is noteworthy that not all employee turnover is negative and that a small, manageable, and predictable rate is actually healthy for an organization. This allows a “reasonable flow of personnel to progress through the system and allow opportunity for both promotion and career enhancement activities.”²¹ Rates that are too low risk slowing promotion opportunities, increasing the average age of the workforce, limiting the ability to attract new talent, and affecting diversity.²² Overall, a balance is needed within an organization’s policies in an effort to manage and influence the recruitment and retention of the right people rather than attempt to completely eliminate it.

HRM within the Military

As a government organization, the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) does not have the same operational goals or aspirations as civilian companies; however, it does face many of the same challenges regarding human resource management. Highlighted within Strong, Secure, Engaged (SSE), people are recognized as being “at the core of everything the Canadian Armed Forces does to deliver on its mandate.”²³ This principle has been previously echoed throughout the CAF strategic level personnel policies and doctrine with a focus on “ensuring that the right people, having the critical competencies, skills and warrior spirit are in the right place, at the right time to achieve the desired effects.”²⁴ The RCAF takes this ideal one step further and has

²¹ Philip Hoglin, Angie Sturrock, Phil Brezzo, and David Goble, “Military Retention Bonuses...”, 41.

²² Philip Hoglin, Angie Sturrock, Phil Brezzo, and David Goble, “Military Retention Bonuses...”, 41; Charles R. Greer, *Strategic Human Resource Management...*, 44-49.

²³ Canada, Department of National Defence, *Strong, Secure Engaged: Canada’s Defence Policy* (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2017), 19.

²⁴ Canada, Department of National Defence, B-GL-005-100/FP-001, *Canadian Forces Joint Publication: Military Personnel Management Doctrine ...*, 1-2.

identified personnel as “the centre of gravity for the AF (Air Force).”²⁵ With this in mind, it is understandable that the numerous issues mentioned earlier also factor into the overall management of RCAF personnel and related policies. However, there are several other key aspects and challenges that are unique to military service that play an important role in RCAF policy development and implementation.

The most appreciable difference between civilian organizations and the CAF is the concept of the profession of arms. The fundamental purpose of the CAF is to apply the “ordered, lawful application of military force pursuant to governmental direction.”²⁶ In order to achieve this effectively, a professional, disciplined, highly trained team is required. This team is ultimately created through a series of training and education processes, the most essential of which is the development of the military ethos and culture.²⁷ While this system fosters many benefits such as cohesion, discipline, and commitment, it also brings about a considerable challenge – entry into the CAF, and consequently, the RCAF, requires a bottom up approach.

It is widely accepted that in order to instill the principles of the profession of arms, indoctrinate an individual into the military culture, and embrace the military ethos, it is necessary to start at the bottom and work up through the organization. Historically, this has proven to be an effective model to meet the military mandate; however, in the face of many modern personnel related issues, this model presents several limitations. Most importantly is that replacements for all positions, other than entry level, need to be resourced internally. There are extremely limited options available with which to enter the CAF laterally.²⁸ This places a premium on those CAF

²⁵ Canada, Department of National Defence, B-GA-407-001/FP-001, *Air Force Personnel Doctrine...*, 5-9.

²⁶ Canada, Department of National Defence, A-PA-005-000/AP-001, *Duty with Honour: The Profession of Arms in Canada* (Ottawa: Canadian Defence Academy, Canadian Forces Leadership Institute, 2009), 4.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 4-24.

²⁸ Canada, Department of National Defence, B-GA-407-001/FP-001, *Air Force Personnel Doctrine...*, 5-5.

members whose skills, training, and knowledge take time and experience to mature. This sways the recruitment and retention policies of the CAF and imposes a unique set of challenges which civilian and other government organizations do not normally experience.

The bottom up system has significantly influenced the way the CAF develops recruitment and retention policies. Historically, incentives have been used, similar to those used by civilian organizations, to entice personnel to join or continue to serve within the CAF. Financial incentives such as bonuses, increased rates of pay, and separate compensation for specialized skills or qualifications have all been used with varying degrees of success.²⁹ Numerous social measures have also been instituted such as honours and awards, education benefits, family support services, and embracing diversity. Human resource measures have also been employed with mandatory service requirements, promotion opportunities, performance assessments, multiple terms of service options, and overall job stability. While these all add value to employment within the CAF, the most powerful aspect remains the military mandate itself. Research has shown that while civilian organizations have the flexibility to better leverage extrinsic rewards (such as money), military service has the advantage of being able to provide more powerful intrinsic rewards (such as pride in the mission).³⁰ Overall, the RCAF has realized the limitations and consequences associated with the bottom up personnel system has employed a variety of strategies in its effort to better manage recruitment and retention issues.

While the CAF has embraced its unique employment situation, the effectiveness of the use of these incentives, as well as others over the years, has achieved mixed results. Many programs have been successful in attracting and retaining personnel; however, recent lower recruitment

²⁹ Philip Hoglin, Angie Sturrock, Phil Brezzo, and David Goble, "Military Retention Bonuses...", 42-48.

³⁰ Albert A. Robbert, B. Keltner, K. Reynolds, M. Spranca, and B. Benjamin, *Differentiation in Military Human Resource Management* (Washington: RAND, 1997), 10-22, 65.

rates, coupled with higher attrition rates, specifically within the RCAF, are concerning. Within the RCAF, operations have been impacted with tasked missions throughout several aircraft fleets having been reduced due to personnel shortages.³¹ While recruitment and retention has been a priority, the RCAF particularly will have difficulty achieving its operational mandate if these trends continue. Multiple new challenges are approaching on the horizon and the current strategies are not sufficient to address the personnel recruitment and retention issues. An alternate approach is needed to support these personnel initiatives in order to meet future operational demands.

Let Them Leave – An Alternative Approach

What if the RCAF adjusted its retention philosophy to be more accepting of personnel turnover? What if an approach was taken to support personnel leaving – but to provide better opportunities to bring them and their skills back? The critical issue within the RCAF isn't turnover itself, but rather who is leaving and at unexpected rates. A C-17 cannot take off with two First Officers, even though both are pilots, but it can with two Aircraft Commanders. Experienced Aircraft Commanders, senior technicians, air traffic controllers, instructors and evaluators are all at risk. These trades and positions are also some of the most difficult to replace due to the training and experience necessary. As mentioned earlier, the most powerful factor is the market itself and it is impossible to overcome its influence on all individuals. In order to meet future operational demands, the RCAF needs to attack the problem from a new vector. Approaching the problem in a manner that allows exiting personnel to embark on a new career

³¹ Canada, Department of National Defence, *RCAF Restricted Release* (Ottawa: CANAIRGEN 16/17 C AIR FORCE 23/17 311813Z Jul 17).

path, while also continuing to provide their skills to the RCAF, is needed. While this may not be possible throughout the RCAF, there is an opportunity within the Air Mobility Operational Training system to employ this strategy.

The initial framework for this approach exists within the Reserve Force structure. What don't exist are the types of positions that are of interest for personnel to want to return in a reserve capacity. For most aircrew instructors the driving factor is to continue flying. Technicians also desire to continue instructing and be involved with the hands on aspect of interacting with students. Many personnel have indicated during their release interviews that they would be favorable to returning in some capacity to the RCAF; however, there were no suitable positions for them to fill.³² Currently, many reserve positions within the Air Mobility training system are created to supplement the main efforts of the unit (i.e. course directors, support coordinators, staff and administrative positions). By employing principles highlighted within SSE and outlined in the concept of the Journey, the creation of meaningful flexible part-time reserve positions would provide an opportunity for key personnel to return to support the RCAF.

Other arguments have been presented contending that additional class B reserve positions are needed in order to address many of the same issues presented in this paper.³³ These arguments though, focus on those personnel that are departing the military for reasons such as geographic stability or a reduced operations tempo and are looking for full time employment in the same area. Additional class B positions will not act as an incentive for those people interested in pursuing a follow on career in civilian industry but also want to maintain a connection to and

³² Canada. Office of the Auditor General of Canada, *Report 5 - Canadian Armed Forces Recruitment and Retention...*, 20-25; The author was the Deputy Commanding Officer of 426 (Training) Squadron and conducted several release interviews during his tenure.

³³ This argument was presented in the Royal Canadian Air Force Association Advocacy Committee. "RCAFA Position Paper 01/2018: Issue: RCAF Personnel Challenge." Last accessed 2 May 2018. <http://rcafassociation.ca/advocacy/position-papers/2018-2/01-2018/>.

support the RCAF. While the terms of employment are an influential factor, a more challenging issue is evolving the way we manage the positions.

In addition to creating the right type of positions, the RCAF should adopt an approach where multiple personnel can be employed to fulfill the requirements of one position. For example, allowing three pilots to share the 10-12 days of flying instruction duties of a traditional class A reserve position. This would allow the needs of the unit to be met as well as accommodate the needs and availability of the individual. Having a roster of part-time personnel available to share the workload of a few positions would increase the flexibility of the system as well as provide an opportunity to retain some of the key talent that is currently leaving the RCAF. Commanding Officers should be provided the authority and ability to manage positions within their unit and extend part-time offers to suitable releasing personnel. This proposal is essentially applying job-sharing principles to the RCAF Reserve Force for both part-time and full time positions.

Having a stronger ability to influence the turnover of personnel from releasing from the RCAF would be ideal; however, that is not the current reality. Present-day attrition rates are higher than recruitment rates for many trades within the RCAF. The greatest impact is seen with the highest percentages of departing personnel being those with key skills and experience, which seriously affect RCAF operations. With the many recruitment and retention policies in place covering a wide range of concerns, it is not a matter of the RCAF not acknowledging or addressing a specific issue. For many, it is a case of the draw of the market being too strong to overcome. Rather than focus on ways to convince personnel to remain in the military, efforts should also be made to create the conditions to meet military requirements while supporting personnel to serve in a capacity that they are best able.

Counterarguments

One of the key concerns that has historically been raised when discussing the use of reserve positions to augment Regular Force operations has been that it will increase the number of personnel releasing. The main premise of this argument is that if provided the opportunity, people would prefer to perform the same job in the Reserve Force. The Reserve Force is seen as being able to provide more stability (in regards to deployments and geographic location), as well as maintaining a lower readiness posture, at least within the RCAF.³⁴ While this argument has some merit on a small scale, there are several factors that make it invalid for most people over the long term. The first issue to consider is that a part-time reserve position will not provide the same level of financial compensation as a full-time Regular Force position. This can be a significant issue for many personnel. Secondly, there are only a limited number of positions available. There may be a few additional people that decide to transfer to the reserve positions who otherwise were not thinking of releasing from the military; however, once the initial positions are filled this would only be a factor when a position becomes vacant again. More importantly, there are already a large number of key personnel who are departing the RCAF for positions in civilian organizations. The current strategies and policies are not sufficient. The opportunity to attract those people to stay, even if on a part-time basis should outweigh the risk of a small number of people transferring to the Reserve Force who would have otherwise stayed in the Regular Force. The focus should be on creating the conditions to retain talent, even if at a reduced capacity, rather than the low risk of attrition rates increasing slightly for a short period of time.

³⁴ Canada, Department of National Defence, B-GA-407-001/FP-001, *Air Force Personnel Doctrine...*, 6-4 to 6-8; Canada, Department of National Defence, *RCAF Flight Operations Manual* (Issued 22 September 2017).

Another argument against utilizing part-time reserve positions is that the profession of arms requires continuity in order for leadership to be effective.³⁵ While this argument has merit in many operational circumstances throughout the RCAF fleets, in the case of Air Mobility training, this is not a major factor. The culture within Air Mobility is used to not having set crews and flying missions with a variety of different people. There is a point where the professionalism of an individual is able to overcome this, particularly in a training environment where the leadership aspect of having the same supervisor is not as critical as having a qualified and experienced instructor. The operational training system also uses a variety of techniques to provide quality and effective instruction to support this. One of the methods involves using several instructors to train each student. This exposes them to a number of different instructional techniques and personalities while using multiple independent assessments to measure a student's progress. Using multiple instructors also ensures that a student is not unfairly exposed to a personality conflict with one specific instructor. Furthermore, the use of contractors increased within the Air Mobility training system over the past several years and has proven to be a valuable addition without sacrificing training and leadership continuity. In the case of aircrew flying positions, commercial airlines have proven that operations can be conducted in a safe and effective manner using personnel on a part-time basis without using set crews. The professionalism, experience, and knowledge of personnel qualified to fill reserve instructor positions would be more than sufficient to mitigate the low risk of continuity being a problem.

Relying on part-time instructors does carry some risk as personnel may only fill the reserve positions until they gain more seniority in their civilian jobs. This may become a factor;

³⁵ Canada, Department of National Defence, A-PA-005-000/AP-001, *Duty with Honour: The Profession of Arms in Canada* (Ottawa: Canadian Defence Academy, Canadian Forces Leadership Institute, 2009), 2-34; Canada, Department of National Defence, A-PA-005-000/AP-004, *Leadership in the Canadian Forces: Conceptual Foundations* (Ottawa: Canadian Defence Academy, Canadian Forces Leadership Institute, 2005), 6-13.

however, this is a manageable issue and is certainly a better situation than having the larger capability gap that would exist without the reserve instructors. Additionally, the retention of experienced aircrew and technicians within the RCAF can be considered a wicked problem. Following common theories and definitions, experimentation is needed while seeking a sustainable solution.³⁶ While implementing job-sharing type solution may not be sustainable for the long-term, it will at least provide an opportunity to bridge a part of the capability gap that is severely impacting Air Mobility operations. The immediate need is to relieve the pressure on current personnel, not only for their well-being, but also in an attempt to reduce further personnel turnover. An incremental approach to this problem has the potential to achieve meaningful results and set the conditions for further successes elsewhere within the RCAF.³⁷ Relieving the pressure will allow personnel to focus on their primary responsibilities, have a better quality of life, and potentially improve job satisfaction making them and more likely to remain within the RCAF.

Over the past several years the implementation of a robust simulation strategy has been used in an attempt to improve training methods, reduce the use of critical resources (i.e. aircraft), and reduce the time required to complete training. It can be argued that further advancements and fully embracing this simulation strategy should be able to mitigate some of the effects of personnel attrition as new recruits will be able to be trained faster. While this will certainly assist with the replacement of personnel in a number of cases, it will not sufficiently address the issue of replacing senior instructors, aircraft commanders, and senior technicians. In order to properly develop personnel to fulfil these roles, time and real world experience is needed. This is not

³⁶ Brian Head, and John Alford, "Wicked Problems...", 712-718; John C. Camillus, "Strategy as a Wicked Problem," *Harvard Business Review* 86. Last accessed 23 April 2018, <https://hbr.org/2008/05/strategy-as-a-wicked-problem>.

³⁷ Using the flywheel and the doom loop model outlined in Jim Collins, *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap...and Others Don't* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2001), 164-187.

something that can safely and effectively be rushed. If a higher than anticipated attrition rate is experienced in a given year, it will take several years to train replacements and suitably attenuate the operational impact.

So What?

The current recruitment and retention trends within the RCAF are not favorable to support RCAF operations in the future. While a guaranteed long term solution is desirable from the start, the situation requires an approach similar to that of solving a wicked problem. The immediate need of the RCAF is to retain certain skills, qualifications, and experience within the organization in order to train the future cadre of aircrew, air traffic control, maintainers, and technicians. If the pace of attrition does not slow, there is the potential for the situation to affect more personnel and the rate to increase as more pressure is placed on those who remain.

In the case of the proposal outlined in this paper, one potentially significant benefit of having the operational training system rely more on reserve personnel is that it would allow the Regular Force personnel to be prioritized at operational squadrons. While contractors have been beneficial in many ways, they are not able to accomplish all required tasks (such as flying instruction) and do not have the same level of flexibility within their contracts as military members do. There should always remain a cadre of Regular Force instructors at the training units in order to provide experience and course stability; however, the number of current positions can be decreased with a few changes to the manning structure. By augmenting the existing Regular Force and contractor instructor cadre with multiple part-time reserve instructors, manning pressures can be reduced.

In addition to having the potential to retain certain personnel, there are several secondary benefits that may be realized with this proposal. While not directly beneficial to the military, Canadians as a whole do benefit from the expansion of commercial airlines and the aviation industry. Military training and experience brings with it a level of professionalism that is respected within the industry, and with that comes a heightened sense of security and safety. A strong and secure commercial aviation industry can also be viewed as having a positive effect on national Air Power, within the broader definition of the term.³⁸

From a financial perspective, every additional day that a highly technical and experienced member serves in a capacity that they were trained provides a better return on the investment the government has made. Additionally, retaining personnel in uniform provides further opportunities to influence them and possibly return to a full time position.

Providing opportunities for personnel to remain connected or return to the RCAF, even if in a limited capacity also has the potential to improve diversity. Employing personnel in both civilian and military roles creates an opportunity for knowledge, values, and experiences to be shared between both organizations. Best training practices on both sides will influence a member's behaviour as well as provide alternate opportunities to improve their skills.

Conclusion

Human resources management theories and principles cover a wide range of topics; however, few are associated as closely to the success of an organization as those dealing with the

³⁸ Definition: "the full potential of a nation's air capability, in peace as well as war, in civilian as well as military pursuits." David MacIsaac, "Voices from the Central Blue: The Air Power Theorists," in Peter Paret, ed., *Makers of Modern Strategy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 625.

recruitment and retention of personnel. Regardless of the type of organization, people are considered to be the most valuable resource available and the management of this resource can have substantial consequences if not done appropriately. While unique in many ways, both civilian and military organizations experience many of the same recruitment and retention challenges and have adopted similar methods when implementing HRM policies. However, the differences between the organizations are a factor, and will play out over the next 20 years, as demand for personnel within the aviation industry increases. During this time the RCAF will be challenged to meet recruiting objectives, as well as to retain the talent it has spent the time, money, and efforts developing. While previous policies and actions have been successful in achieving these goals, they are no longer providing the same results. As society changes, a new approach to the employment structure within the RCAF is needed. Specifically, the RCAF should implement a more flexible and creative reserve employment policy to compliment recruiting and retention initiatives.

The RCAF needs to adapt in order to meet its future operational objectives. The proposed alternative approach in this paper has the potential to address and resolve immediate and pressing issues. As a part of the profession of arms and a bottom up organization, the RCAF is limited in its options to recruit and retain personnel. Using the desired type of reserve positions in a job-sharing manner will provide the opportunity for that member to continue contributing to the RCAF mission, even if in a reduced capacity. This approach has the potential to help the RCAF bridge the capability gap that is widening each day as the competition for talented individuals increases. Many people are making the tough decision to leave the RCAF after serving a meaningful career. Adopting the alternate approach will help the RCAF create the opportunities to make it an easier decision for valued team members to return.

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