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**Abstract:**

Succession planning, the process whereby organizations identify, evaluate, develop and appoint individuals to leadership positions is a vital activity. In the Canadian Forces, while individual branches such as the Air Force and the Navy are responsible for succession planning at the tactical level, many of the key processes that support this activity are managed and controlled by the central Human Resources Branch. In particular, the personnel evaluation process and the promotion selection boards are not controlled by the Air Force, which impacts on their internal succession planning activities. In this paper the Succession Planning Process used by the Air Force will be thoroughly examined. This process will be compared to the processes utilized by the Canadian Navy, and the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF), an air force that is similar in size and organizational structure to the Canadian Air Force. The CF Personnel Appraisal System (CFPAS) and the Selection Boards process will also be examined, due to the essential role they play in effective succession planning. Based on these analysis's it will be demonstrated that Canadian Air Force Succession Planning can be improved by adopting some aspects of the RAAF and Navy models

“The axiom “only humans command” seems to have suffered the fate of many axioms: its self-evident nature conceals its fundamental truth.”<sup>1</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

Experienced and capable leadership at the tactical level of command is critical to the conduct of air operations and therefore a rigorous and comprehensive command selection and appointment process is vital for the Canadian Air Force. To ensure that people with the necessary skills and competencies are appointed to command, militaries must be able to assess a leaders' competency, identify and promote the better leaders and ultimately chose the right people to be commanders. The relationships between personnel evaluation, development and advancement are critical, and it is necessary to examine all three components in order to fully understand and evaluate the quality of a command appointment process. This paper will examine these vital processes as they apply to the Air Force. Initially, the nature and importance of command of armed forces will be defined. As well, the critical role that a clear and defined succession process plays in the development and appointment of key personnel to command positions will be outlined. Included in this section will be a brief description of what is implied by tactical level of command as it applies to the Air Force and the Navy. Secondly, an overview of the Canadian Forces Personnel Development Process will be provided. Specifically, the personnel evaluation process will be described, covering its objectives, strengths and

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<sup>1</sup> Ross Pigeau and Carol McCann, “The Human In Command: A Brief Introduction.” Chap. 1 in *The Human In Command: Exploring the Modern Military Experience*, ed Carol McCann and Ross Pigeau, 1-5. (New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers. 2000), 5.

potential deficiencies. This analysis will also include a description and critique of the current promotion selection process. Once these baseline processes have been introduced, the Air Force Command Appointment Process, commonly referred to as Succession Planning, can be described and evaluated. For comparative purposes, the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF), and the Canadian Navy development, selection and appointment models will also be described. By use of these comparisons, it will be demonstrated that Canadian Air Force Succession Planning can be improved by adopting some aspects of the RAAF and Navy models. These improvements will ensure that personnel appointed to tactical level command positions will be more experienced and better qualified, which will result in improved risk management for the Air Force.

## **COMMAND**

For the purposes of this paper, the level of command to be discussed is the tactical command level. In the Air Force this is specific to schools, and flying, maintenance or support squadrons; and in the Navy to warships, schools and support units. In both services, appointment to command at the tactical level is made by the Chief of Air (CAS) and Maritime (CMS) Staffs respectively.

The Canadian Forces Operations Manual defines command as “the authority invested in an individual of the armed forces for the direction, coordination and control of armed forces.”<sup>2</sup> The Royal Air Force uses near identical terminology to define the

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<sup>2</sup> Department of National Defence, *B-GG-005-004/AF-000 Canadian Forces Operations*. (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2000), 2-1.

concept of command,<sup>3</sup> as does the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF), although they also emphasize the burden of “responsibility.”<sup>4</sup> These similarities are not surprising, as command is essentially a legal appointment or assignment, which encompasses two distinct yet interdependent burdens of “responsibility and accountability.”<sup>5</sup> While there are many terms used in these short definitions that are worth examining, the term, ‘individual’ is of perhaps utmost importance, because of the burdens of responsibility and accountability that are placed on the individual. Accordingly, considering the wide variety of operations in which CF personnel could be involved, it follows that the leadership element must be fully professional and competent. The CF Operational Planning Process Manual articulates this dynamic fully, stating that, “Military operations are inherently complex, dynamic, dangerous and by nature, involve the acceptance of risk,”<sup>6</sup> and that, “The commander’s judgment balances the requirement for mission success with the inherent risks of military operations,” in which “the degree of success vary widely depending on the leader’s level of training and experience.”<sup>7</sup>

Command of air operations is fraught with the same requirement to measure risk against mission success. Strategic Vectors: The Air Force Transformation Vision was

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<sup>3</sup> Ministry of Defence, *British Air Power Doctrine: AP 3000*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., (London: Her Majesty’s Stationary Office, England: Directorate of Air Staff, 1999), 3.13.3.

<sup>4</sup> Royal Australian Air Force, *AAP1000 Fundamentals of Australian Aerospace Power*. 4th ed., RAAF Base, Fairburn (Aerospace Centre, August 2002), 328.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.3.1.

<sup>6</sup> Department of National Defence, *B-GJ-005-500/FP-000 Canadian Forces Operational Planning Process*. (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2003), 7-1.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 7-1.

released in 2004 and defines the paths, or “strategic vectors”<sup>8</sup> that the Air Force must follow to transform its operations effectively. Further, Strategic Vectors acknowledges this mission versus risk challenge and concludes, “The successful execution of aerospace operations now and in the future depends on effective command and leadership.”<sup>9</sup> The Air Force has also concluded that the significant reduction in personnel numbers in the past decade have reduced the air force to a “fragile organization.”<sup>10</sup> As a result, no fewer than three of the eight ‘strategic vectors’ address leadership transformation requirements and a re-investment in the training, education and leadership of air force personnel.<sup>11</sup> The introduction of Uninhabited Air Vehicles (UAVs), into air force operations, while mitigating the immediate risk to some aircrew, will not ease the leadership burden, as there will always be a full degree of command oversight required in the use of this technology. Accordingly, strong leadership and competent command of air forces is essential to executing air operations across the full spectrum of conflict.

## **PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT PROCESS - OVERVIEW**

Since the Canadian Forces formally became a unified service in 1967, there has been an increased emphasis on joint operations. Coincident to this emphasis, there has been significant force downsizing, which has resulted in an additional need for the individual branches (Army, Navy and Air Force), to become more interoperable. This

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<sup>8</sup> Department of National Defence, *CFP A-GA-007-000 AF-004 2004 Strategic Vectors*, (Ottawa: NDHQ/Chief of the Air Staff, 2004), 45.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 49-51.

interoperability has resulted in a large degree in a harmonization of personnel management processes, from recruiting and basic training to more advanced personnel developmental processes such as individual evaluation reports (CFPAS), advanced training courses, such as Command and Staff College, and promotion Selection Boards. These advanced processes are centrally managed by the CF Human Resources organization. There have been continuing efforts within the branches since 1967, to retain cultural distinctions, however this has been difficult and the degree of success in that regard is arguably less each year. As an example, the Army Regimental System, once a bastion of Army culture, while not officially disbanded, is less relevant each year. As a result, the Regimental System is not currently featured in Army Transformation programs. One of the few remaining areas where the branches retain a degree of exclusivity and distinction is in the selection and appointment of individuals to command positions. This process, commonly called succession planning, is of vital importance. Moreover, considering the emphasis on joint operations, the high degree of central control of personnel management processes, and the authorities and accountabilities commensurate with the responsibilities of command, it is essential that the succession process possess a high degree of rigour so as to minimize risk to operations.

## **CF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**

In the CF, it is necessary to identify and develop leadership skills in key personnel and appoint those individuals to command positions, initially at the tactical level, and ultimately to senior levels. To ensure that qualified people, capable of leading personnel during times of conflict are appointed to command positions, it is necessary to have a

comprehensive and rigorous personnel evaluation and promotion system. In the CF, the processes and methodologies utilized in the development and evaluation processes are centrally managed and controlled, notwithstanding their acute importance to the individual commands, which remain responsible for their own respective succession planning.

## **CF PERSONNEL ASSESSMENT**

The primary system of evaluating the effectiveness of leaders is the CF Personnel Appraisal System (CFPAS). This system, in place since 1998, is “an important milestone in how the CF develops and appraises its members”<sup>12</sup> and was “the result of two years of intensive research and development,”<sup>13</sup> brought on by perceived “dissatisfaction with the state of leadership within DND.”<sup>14</sup> The CFPAS serves two necessary and related purposes. Firstly, it serves as an annual evaluation report and secondly, it is used as a tool for developing personnel, primarily by identifying particular strengths and weaknesses within individuals. The CFPAS individual reports also serve as the primary basis for determination of individuals for promotion from one rank to the next higher rank based on merit, and for selection and appointment to key positions with the CF.

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<sup>12</sup> Department of National Defence, *Canadian Forces Personnel Appraisal Handbook*, Version 2005.0.6 (Ottawa: ADM Human Resources, Military, 2005), Foreword.

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

<sup>14</sup> Report of the Somalia Commission of Inquiry, “*Leadership*,” Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, (Canada: 1997), (Report on-line); available from <http://www.dnd.ca/somalia/v010/v0s9e.htm>; Internet; accessed 12 November 2004



With respect to the first purpose of the CFPAS, the evaluation report, assessments made by supervisors must “distinguish between performance and potential”<sup>15</sup> when evaluating a subordinate. In this regard, the performance component is an assessment of how an individual has performed at certain tasks at his current rank, measured against organizational established standards. The second component of the annual evaluation report is the assessment of the subordinates potential “to perform at the next higher rank.”<sup>16</sup> The annual report covers a wide variety and number of performance and potential assessment factors. These factors run the full spectrum of characteristics and personal qualities of leadership, communications skills, intelligence, problem solving and professional abilities. Guidance given to the supervisors in regards to the relationship between the performance factors and the potential factors is that they are to be assessed independent of each other. In other words, a member may be scored very high in potential, but only receive average scores in performance, as he may not yet have excelled in that job.<sup>17</sup>

The CFPAS structure that the CF uses to internally develop and assess leaders is not unique. Large civilian industries utilize similar methodologies of identifying and promoting leaders within their organizations using an evaluation model that emphasizes both performance and potential. This model is referred to as the “leadership pipeline”<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Department of National Defence, *Canadian Forces Personnel Appraisal...*, art 103.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, art 301.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, art 301.

<sup>18</sup> Stephen J. Drotter and Ram Charan, “Building Leaders at Every Level: A Leadership Pipeline,” *Ivey Business Journal*, 21-27, (London, Ontario: May/June 2001), available from [http://www.iveybusinessjournal.com/view\\_article.asp?intArticle\\_ID=287](http://www.iveybusinessjournal.com/view_article.asp?intArticle_ID=287); Internet, accessed 2 February 2005, p. 21.

as industry has realized that “for the long term, management must build, develop and maintain a pipeline of skilled, prepared leaders from within the company.”<sup>19</sup> Concerned that leadership crisis’s are a result of company-wide culture breakdowns, large companies have moved away from past practices of external leadership recruitment and, similar to the CF are building internal leadership cultures that are better able to respond to changes and challenges in their respective business operations.<sup>20</sup>

In many ways, the CF faces similar changes and pressures. The increased public scrutiny on leadership issues as a result of the Somalia Operation; the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA); the proliferation of the asymmetric threat; and the concomitant demands placed on CF leadership due to an increased operational tempo, necessitated the introduction the CFPAS performance/potential model.

The other purpose and component of the CFPAS is the Personnel Development Review (PDR) module. The objective of this module is to provide continuous professional development of an individual and consists of “a process where critical tasks and expected results are set followed by the supervisor providing feedback and discussion of performance and potential.”<sup>21</sup> This process of isolating and correcting weaknesses is also consistent with the ‘leadership pipeline model’, a system that enables developmental decisions to be made based on individual needs as opposed to more costly generalized training programs.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Stephen J. Drotter and Ram Charan, “Building Leaders...”, 22.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>21</sup> Department of National Defence, *Canadian Forces Personnel Appraisal...*, (Key Terms).

<sup>22</sup> Stephen J. Drotter and Ram Charan, “Building Leaders...”, 27.

## CF PROMOTION PROCESS

Promotion within the CF is a management-intensive process, laden with regulations,<sup>23</sup> informal guidance, oversight and rigour, with the ultimate dual objective of selecting the best candidates for promotion to the next higher rank, and to concurrently ensure to the highest degree possible, fairness and transparency throughout. Promotions are determined once per year within each military occupation and are limited to the next highest rank, without any possibility of skipping a rank level. Normally, there are also prescribed and/or preferred occupational responsibilities, which should be executed by an individual prior to being promoted. However, there are few instances, particularly in the Air Force, where this progression criterion is formally prescribed or codified. Selection Boards are convened annually that produce merit lists, which rank individuals within each occupation. This peer comparison system is highly regulated and monitored by a significant degree of departmental oversight,<sup>24</sup> not the least of which is the criteria which regulate the selection and composition of board members. Numbers of personnel within an occupation are based upon the operational needs of the military and include a proportionately fewer number at each higher level respectively. Therefore promotions only occur if there is a vacancy at the next level. Consequently in some instances, deserving members who have already fulfilled the required responsibilities at one rank,

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<sup>23</sup> Department of National Defence, *Canadian Forces Administrative Order 11-6, Commissioning and Promotion Policy – Officers – Regular Force*, (Ottawa: ADM Fin(CS), 1988-12-09), available from [http://www.admfincs.forces.gc.ca/admfincs/subjects/cfao/011-06\\_e.asp](http://www.admfincs.forces.gc.ca/admfincs/subjects/cfao/011-06_e.asp); Internet, accessed 18 January 2005.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, This oversight includes the composition of board members, as well as comparative analysis of all merit boards conducted each year, to ensure fairness on a broad level. Also, boards do not approve promotions. Approvals (with some minor exceptions – i.e. Cpl to MCpl) are within the authority of commanders of command and ultimately at a level in NDHQ dependent upon the promotion level (CDS-DGMC).

might not receive a promotion for many years despite excellent performance and high potential if there are no vacancies at the next rank. Conversely, average performers might receive regular promotions, merely because vacancies exist in the rank above them.

Ultimately, the need of the CF to develop and promote personnel exclusively from within the existing body of personnel, and the requirement for each of these individuals to progress through each rank level, demands that a system be in place to identify certain individuals with very high potential. As well, the system must also provide them with developmental opportunities at an accelerated rate. The centrally controlled CFPAS system however, because it no longer is based on peer comparison within individual units constrains the identification of high performers. This is becoming increasingly challenging, as there has been an increasing tendency to inflate the scores on the annual CFPAS reports. In the past five years the number of air force personnel given the highest CFPAS recommendation of “immediate promotion” has increased by 10 percent (to 49%). The lowest promotion recommendation of “no” was almost never used, and use of the next higher level of “developing” has dropped from 20% to 3%.<sup>25</sup> This means that in 2003, 97% of air force personnel were rated as either ready for promotion or should be promoted immediately.<sup>26</sup> Inflation problems are recognized by the central Human Resource Branch that stated this year, “since removal of high score controls from all aspects of the PER [CFPAS] inflation has become problematic.”<sup>27</sup> This inflation in

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<sup>25</sup> Department of National Defence, *Air Force 2004-2005 Career Manager Briefing to Canadian Forces College*, (Ottawa: DGMC, 24 February 2005), slide 47 of 82.

<sup>26</sup> The promotion recommendation options on the CFPAS are “No,” “Developing,” “Ready” or “Immediate.”

<sup>27</sup> Department of National Defence, *CFPAS LESSONS LEARNED AND WAY AHEAD*, (NDHQ Ottawa: Director General Military Careers, DGMC001, 261300Z JAN 05), para 6.

individual rankings presents a significant problem with respect to succession planning, as not every officer can or should be considered capable of senior command at the highest levels.

The ranking of personal files on each individual by the selection board<sup>28</sup> members is based on a review and scoring by each board member of each file. This includes CFPAS annual evaluations, course reports, letters of commendation and the members' career resume (MPRR). As directed by ADM HR, the central agency that controls the selection board process, each file is scored out of 100, 60 points for performance, 35 for potential and 5 for second language abilities. The potential points are not directly related to the CFPAS potential factors, but are determined by a wide variety of other skills and/or qualifications, such as leadership, education, courses, training and military experience.<sup>29</sup> The CF has recently re-examined the points weighting used by selection boards, and has come to the conclusion that more emphasis must be placed on both potential and second language skills and less on performance. While the "precise weighting will be communicated at a later date," it will "reflect the increased importance of potential."<sup>30</sup> The only reason given for the pending change is that "performance criteria for senior rank levels is no longer sufficiently discriminating to identify the most suitable personnel for

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<sup>28</sup> The selection board is commonly called a promotion board, as the leading candidates are then 'selected' for promotion, based on the needs of the military occupation. The boards are convened electronically and only the top percentage (based on 'dot-counting' of the past 3 CFPAS reports) of the personnel files are ranked. This percentage is roughly based on three times the estimated number of promotions for the next year.

<sup>29</sup> Department of National Defence, *Canadian Forces Administrative Order 11-6...*, para 10.

<sup>30</sup> Department of National Defence, *CHANGES TO WEIGHTING CRITERIA – CF SELECTION BOARDS*, (NDHQ Ottawa: ADM Human Resources – Military CANFORGEN 066/05 ADM (HR-MIL) 031 011818Z APR 05).

promotion and advanced training, and to fill senior positions with our best leaders.”<sup>31</sup>

This change reinforces the problems associated with inflated CFPAS evaluations; however, it is not clear why that problem is not being addressed. This is particularly troubling, as the proposed change will be the third significant modification to the evaluation and selection process in the past seven years.<sup>32</sup>

### **AIR FORCE SUCCESSION PLANNING**

Air Command Order (ACO) 1000-7 defines the management policy whereby the Air Force identifies select regular force and reserve officers; below the rank of Colonel, who have “the capability to achieve senior appointments”<sup>33</sup> Accordingly, these officers are then, “tracked and provided with developmental opportunities”<sup>34</sup> over and above their peers at that respective rank level. This critical management policy consists of two key pillars, each with its own respective process and aim. The first pillar is “The Appointment Process [which] is used to meet the near-term requirement to assign adequately competent individuals to key positions.”<sup>35</sup> The main feature of this process is the Air Personnel Appointment Board (Officers) [APAB(O)], which meets annually to “identify personnel to fill key positions during the upcoming APS.”<sup>36</sup> The second pillar, referred to

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<sup>31</sup> Department of National Defence, *CHANGES...*, para 3.

<sup>32</sup> Includes introduction of the CFPAS in 1998, the change in selection board weighting criteria from 80-20 to 60-35-5 the year following, and now additional weighting criteria changes.

<sup>33</sup> Department of National Defence, *ACO 1000-7 Air Force Personnel Management – Officers Identification*. (Ottawa: Chief of the Air Staff, 2000), 3/15.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 3/15.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 3/15.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 6/15.

as the Succession Planning Process, is similar, but deals with the “longer-term requirement to identify, track and mentor individuals having the potential and motivation to achieve senior appointments within the CF.”<sup>37</sup> The board that develops the longer-term succession plan is called the Air Personnel Management Board (Officers) [APMB(O)]. APAB(O) is chaired by the Assistant Chief of Air Staff (ACAS), assisted by Comd 1 CAD/CANR, and is comprised of other key air force General Officers. APMB(O) is also chaired by ACAS and is comprised of all Air Force MGenS, and BGenS.

A key strength of the Air Force is the wide variety of expertise resident within the numerous specialist communities. This variety can also present some challenges however, due to the disparate nature of these communities within the Air Force.<sup>38</sup> Accordingly, Capability Advisory Groups (CAGs) have been established “to provide a mechanism for senior, community-based leadership consultation, decision-making, and promulgation of direction in support of the Commander 1 CAD/CANR.”<sup>39</sup> The Advisory Groups are comprised of senior officers within the various Air Force specialist communities. While these Groups are part of the larger Canadian Air Force governance structure outlined in ACO 1000-2, they are also key contributors to Air Force Personnel Management and Succession Planning.

To contribute to the short-term Appointment Process, the CAGs are provided with a list of “key position vacancies” so as to ultimately produce a list of “nominations at the

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<sup>37</sup> Department of National Defence, ACO 1000-7 *Air...*, 3/15.

<sup>38</sup> In the air force, examples of specialist communities, would be fighters, transport, maritime (both maritime patrol and helicopter), tactical aviation, Search and Rescue etc. The Advisory groups would include senior operators and support officers from the respective communities.

<sup>39</sup> Department of National Defence, 1 Canadian Air Division Orders, Vol 1, 1-624, *CAPABILITY ADVISORY GROUPS TERMS OF REFERENCE*, (Winnipeg: Commander 1 CAD, July 2002), 2/4.

rank of LCol and below.”<sup>40</sup> In this bottom-up management process, the CAGs conduct “screening boards” and provide recommendations and/or lists of “high potential individuals”<sup>41</sup> to the APAB(O). These Advisory Group lists are then reviewed by the APAB(O), which produces a list of recommended command appointments and other “nominees successfully screened for command appointments, but not selected for a command position.”<sup>42</sup> This list is then sent to CAS for approval.

The second pillar of The Air Force Personnel Management Policy is the Succession Planning Process. The key feature of this pillar is the APMB(O). This Board also relies heavily on input from the Capability Advisory Groups. The APMB(O) meets annually with numerous objectives; to produce “potential lists,” “ranking lists,” associated “progression plan[s] for [those] high potential individuals,” and to, “produce a notional medium to long-term succession plan.”<sup>43</sup> While the longer-term succession plan is obviously necessary for future Air Force planning, the development of this plan is under-pinned by the other key outputs of the APMB(O) deliberations. These key outputs are the potential, or ‘O Lists’ and the ranking or ‘A and B Lists.’ The potential lists identify officers by rank whose “careers require additional attention” because they have “demonstrated high potential for executive rank.”<sup>44</sup> There are three categories included in the potential lists. Officers designated to the 01 and 02 lists have been assessed by APMB(O) as having the potential to rise to the rank of LGen or General Officer

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<sup>40</sup> Department of National Defence, ACO 1000-7 *Air...*, 7/15.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 3/15.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 6/15.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 9/15.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 10/15.



respectively. The 03 list is “maintained as a ‘feeder list’ for the 02 list” and is specific to senior Captains or Majors who have been assessed to have the potential to “quickly advance through the next two ranks.”<sup>45</sup> The ranking lists determined by the APMB(O) function in a similar fashion to the potential lists. ‘A List’ officers, based on ADM-HR managed Selection Board results, “will compete for promotion within the next year, while ‘B List’ officers will compete for promotion within two to three years.”<sup>46</sup> The purpose of the ranking lists is “to ensure that officers having an appropriate combination of impressive potential combined with outstanding performance are identified and challenged in order to compete effectively for promotion over the next few years.”<sup>47</sup> Due to the importance of overall system coherence, numerous criteria dictate the placing and movement of officers amongst the categories of 01, 02 and 03 potential lists and the A and B ranking lists. These criteria are fully articulated in the ACO.

Civilian industry has also recognized the need to develop lists of personnel who have high potential, require greater challenges and careful grooming. Commonly referred to as the “acceleration pool method,” [it] “develops a group of high-potential candidates for undefined jobs at the executive level.”<sup>48</sup> The importance of early identification and development of high potential officers to the Air Force cannot be over-emphasized. The Air Force version of an ‘acceleration pool system,’ while complex, allows the Air Force to retain a higher degree of control and influence over their high performers, a necessary

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<sup>45</sup> Department of National Defence, ACO 1000-7..., 11/15.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 14/15.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 13/15.

<sup>48</sup> William C. Byham, “How to Create a Reservoir of Ready-Made Leaders,” *T+D Magazine* March 2000, 2001 ASTD. JWillin Consulting, Ltd. Article of the Month [Article on-line]; available from <http://www.jwillinconsulting.com/articles/02-09.htm>; Internet; accessed 27 March 2005.

attribute of succession planning, considering that promotions and personnel evaluation processes are centrally managed.

## **ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE (RAAF) SUCCESSION PLANNING**

Succession planning in the RAAF, while similar to the Canadian Air Force Succession Planning model described previously, has some key differences.<sup>49</sup> The similarities are that the personnel evaluation process is centrally controlled, and that succession planning and selection of command appointments are the responsibility of the air force commander. The differences in the process have significant import however, and potentially contribute to a more rigorous RAAF selection process that better manages potential risk to operations resulting from inappropriate command appointments. The key differences are that individuals must formally apply to be considered for specific Commanding Officer positions, and that a selection process is also in place for Deputy-Commanding Officer (DCO) positions. As well, in the RAAF, all promotion selection and decision processes are controlled entirely by the Air Force, including the selection and weighting of performance and potential criteria utilized by the selection boards. What is also significant is that unlike the CF, promotions within a given MOC, such as pilot for example, are apportioned equitably across the specialist communities.<sup>50</sup> In the Canadian Air Force, potential exists for a disproportionate number of promotions to be offered to one specialist community, because CF Selection Boards do not differentiate between

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<sup>49</sup> WGCDR Rick Soesman, DDAIROPS, DP-AF, of the RAAF, provided the description of the RAAF Succession Planning process to the author. The specific details of RAAF Succession Planning are consistent with their Bench Level Instruction specific to the RAAF Decision Making Policy.

<sup>50</sup> Similar to the Canadian Air Force, examples of RAAF specialist communities, would be fighters, transport, maritime (both maritime patrol and helicopter), tactical aviation, Search and Rescue etc.

specialist communities when merit lists are determined. As such, there is potential for some communities to have either a shortage or a surplus of potential commanding officers. This is a situation that could impinge seriously on morale and effective succession planning at the tactical level.

With respect to the application process, applicant qualifications are matched to the essential and desirable qualification criteria prescribed by each command positions' job description. The Air Force personnel office conducts this initial evaluation, and subsequently produces a list of potential candidates. This list of candidates is then reviewed and evaluated by a formal board consisting of personnel drawn from the RAAF Personnel Branch and the respective Force Element Group, which is composed of senior personnel within a force element or community. This board will then produce a nomination list for the approval of The Chief of Air Force (CAF). The CAF reviews the recommendations produced by this board, and will then interview each officer nominated for command, prior to giving his final approval.

A similar process is also followed for DCO positions and some key Flight Commander positions. However, the board will also undertake a degree of consultation with the respective CO's and Wing Commanders. Notwithstanding this consultation, the final approval authority remains within the offices of the CAF. Interviews are not required for approval of these appointments.

## **CANADIAN NAVY SUCCESSION PLANNING**

Tactical command selection and appointment within the Canadian Navy is based on a naval-managed succession planning process, and on the centrally managed processes

of personnel evaluation (CFPAS) and promotion (ADM-HR selection boards). The centrally managed processes potentially place similar constraints on the development and advancement of personnel within the Navy as they have for the Air Force, particularly with respect to CFPAS inflation, and the lack of high score controls. The Navy however, mitigates these constraints by providing specific CMS guidance annually, regarding CFPAS completion. This guidance emphasizes that, “an immediate recommendation for promotion must be carefully considered and reserved for those personnel who are assessed to have truly outstanding potential for progression to the next rank.”<sup>51</sup> This correspondence also highlights the need to provide “comparative assessments wherever possible ... (1 of 12 in unit)”<sup>52</sup> within the CFPAS Additional Review Section, so as “to clearly identify top performers.”<sup>53</sup> This type of guidance, while not unique to the Navy, is illustrative of the need to reduce CFPAS inflation, and moreover, it addresses service specific concerns with the centrally managed evaluation process. Unique to the Navy however, is the annual CMS “Direction for CF Selection/TOS and Naval Selection Boards.”<sup>54</sup> This is a detailed policy directive regarding CF Selection Board scoring and assessment criteria and other personnel developmental processes. This directive is another means of minimizing the impact of a centralized system. As well, it provides naval specific guidance to Selection Board members to guarantee, “the health of [naval

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<sup>51</sup> Department of National Defence, *NAVAL PERSONNEL EVALUATION REPORT (PER) DRAFTING INSTRUCTIONS 04/05*, (NDHQ Ottawa: Chief of Maritime Staff, MARGEN 016/05, 150802Z FEB 05), para 6.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, para 9.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, para 9.

<sup>54</sup> Cmdre J.A.D. Rouleau, *DIRECTION FOR CF SELECTION/TOS AND NAVAL SELECTION BOARDS – 2005* (Ottawa: Director General Maritime Personnel and Readiness: 5000-1 (D Mar Pers 3, RDMIS #29583), 26 August 2004.

members] occupation,” and to facilitate in, “identifying the future leaders of the occupations and the Navy.”<sup>55</sup>

Naval succession planning and personnel development processes are governed by Maritime Command Orders (MARCORDs)<sup>56</sup> that outline in detail the qualifications, training and experience that naval officers must possess at specific junctures in their career to be eligible for advancement within the Navy.<sup>57</sup> More comprehensive than the Air Force Personnel Management Policy, these MARCORDs also specify courses, qualification boards, examinations, occupational experience and appointment selection board processes applicable to all naval officers considered eligible to be appointed to a command position. The annual CMS Direction also provides detailed eligibility requirements to be used by Naval Selection Boards in succession planning,<sup>58</sup> and is consistent with, and amplifies these MARCORDs.

There are significant differences between the naval succession planning/personnel developmental processes and the Air Force processes. Firstly, unlike the Air Force, there is the requirement within most naval occupations to complete a comprehensive series of command qualification exams. Secondly, and perhaps the most important difference, is the Navy’s use of a formal Selection Board convened to appoint Executive Officers to

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<sup>55</sup> Cmdre J.A.D. Rouleau, *DIRECTION...*, para 1.

<sup>56</sup> Maritime Command Orders 9-50, 9-51 and 9-23 directly apply to Command and charge Qualifications, and Sea Command Review processes.

<sup>57</sup> Note: in this context advancement does not refer to promotion, but progression within an occupation, such as selection for Operations Room Officer training.

<sup>58</sup> Rouleau, *DIRECTION...*, Annexes D and F.

tactical level units.<sup>59</sup> The Air Force does not utilize any formal structure to designate DCO's and essentially permits serving Air Force CO's to appoint their own, using their own respective criteria. CMS convenes this Executive Officer Selection Board, for the express purpose of producing a list of candidates for appointment to XO positions of warships, submarines and Fleet Diving Units. Moreover, while MARCORDs do not state that it is mandatory for naval officers to have been an XO prior to being appointed to a CO position, it is certainly the norm as, "performance as executive officer is given particular scrutiny and assigned particular importance,"<sup>60</sup> by the Sea Command Review Board (SCRB). As well, the CMS annual Direction to Boards identifies XO experience, including a qualitative level of competency in that position, as mandatory eligibility criterion to command a tactical unit.<sup>61</sup>

Finally, in accordance with CMS policy directives and MARCORDs, the Navy has mandated specific positional progression within naval occupations, and in particular the MARS occupation. In the MARS occupation, all officers must progress through two levels of Bridge Watchkeeper, a D Level specialty qualification, ORO training and employment, optimally culminating with a tour as Combat Officer, prior to being eligible to be an XO. Moreover, progression through these positions is regulated by various Naval Selection Boards, Oral Qualification Boards, as well as being accompanied by numerous command exams. This rigorous process enables the Navy to utilize better decision criteria regarding accelerated personnel advancement and thereby facilitate tactical and

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<sup>59</sup> Rouleau, *DIRECTION...*, Annex F. This selection board determines the appointees for XO (deputy commanding officer position) for all FFH's/DDG's/Submarine's and Fleet diving units.

<sup>60</sup> Department of National Defence, Maritime Command Order 9-51, Volume 1 – *Sea Command Review Board (SCRB)*, (NDHQ Ottawa: Chief of Naval Staff, October 2003), 3.

<sup>61</sup> Rouleau, *DIRECTION...*, Annexes A and D.

senior command succession planning decisions. In the Air Force, there is no equivalency vis-à-vis eligibility criteria for command selection and appointment.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

In the evaluation of the Air Force Succession Planning Process, as it pertains to tactical level command, it was necessary to examine the centrally controlled evaluation and promotion selection processes. As well, a comparison of the Air Force system to the RAAF and Canadian Navy systems served to illustrate the strengths and weaknesses of the Air Force model. Numerous conclusions were made, some of which, if adopted, would improve the existing Air Force model. Other conclusions emphasize specific attributes of the Air Force model that should be retained and perhaps given additional emphasis and/or visibility.

Firstly, the centralized management of the evaluation system and process ensures fairness and commonality for all CF members. However, elimination of high score controls and peer assessment narratives have led to inflation of scores and promotion recommendations. Secondly, while central control of Selection Boards ensures fairness, flexibility is lost to the environmental commanders, in that specialist communities within an occupation might receive disproportionately more or less promotions than are necessary for effective succession planning purposes. Neither of these deficiencies is within the ability of the Air Force to control. However, more influence on the process can be exerted through annual guidance and policy directives regarding CFPAS completion and Air Force specific Selection Board evaluation criteria.

The Canadian Air Force has not promulgated any Order or Directive, which prescribes or defines any eligibility criteria or qualifications for Commanding Officers or even Deputy-Commanding Officers. Certainly there are occupational and rank requirements associated with these positions, but these requirements stop well short of defining any previous positional, coursing and/or experience qualifications. Unlike the Canadian Navy, or the RAAF, a Commanding Officer in the Canadian Air Force does not have to have previously been an Executive Officer or a Deputy-Commanding Officer respectively. One can also assume that the RAAF and the Navy evaluate the level of performance by individuals in these positions. These evaluations would then facilitate decisions on further suitability for command appointment. This mandatory experience and eligibility criteria is considered invaluable, particularly when one takes into account the requirements to manage risk in operations. The Air Force should adopt this formal selection process for DCO positions.

Further, the Air Force, unlike the Navy, does not even insist upon other subordinate experience requirements, such as a warships' combat officer position, which would be similar to a flight commander or detachment commander position. The lack of a tiered developmental structure, which makes such key positions, command examinations and experiences mandatory for further progression, is considered to be a significant weakness in Air Force personnel development from a succession planning perspective.

The Chief of Air Force in the RAAF conducts a formal interview with all command nominees prior to final approval and appointment to command at the tactical level. The personalization of this process is compelling and would provide both an opportunity to provide specific CAS wisdom, and serve as a final endorsement check.



Finally, the utilization of potential and ranking lists for personnel development by the Air Force is comprehensive and more thorough than any 'acceleration' systems used by the RAAF or the Navy. These systems should be retained and given further visibility, particularly in those circumstances whereby Air Force personnel are employed outside Air Force units.

Canadian Air Force Succession Planning can be improved by adopting some aspects of the RAAF and Navy models, as indicated above. These improvements will ensure that personnel appointed to tactical level command positions will be more experienced and better qualified. Overall these changes will result in improved personnel development processes and better risk management for the Air Force.

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