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CANADIAN FORCES COLLEGE / COLLÈGE DES FORCES CANADIENNES
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EXERCISE/EXERCICE NEW HORIZONS

PREVENTION OF SPOUSAL ABUSE IN THE CANADIAN FORCES

By /par Maj D.L. Herrington

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Abstract

Family violence is a serious problem in Canada and in the Canadian Forces (CF). The CF is committed to improving its measures to prevent family violence, and in particular, the abuse of spouses by military members. This paper analyzes the CF Family Abuse prevention programme and offers ways in which to improve the prevention of spousal abuse. Its major conclusions include weaknesses in the CF prevention plan, such as the absence of a means by which to attack the underlying link between male attitudes toward women; the absence of a means by which to ensure that commanders at all levels actively promote an environment wherein military members with problems may seek help without prejudice or reprisal; and certain deficiencies in the reporting and intervention of CF cases. Recommendations include the adoption of best practices from the US military and other agencies, such as a victim advocate programme and sensitization training; the fostering of a military environment in which members may seek help without jeopardizing their careers or being subjected to peer prejudice; and modifications to the CF reporting and intervention procedures for family violence, to encourage victims to come forward for assistance.

*"Family Violence, in any form, is abhorrent and cannot be tolerated in the CF."*¹

Family violence is a serious problem in Canada. In a 1999 Statistics Canada survey, approximately 220,000 women and 177,000 men reported that they had been victims of spousal violence within the previous year.² Annual costs for Canadian Government medical, social services, and criminal justice expenses have been estimated at over four billion dollars.³ Victims of family violence suffer tremendously, both physically and psychologically. In extreme cases, a person kills or severely injures another family member.⁴ Furthermore, family violence spreads from generation to generation - children who experience or witness violence at home often grow up to become adult perpetrators.⁵ Unfortunately, the Canadian Forces (CF) is not immune to this "destructive social phenomenon".⁶

¹ Department of National Defence, *CANFORGEN 055/00 CDS 031 151249Z MAY 00*, (hereafter referred to as CANFORGEN 055/00).

² Statistics Canada, *Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile 2002*, [http://www/hc-sc.gc.ca/hppb/familyviolence/famvio_e.html].

³ Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women, *Assessing Violence Against Women: A Statistical Profile*, [http://www.swc-cfc.gc.ca/pubs/0662331664/200212-0662331664_e.pdf].

⁴ Department of National Defence, *Defence Administrative Orders and Directives (DAOD) 5044-4, Family Violence*.

⁵ *Family Violence Canada: The Facts*, [http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hppb/familyviolence/html/fvfa_e.html].

⁶ DAOD 5044-4 and LGen C. Couture, *Family Violence Action Plan* (National Defence Headquarters Ottawa), 25 January 2002, with updated plan dated 25 March 2003 (provided by Cdr H. Armstrong, Director Quality of Life 7 - Family Policy Team Leader, via e mail 7 April 2003), (hereafter referred to as *Family Violence Action Plan*) and The Family Violence and the Military Community research teams of the Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Family Violence at the University of New Brunswick and the RESOLVE Violence and Abuse Research Centre at the University of Manitoba, *Report on the Canadian Forces' Response to Women Abuse in Military Families*, [<http://www.unbf.ca/arts/CFVR/military.htm>], (hereafter referred to as *Report on the Canadian Forces' Response to Women Abuse in Military Families*).

According to National Defence Headquarters (NDHQ) statistics, between 1999 and 2002, there were 462 cases of family violence reported in the CF.⁷ However, the CF Deputy Chief of Staff Medical Policy/Social Work Policy & Standards stresses that this number is likely far below the actual number of cases.⁸ The statistics are unreliable; there is no central point for recording cases reported on Bases and no way of knowing how many cases were reported directly to civilian agencies. Furthermore, definitions of violence and abuse have been interpreted differently amongst the professions and there is no consistent measurement used. Moreover, CF Social Workers believe that many cases are not reported, an inaction which is consistent with the civilian population's trends.⁹ Many victims may not report abuse because they fear they will not be believed, particularly if they have no physical marks or wounds. Many are also concerned that they will lose their spouse's income, be unable to obtain a good job and thus subject themselves and their children to poverty. Others may be hesitant to come forward because they believe that their spouse might increase the violence as punishment for getting them into trouble.¹⁰ It is impossible to know the exact number of cases of family

⁷ Maj GD Doyle, National Defence Headquarters Social Work Program Development, *Social Work Yearly Statistics*, (unpublished, provided by e mail 11 April 2003).

⁸ Interview with LCol H. Matheson, National Defence Headquarters, Canadian Forces Deputy Chief of Staff Medical Policy/Social Work Policy & Standards, via telephone, 8 April 2003.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Murray A. Straus, *Sexual Inequality, Cultural Norms, and Wife-Beating*, [<http://pubpages.unh.edu/~mas2/v13.pdf>] and *Report on Canadian Forces' Response to Woman Abuse*.

violence in the CF. As a result, the CF will "not even talk about numbers."¹¹

Although the total number of cases is unknown, the severity of violence has varied from instances of spitting, threatening, slapping, pushing, and hair-pulling, to instances where victims are hospitalized and others murdered.¹² The CF takes the issue of family violence very seriously and believes that the problem warrants considerable effort in prevention and intervention.¹³ Research indicates that certain aspects of military life make it more difficult for victims who are spouses of CF members than for those in the civilian community to cope with the impact of family violence. These aspects include victims' economic dependency on their CF spouses, frequent postings, an unfamiliar and closed environment, peculiarities of Married Quarter neighbourhoods, and, in some cases, language disadvantages. "Military life makes members of military families, and in particular military spouses, especially socially vulnerable."¹⁴ Furthermore, the CF has entered into a "social contract" with military families - it has taken on the responsibility to assist in resolving all types of family related problems.¹⁵ Similar to the US military's approach, family violence in the CF "is an offence against ... institutional values. One incident of domestic violence is one too many."¹⁶ The CF should be a model for the rest of society; it is our duty to uphold Canadian values and to

¹¹ Interview with LCol Matheson, via telephone, 6 May 03.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ CANFORGEN 055/00.

¹⁴ *Report on the Canadian Forces' Response to Woman Abuse in Military Families.*

¹⁵ Interview with LCol Matheson, 6 May 03.

¹⁶ United States Department of Defense News Release No. 145- 00, March 24, 2000, [http://dod.mil/news/Mar2000/b03242000_bt145-00.html].

act more responsibly than civilian citizens.¹⁷ Hence, the CF is taking action against family violence. In its Family Violence Action Plan, the CF shows strong commitment to prevent family violence, to establish appropriate procedures to respond to incidents, and to rehabilitate affected families.¹⁸ This is an excellent initiative, but its approach to prevention has certain inadequacies. The CF believes strongly that as long as the problem exists, there will always be a need to do more.¹⁹

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate how the CF Family Abuse prevention programme can be improved in the area of spousal abuse.

To support the suggestions for improvement, this essay will first introduce the CF definition of family abuse and explain why the paper focuses on spousal abuse, to establish its importance. Then, it will present links, risk factors and characteristics of abusers, to provide an appreciation for the underlying causes of spousal violence and to lay a basis for later analysis of prevention measures. The essay will then describe and analyze the CF plan for prevention of family violence, identifying its strengths and weaknesses. Finally, it will suggest ways in which the shortfalls could be addressed.

To understand why the CF needs to improve its family abuse prevention programme in the area of spousal abuse, one must have a general appreciation of what comprises family violence. The CF defines family violence as:

... an abuse of power within a relationship of family, trust or dependency, and includes many forms of abusive behaviour, e.g., emotional abuse, psychological

¹⁷ US News Release No. 145- 00 and Canadian Forces College, *Canada's Army Chapter 2 - Professionalism and Ethos - The Army's Essence*, [http://barker.cfc.dnd.ca/Admin/jointdocs/canadasarmy/c2.en.html].

¹⁸ *Family Violence Action Plan*.

¹⁹ Interview with LCol Matheson, 6 May 03.

abuse, neglect, financial exploitation, destruction of property, injury to pets, physical assault, sexual assault and homicide.²⁰

This definition is broad, encompassing a wide range of abuse committed by one family member against another; however, there is little extant literature on CF involvement in family violence other than spousal abuse. Child abuse is not dealt with in depth because the seriousness of child abuse and the responsibilities for reporting it to proper authorities tend to be more widely understood and followed by most people. However, that is not the case with spousal abuse.²¹

Spousal abuse occurs both in homosexual and heterosexual relationships. There is much debate amongst experts in the field of family violence over which gender is more prone to commit spousal violence - men or women.²² It is a controversial issue but it merits discussion because it is important to understand why most research on causal factors, response to reports and treatment efficacy for family violence is focused on male offenders.

In the 1999 Statistics Canada Survey, the number of men and women claiming to have been victims of some form of spousal violence within a one-year period was very close.²³ Without a doubt, there are men who are abused by their female partners and some who are seriously injured or killed.²⁴ However, research indicates that most often,

²⁰ DAOD 5044-4.

²¹ Interview with LCol H.G. Matheson, 8 April 03.

²² Leslie Tutty, *Husband Abuse: An Overview of Research and Perspectives*, [<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hppb/familyviolence/pdfs/husbandenglish.pdf>] and Murray A. Straus, *The Controversy Over Domestic Violence by Women*, [<http://pubpages.unh.edu/~mas/CTS21.pdf>].

²³ *Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile 2002*.

²⁴ Capt Robyn Chumley, "Behind Closed Doors", in *Airman*, November 1994.

women are violent towards men in retaliation or self-defence.²⁵ In contrast, men often use violence in the absence of aggression from their spouses.²⁶ Female victims tend to suffer more chronic, ongoing abuse and their injuries are generally more serious than most men's.²⁷ For instance, in the US, men are judged three times more likely to severely assault their non-violent wives than the other way around. In Canada, twice as many women are beaten, almost twice as many women are injured by dangerous weapons, and five times as many women are choked than are men.²⁸ Due to CF demographics, the most common form of family abuse cases managed in the CF involve violence against female spouses.²⁹ Therefore, this paper will primarily focus on spousal abuse by male CF members. However, it is emphasized that other types of family violence are equally important and steps must be taken to prevent them all. Examining possible causes is a good start.

Social scientists offer a number of different theories but no definitive causes for family violence. Instead, they indicate certain links, risk factors and abuser personality profiles to explain the phenomenon, including, among others: passing a cycle of violence from one generation to the next; alcohol abuse; low socio-economic status; stress;

²⁵ Murray Straus, *Victims and Aggressors in Marital Violence*, [<http://pubpages.unh.edu/~VA21.pdf>].

²⁶ Tutty.

²⁷ *Assessing Violence Against Women: A Statistical Profile*.

²⁸ Straus, *Victims and Aggressors in Marital Violence* and *Assessing Violence Against Women: A Statistical Profile*.

²⁹ Interview with LCol Matheson, 8 May 03.

personality factors; occupational factors; and social attitudes.³⁰ It is worthwhile to examine each of these individually, beginning with the cycle of violence.

"...Violence perpetuates itself through intergenerational transmission of violence."³¹ Many adult abusers once suffered family abuse or witnessed it as children.³² It is generally well known that an individual's personality and ethical behaviour are influenced heavily by upbringing. Research indicates that this particularly applies to violent behaviour. Even when a child has not experienced abuse as defined by the CF, there is a risk for learning violent behaviour if he has been repeatedly punished physically.³³ Parents may inadvertently teach their children that, under certain circumstances, it is normal and morally right to hit family members. Ironically, by using corporal punishment with the desire to raise disciplined, respectful and law-abiding citizens, parents instead may be contributing to an association between love and hitting within the family environment.³⁴ Logically, this theory could be extended to psychological abuse, too. Some children who are exposed to a wide range of verbal threats, emotional manipulation, and self-esteem put-downs may repeat these tactics in

³⁰ Department of National Defence Canada Operational Research Division ORD Report 9602: *Military Family Violence and Violence Against Women: Causes and Incidence*, Ottawa, November 1996, (hereafter referred to as ORD Report 9602), p 14.

³¹ Stephen J. Brannen and Elwood R. Hamlin II, "Understanding Spouse Abuse in Military Families", in *The Military Family: A Practice Guide for Human Service Providers*, ed by James A. Martin, Leora N. Rosen, and Linette R. Sparacino, (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2000), p 176.

³² *Ibid*, and Family Violence Canada, The Facts.

³³ Strauss, *Victims and Aggressors in Marital Violence*.

³⁴ *Ibid*.

their own families, thus perpetuating the abuse. There is also a strong link between alcohol and family violence.³⁵

It may be that alcohol alters a person's judgment and temperament, so that he commits violent acts that he would not do if sober. Or, a person may choose to use alcohol to have an excuse for behaving violently. Regardless of the reason, there is evidence of more spousal violence in relationships where drinking is a problem. Men who are heavy drinkers or binge drinkers are two-to-three times more likely to assault their wives than are abstainers. However, alcohol use is not always a precursor to violence - one study shows that alcohol was not a factor in seventy-six percent of violence cases examined. Clearly, not all alcohol abusers hurt their spouses and not all family violence is caused by alcohol abuse. It is unlikely that alcohol rehabilitation treatment alone would prevent incidences of family violence. Socio-economic status also plays a part.³⁶

Men in lower socio-economic groups are somewhat more likely to abuse their wives than are men in higher socio-economic groups, but not by a wide margin.³⁷ There is a link between family violence, economic hardship, and financial pressures. People experiencing financial difficulties may experience low self-esteem and high levels of frustration, both of which may contribute to higher rates of violence.³⁸ Additionally, some people in lower socio-economic groups may be more apt to accept violent

³⁵ Glenda Kantor and Murray Straus, *The "Drunken Bum" Theory of Wife Beating*. [<http://pubpages.unh.edu/~mas2/VB4.pdf>].

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ ORD Report 9602, pp 15-16.

behaviour as a cultural norm.³⁹ It is also possible that abused spouses in higher socio-economic classes are less likely to report family violence because of the potential impact of the consequences of disclosure in terms of shame and loss of social stature.⁴⁰ In the military, studies show that "the higher the rank, the lower the rate of abuse".⁴¹ There may be a tendency for fewer reports on officers to be recorded.⁴² Suspicions have been raised that in the CF, offences committed by officers are more likely to be covered up. Military Police, senior Non-Commissioned Members (NCM), and human service professionals have provided specific instances of cover-ups of officers' behaviour to a Family Violence research team. Some of them suggested that there has been an effort to prevent public knowledge of certain officers' wrongdoings. They contend that it is easier to hide offences by officers because they have fewer people above them in the chain-of-command than do NCMs. However, the same research team interviewed members who supervised officers, and they denied the allegation.⁴³ In spite of this denial, it is clear that family abuse is committed by people of all socio-economic groups, so any plan for prevention must target the entire spectrum.⁴⁴ Although difference in socio-economic

³⁹ Murray Straus, Glenda Kantor and David Moore, *Change in Cultural Norms Approving Marital Violence From 1968 to 1994*, [<http://pubpages.unh.edu/~mas2/V54.pdf>].

⁴⁰ *Report on the Canadian Forces' Response to Women Abuse in Military Families*.

⁴¹ Ord Report 9602, p 16.

⁴² LT Wasileski, LT Martha Callaghan-Chaffee and LT Blake Chaffee, "Spousal Violence in Military Homes: An Initial Survey", in *Military Medicine*, Vol 147, September 1982, p 764.

⁴³ *Report on the Canadian Forces' Response to Woman Abuse in Military Families*.

⁴⁴ Heike Hasenauer, *Lives Full of Fear*, [<http://www.dtic.mil/search97bin/aulimp/viewer?YEAR=1992&ID=6964>].

status is not a major factor in family abuse, the presence of high stress is a significant risk factor for family violence.⁴⁵

People often respond to stress and frustration with aggression.⁴⁶ In a 1996 US study of ninety-six military couples involved in family violence, the most frequently reported stressors were separation of the family for military service and marital stress in general.⁴⁷ Other reports of stressors include work-related problems, financial difficulties, and an inability to communicate.⁴⁸ Additionally, members suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) are believed to be at an increased risk to commit family violence.⁴⁹ There are also a number of personality factors that have been linked with family abuse.

Research indicates that abusive men tend to share certain common characteristics, including low self-esteem, distrust and suspicion of others, sexist attitudes, an inability to empathize, immaturity, dependence, low tolerance to frustration, extreme jealousy towards spouse, and poor impulse control.⁵⁰ Mental health problems can also be a factor, but mental illness is not the cause of violent behaviour in the vast majority of cases.⁵¹

⁴⁵ Wasileski, *et al*, p 762.

⁴⁶ Strauss, *Victims and Aggressors in Marital Violence*.

⁴⁷ Branen and Hamlin, p 173.

⁴⁸ Wasileski, *et al*, p 762 and Hasenauer.

⁴⁹ Kimberly Guest, *Social Aspects of PTSD: PTSD and the Family*, [http://www.mfnab.forces.gc.ca/engraph/annexD_e.asp].

⁵⁰ CPT David Hurlbert and Karen Whittaker, "Etiological Characteristics of Abusive Husbands", in *Military Medicine*, Vol 156, December 1991, pp 673-674 and *ORD Report 9602*, p 18..

⁵¹ Julio Arboleda-Florez, Heather Holley and Annette Crisanti, *Mental Illness and Violence: Proof or Stereotype?*, [<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hppb/familyviolence/html/testmentalillness.htm>] and Lee Ann Hoff, *Violence Issues: An Interdisciplinary Curriculum Guide for Health Professionals*, August 1994, [www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hppb/familyviolence/html/violencei/1violencei.htm].

Some researchers believe that the military profession may influence some military members to behave violently at home.

It may be that the profession of arms attracts people with more violent personalities than other occupations, because the primary function of a military member is to fight wars and to kill others when necessary. Or possibly, combat training may mould members into more aggressive individuals, and the violence in the job may carry over into other areas. Another theory is that some members of the military have so much power and control at work that they wish to exercise it at home, as well. On the other hand, those who feel they have little power and control at work may feel a need to gain excessive power and control at home in compensation. Nevertheless, there is no empirical evidence that the violence in the military profession presents a higher risk factor for members to commit family violence.⁵² However, there is a strong link between social attitudes and family violence.

Many researchers have concluded that the social attitudes of abusers play a large factor in family abuse:

...the use of violence and other tactics of power and control by offenders is based upon attitudes and values of entitlement and is often rewarded with a privileged position that they are unwilling, not unable, to relinquish.⁵³

⁵² ORD 9602, pp 19-20.

⁵³ [United States] Defense Task Force on Domestic Violence Third Year Report 2003, [http://www.dtic.mil/domesticviolence/reports/DV_RPT3.PDF].

There is a strong link between social attitudes of male control over women and the instances of male violence against their spouses and other women in general.⁵⁴ A theory contends that spousal abuse is about male control in a relationship, the "assertion of male privilege."⁵⁵ This is reinforced in a culture where men are considered to be the "head of [the] household"⁵⁶ and where "the role of "bread winner" is still a powerful one, interfering with the ability of many males to consider women as equals".⁵⁷ Some people can change their attitudes, however, and this may go a long way toward preventing family abuse.

Family violence can be prevented - people can change their attitudes toward others, modify their behaviour, and learn non-violent responses to stress and conflict.⁵⁸ Although it is unrealistic to expect that one hundred percent of family violence can be eliminated, the CF must strive to do all that it can. By taking action to prevent family violence, the CF "...can ensure the unity, readiness and total defence capability of [its]

⁵⁴ *Assessing Violence Against Women: A Statistical Profile 2002.*

⁵⁵ LTC Stephan Brannen, *et al*, "Spouse Abuse: Physician Guidelines to Identification, Diagnosis and Management in the Uniformed Services", in *Military Medicine*, Vol 164, January 1999, p 32.

⁵⁶ Hulbert and Whittaker.

⁵⁷ Department of National Defence Canada, Operational Research Division ORD Report 9701, Military Family Violence and Violence Against Women: Qualitative Data, p 7.

⁵⁸ Hoff.

Forces." ⁵⁹ The first step in preventing family violence in the CF begins with the recruiting process.

The CF National Recruiters Course now includes a briefing on family violence to teach recruiters how to screen out people displaying unacceptable characteristics or backgrounds. There is also a psychological screening test being developed to determine candidates' behavioural unsuitability to join the CF. These measures may enhance the existing methods used in screening potential recruits, such as medical examinations and criminal record checks.⁶⁰ It is unrealistic, however, to expect that the CF will be successful in eliminating all family violence through the recruiting process. Consequently, the CF has formalized a policy and process for dealing with the issue.

The CF has established a structure to handle family violence issues. At the top, the CF Family Violence Advisory Committee at NDHQ holds overall responsibility for the CF policy on family violence prevention and intervention. The committee is made up of civilian spouses of military members; civilian community family violence experts; a representative from the CF Personnel Service Agency - Health Promotion; the Canadian Forces Provost Marshal; the Chaplain General; the Director General Health Services; the Director Military Family Services; and the Director Quality of Life. At Base level, there is a Family Crisis Team that includes medical personnel; chaplains; military police; Military Family Resource Centre (MFRC) prevention and intervention coordinators; and

⁵⁹ The Miles Foundation, Inc.,
[http://members.aol.com/_ht_a/milesfdn/myhomepage/index.html?mtbrand=AOL_US].

⁶⁰ *Family Violence Action Plan*.

civilian community health and social service providers. The Team leader is normally the Base Social Work Officer, who is responsible for the Base family prevention plan.⁶¹

The CF plan to prevent family violence is contained in Defence Administrative Order and Directive (DAOD) 5044-4 and amplified in the CF Family Violence Action Plan.⁶² It consists of basic education on family violence for CF members and their families; professional education for people responsible for responding to family violence incidents; training that new Base Commanders, Wing Commanders and Commanding Officers (COs) must take within 90 days of assuming command; and direction on intervention and follow-up action.⁶³ The CF Family Violence Action Plan describes a communication and education plan in more detail:

Controlling aggression and determining the appropriate criteria for the legitimate use of force is integral to all military training. ... both officer and non-commissioned members' developmental training includes components dealing with resolution of personal problem, promoting ethical behaviour, managing stress, characteristics of human behaviour, conflict resolution techniques, social support services, signs and symptoms of post-traumatic stress, etc.⁶⁴

The Family Action Plan highlights the role of the MFRCs. The centres organize various events that are open to all family members, including family violence general awareness briefings, seminars on legal issues, and assertiveness training. Additionally, MFRCs disseminate literature on family violence. As well, the Action Plan states that training on family violence will be incorporated into existing CF courses at various rank levels. The briefings will include "...recurring information for a continued and lasting

⁶¹ DAOD 5044-4.

⁶² *Family Violence Action Plan*.

⁶³ DAOD 5044-4 and *Family Violence Action Plan*.

message that family abuse under any circumstances is wrong."⁶⁵ However, when abuse does occur, CF members must follow the procedures laid down in DAOD 5044-4.

DAOD 5044-4 instructs the supervisor to:

- a. direct the alleged abuser to contact the Family Crisis Team Leader;
- b. if someone's imminent safety is at risk - immediately inform the military or civilian police;
- c. if child abuse is suspected - immediately inform child welfare authorities;
- d. provide support to the victim by encouraging her to seek appropriate assistance; and
- e. inform the CO if the matter is likely to impact on the service of the CF member.⁶⁶

Once the CO is informed, he is advised to seek legal advice and eventually, to determine what administrative action should be taken against the CF member.⁶⁷ Although not specified in DAOD 5044-4, administrative action in the CF could include counselling, the issuance of a Recorded Warning, Counselling and Probation, or release from the CF. Administrative action may be taken in concert with or in the absence of disciplinary or legal action against the member.⁶⁸ These consequences would be considered in cases where family violence was not prevented. It would now be useful to examine both the positive aspects and the shortfalls of the CF family prevention plan by analyzing how it addresses the root causes of spousal violence identified earlier in this paper.

⁶⁴ *Family Violence Action Plan.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ DAOD 5044-4.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Canadian Forces Administrative Order (CFAO) 26-17, Recorded Warning and Counselling and Probation.

The current CF plan has strengths and weaknesses. On the positive side, the CF attempts to address most of the factors that are linked with family violence, either through measures specific to family violence or through other social programmes. MFRCs offer courses and literature on topics not directly related to family violence, such as effective parenting and building positive marital relationships, all of which may assist in ending the cycle of violence. However, attendance at these seminars is not obligatory. In addition, most of the courses are held on military bases and it is highly unlikely that many offenders would risk being seen by fellow members at such a forum. Furthermore, a Department of National Defence (DND) study concluded that disseminating information to increase awareness is ineffective because it does not reach those people who need it the most - the people who are the most violent and abusive.⁶⁹ Therefore, the plan to prevent the cycle of violence is weak. Next, the link with alcohol will be examined against the family violence prevention plan.

The CF has policy and intervention procedures to deal with members who abuse alcohol. Members may volunteer to attend alcohol rehabilitation courses when their abuse has not been identified by their superiors, or they may be directed to attend the courses and given a Recorded Warning or other administrative measures when their alcohol abuse has been formally recognized.⁷⁰ This treatment for alcohol abuse may result in the reduction of family violence by abusers who harm their family members only when they are drinking and who are successful in overcoming their alcohol addiction. The CF assistance to members experiencing financial problems will be examined next.

⁶⁹ ORD Report 9701, p 21.

⁷⁰ CFAO 19-31, Misuse of Alcohol.

There are financial counselors on all CF bases who can provide financial assistance to members in the way of low-interest loans, grants and advice on budgeting, depending on the individual's situation. This may help people who are experiencing temporary financial difficulties to get out of debt, and some may learn to better control their resources. This, in turn, may reduce the link between family violence and economic hardship for some abusers. However, some CF members are reluctant to use this assistance because they fear that information on their financial difficulties may go to their supervisors. This could prove to be embarrassing for the member, or negatively influence their superiors' opinion of their character and capabilities. Also, when members' severe financial difficulties begin to affect their work, supervisors may issue Recorded Warnings, etc., to prevent the members becoming administrative burdens on the military. Consequently, not all CF members who need financial help will seek it. The CF is also struggling with attempts to assist members in coping with high stress.

Over the past decade, there have been many stress reduction seminars offered by the CF. At these seminars, people learn how to recognize stress factors in their lives and are given advice on how to reduce unnecessary stress and how to cope more effectively with unavoidable stress. There are also briefings provided to members and their families on the stress specific to military life, such as family separation arising from operational deployments, family difficulties in re-adjusting to the member's return, and information on PTSD. Additionally, CF members returning from deployments are now individually screened by Medical Officers for signs of PTSD. The CF also has special centres to treat members diagnosed with PTSD. Some people benefit from these measures, while others do not. It is widely known that many CF members continue to experience stress-related

health and social problems, especially in today's climate of increased operations and decreased personnel strength. Therefore, efforts to reduce family violence through stress-reduction programmes would have minimal effect. People with certain character traits may find it even harder to cope with stress.

As indicated earlier, the CF attempts to screen out people who display personality disorders and undesirable character traits during the recruiting process. However, it is questionable whether the CF can reliably screen for family violence. Therefore, likely it would be impossible to prevent all people with potential for family violence from joining the CF.⁷¹

The CF deals with members who have personality disorders and mental health problems in a variety of ways, including group seminars, individual treatment, and in severe cases, release from the CF. Examples of training designed to eliminate certain types of negative social behaviour include anger management seminars; courses on the prevention of harassment and racist behaviour; briefings on the fair treatment of minority groups; and training in ethics.⁷² Members requiring individual treatment may receive it from Social Workers, non-specialist Medical Officers, psychologists, or psychiatrists. Some people receive treatment within the CF environment, and some are treated by civilian specialists. All of these measures are positive but the author's experience working in the administrative field has shown that there are CF members who do not always receive the treatment they need because of several factors.

In the military, asking for behavioural or psychological help is often thought of as a sign of weakness - a lack of moral fibre. This perception fosters the stigma that

⁷¹ Interview with LCol Matheson, 8 April 2003.

prevents many people from seeking assistance.⁷³ Furthermore, many CF members believe that their problems are not kept confidential.⁷⁴ Additionally, some CF COs are reluctant to allow members the necessary time off for appointments; they put workplace requirements ahead of the member's needs.⁷⁵ Many COs quickly take action to place members on the Service Personnel Holding List (SPHL) so that the unit can receive a replacement. This often leads to the CF hastening career

policy on the employment of women. Unlike in the past, now all military occupations are open to female members; women receive the same pay as their male counterparts; females attend Royal Military College and the Canadian Forces College; promotion opportunities are equal for both genders; and women are no longer forced out of the CF if they marry or have children. This equal treatment of female CF members with male members may influence men to have an attitude of equality toward their spouses, as well. However, there is evidence that some men in the CF use certain aspects of military life to increase their power and control over their spouses and to diminish the power and control of their spouses.⁷⁷

There have been men who have emphasized to their wives that wives have no status in the military environment - that if they were to separate, the wives would have no entitlement to stay in the married quarter (if applicable); they would not receive any portion of the husband's pay (unless ordered by the Court); and they would not receive any benefits to move back to the location of their parents or other support. Additionally, some men have kept their wives from accessing assistance from MFRCs, and have warned them to keep quiet about family problems in general. Some men have told their wives that if their problems were to get back to the workplace, their careers could be jeopardized.⁷⁸ In fact, all of this is true. The CF cannot legally provide pay and benefits of a member to his spouse without a Court Order. Technically, the CF cannot pressure a member to look after his family, either, because his pay and benefits are his to do with as

⁷⁶ *Report on Canadian Forces' Response to Woman Abuse.*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Report on the Canadian Forces' Response to Woman Abuse.*

he wishes and any military interference could legally be considered as harassment.⁷⁹

There is very little that the CF can do to help victims in these circumstances, except to help them seek assistance from civilian support agencies. The reason why this sort of situation can be more debilitating for military spouses than for civilians is because the military spouse is more likely to be far away from her relatives and close friends and, because of frequent postings, less likely to have been able to build a solid career. This can result in the military spouse becoming very dependent on her husband both physically and emotionally.⁸⁰ To counteract this, MFRCs strive to reach out to all military families, and offer spouses assistance in job-finding, skills upgrading, building self-esteem, and temporary crisis counselling.⁸¹ This is a positive initiative that may help some individuals. However, it does not address the root of the problem - the attitudes of members who abuse their spouses. The key to preventing abuse may be in changing those attitudes, and the CF plan can be improved in this area.

This paper will not offer ways in which to address all of the weaknesses in the CF plan to reduce family violence. Indeed, it is questionable whether there are any ways to improve on some of the shortfalls. This paper will, however, suggest how to turn around attitudes toward women; how to encourage victims to seek help; and how to help abusers stop abusing. Most of the suggestions come from a study conducted by the US Department of Defense (DoD).

The DoD is taking action to determine the best approach to preventing family

⁷⁹ *Family Violence Action plan.*

⁸⁰ *Report on Canadian Forces' Response to Woman Abuse.*

⁸¹ *Family Violence Action Plan.*

abuse.⁸² It has started with an examination of the US public health model method of prevention for other conditions. It is worthwhile to review this model with a view to adopt what makes sense for the CF. Within the model, there are three levels of prevention: primary, secondary and tertiary.

The aim of primary prevention is to reduce the incidence of the problem before it occurs. The task is to "affect attitudes, beliefs and behaviour, through individual, societal/cultural, and institutional change, which can, in turn, prevent the problem." The next prevention level is secondary. Secondary prevention focuses on decreasing the prevalence of the problem and hindering it from escalating. It is targeted at the general population and high-risk groups. Early identification and intervention are used in secondary prevention. The last level of prevention in the US public health model is tertiary. At the tertiary level of prevention the problem is already clearly evident and causing harm. The aim of this level is to stop the problem, minimize the damage, and prevent recurrence.⁸³

The application of this model to CF family violence prevention would be effective because, similar to public health concerns, family violence in the CF has risk factors and an identifiable target population.⁸⁴ At the primary level, the CF should continue to focus on a wide range of health promotions for all CF members, but at some point it needs to clearly present the specific problem of family violence with all of its facets. The most important aspect of a campaign would be to foster attitudes at all levels of command that will prevent abuse. The hearts and minds of potential abusers must be targeted for

⁸² Caliber Associates.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

change, because changing the negative attitude is the "stepping stone" to changing the behaviour.⁸⁵ How to change attitudes is the question that needs to be answered.

Dr K.M. Campbell recommends that the CF provide family violence sensitization training for its members that would focus on making it clearly understood that sexism, sexist remarks and misogynist practices are unacceptable.⁸⁶ For this to work, it would need honest and vigorous support from all military levels, because strong leadership is the key to success in all military endeavours.⁸⁷ The DoD is looking at a different approach to primary prevention.

The DoD believes that past domestic violence campaigns have failed because they "usually indicted; not invited men". It contends that most men are concerned about family violence and are willing to take action, but are unsure of what they can do.

Therefore, a study has been proposed, which seeks to:

- formulate a research based public education campaign to prevent domestic violence;
- engage men in promoting nonviolence and preventing domestic violence;
- change the social norms tolerating violence against women and girls and the silence concerning it in the military;
- teach boys and young men that violence against women is wrong; and
- evaluate the effectiveness of the public education campaign.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Assessing Violence Against Women: A Statistical Profile.*

⁸⁶ Kathryn Campbell, "Conjugal Homicide at Fort Bragg, North Carolina - Implications for the Canadian Forces", (unpublished paper for the Family Violence Action Committee, December 2002).

⁸⁷ [United States] Defense Task Force on Domestic Violence - Second Year Report, [http://www.dtic.mil/domesticviolence/reports/DV_RPT2.PDF].

The CF should consider adopting any measures that could assist in primary prevention of family violence in the CF. Granted, there is no evidence to indicate that the US approach will work, but the CF cannot sit idly by without attempting to improve its prevention measures. Rather, it must actively seek ideas for improvement from other institutions, such as the US military. In addition, it needs to examine secondary prevention techniques.

To improve its secondary prevention of family violence, the CF needs to modify DAOD 5044-4. The DAOD instructs the supervisor to inform the CO if the matter is likely to impact on the CF member's service. That direction is too vague. Many victims will not report abuse to CF authorities if there is a chance that by doing so, they may seriously jeopardize their spouse's career.⁸⁹ Furthermore, victims often fear that many unnecessary people will become aware of their problem because of the lack of confidentiality. Often, abused spouses do not want to punish their spouse or lose his income - they just want help to stop the abuse.⁹⁰ Yet, if the CF were not to take action, it would be guilty of failing to hold an abuser accountable for his actions. The US Task Force on domestic violence has addressed this dilemma through its proposed Victim Advocate program.⁹¹

Under the Victim Advocate program, in most circumstances (excluding child abuse and imminent victim danger), the military member's abuse will not be reported to the CO unless the victim authorizes its disclosure. Instead, the supervisor or other first

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ ORD 9701, p 37.

⁹⁰ *Report on Canadian Forces' Response to Woman Abuse.*

⁹¹ United States Defense Task Force on Domestic Violence Third Year Report 2003.

contact will connect the reporting victim with a Victim Advocate (a specially trained full-time DoD or contracted employee). The Victim Advocate's role is to assist the victim in securing crisis and long-term services and assistance.⁹² The US Task Force supports the tenet that abusers should be held responsible for their actions but believes that the Victim Advocate program will encourage more victims to come forward to seek assistance, which will increase victim safety. The Task Force's position is that victim safety is more important than offender accountability. Since the CF's primary concern also is the safety of victims,⁹³ it should closely monitor the US proposal and adopt its best practices. This plan may assist victims, but the CF can also decrease the prevalence of family violence and hinder it from escalating by assisting abusers (who have not been reported as such) who need treatment for psychological and social problems.

Ways in which the CF could help abusers stop the abuse are: remove the stigma of seeking help for all behavioural and psychological problems through a systematic campaign aimed at COs in particular; facilitate members' access to confidential services; and ensure that members' careers would not be affected unless operationally essential.⁹⁴ This could be an effective secondary prevention measure that could curtail violence through early identification and intervention, but a more controlled approach is required for the tertiary level of prevention.

Once family abuse has been clearly identified, all measures must focus on the victim's safety and the prevention of recurrence.⁹⁵ Presumably, using the US proposal,

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ DAOD 5044-4.

⁹⁴ Campbell and Hoff.

that would mean that the victim has requested disclosure and wants the abuser to be held accountable. To deal with those instances appropriately, the CF should further modify DAOD 5044-5 by adding the following direction to supervisors: 'if the victim has requested disclosure - inform the CO under all circumstances'. This would allow for sound legal and administrative assessment of the situation and appropriate action to be taken. In that way, the offender would be held accountable for his actions. This is an important aspect of tertiary prevention because victims who come forward must be certain that the CF will not protect offenders from justice. Otherwise, the loss of confidence in the CF system to handle cases of family violence could discourage other victims from seeking assistance.

Holding people accountable for their violence can contribute to their potential rehabilitation. Conversely, the failure to be held accountable may result in unsuccessful counselling and eventual recurrence of family violence.⁹⁶ Finally, a spin-off benefit of ensuring that offenders are held accountable in tertiary prevention is the restoration of public confidence. The public needs to know that the CF does take appropriate action against all offenders, regardless of rank, except when it would present a risk to victims. In that manner, the CF could indeed become a model for the rest of society.⁹⁷

In summary, family violence is a serious problem in Canada and in the CF. The CF is committed to improving its measures to prevent family violence, and in particular, the abuse of spouses by military members. There are several links, risk factors and

⁹⁵ US Defense Task Force on Domestic Violence Third Year Report 2003.

⁹⁶ Hoff.

⁹⁷ Readers interested in first-hand accounts of abuse from current and former spouses of CF members should review the following: Deborah Harrison and Lucie Laliberte, *No Life Like It: Military Wives in*

characteristics that are associated with the occurrence of spousal abuse, and the CF is making good progress toward addressing these possible causes of the violence. Through its DAOD and Family Violence Action Plan, the CF has demonstrated its determination to end the cycle of violence, assist in the recovery of victims, and hold offenders accountable for their actions. However, there are certain weaknesses in the CF prevention programme. Attendance at preventive seminars is not compulsory and members are not obliged to read preventive literature. Therefore, these measures may not reach the people who need it most. Many members are reluctant to seek help with financial difficulties, problems coping with stress and problems with underlying medical issues, because of the possible negative impact on their careers and the stigma associated with personal problems.

To improve the prevention of spousal abuse, the CF should follow closely other agencies' research, and the US military research on family violence prevention in particular. Best practices should be adopted, even in the absence of solid evidence. Positive attitudes need to be fostered toward women, which might be accomplished through specific sensitization training. The CF must also ensure that all levels of command actively promote an environment wherein people with problems may seek help without jeopardizing their careers and without subjection to peer prejudice. The CF intervention policy should be modified; firstly, to preserve the confidentiality of victims who request help but do not want to punish their abusers. In addition, the CF should consider using a type of victim advocate programme, which would encourage victims to come forward for professional assistance in a confidential and safe environment.

Canada (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 1994) and Deborah Harrison, *The First Casualty: Violence Against Women in Canadian Military Communities* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 2002).

Secondly, the intervention policy should be modified to ensure that victims who want to bring the violence into the open are taken seriously and treated fairly. If justified, the abuser then would be held accountable for his offense and would receive appropriate consequences for his actions. In conclusion, these suggested ideas and changes could well be the key to improving the CF Family Abuse prevention programme in the area of spousal abuse and ending the cycle of violence.

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