

Archived Content

Information identified as archived on the Web is for reference, research or record-keeping purposes. It has not been altered or updated after the date of archiving. Web pages that are archived on the Web are not subject to the Government of Canada Web Standards.

As per the [Communications Policy of the Government of Canada](#), you can request alternate formats on the "[Contact Us](#)" page.

Information archivée dans le Web

Information archivée dans le Web à des fins de consultation, de recherche ou de tenue de documents. Cette dernière n'a aucunement été modifiée ni mise à jour depuis sa date de mise en archive. Les pages archivées dans le Web ne sont pas assujetties aux normes qui s'appliquent aux sites Web du gouvernement du Canada.

Conformément à la [Politique de communication du gouvernement du Canada](#), vous pouvez demander de recevoir cette information dans tout autre format de rechange à la page « [Contactez-nous](#) ».

CANADIAN FORCES COLLEGE / COLLÈGE DES FORCES CANADIENNES
CSC 32 / CCEM 32

EXERCISE NEW HORIZONS

**Unit Cohesion in the Canadian Land Force –
Essential and Achievable within Managed Readiness**

By /par LCol KJ Hamilton

This paper was written by a student attending the Canadian Forces College in fulfilment of one of the requirements of the Course of Studies. The paper is a scholastic document, and thus contains facts and opinions, which the author alone considered appropriate and correct for the subject. It does not necessarily reflect the policy or the opinion of any agency, including the Government of Canada and the Canadian Department of National Defence. This paper may not be released, quoted or copied, except with the express permission of the Canadian Department of National Defence.

La présente étude a été rédigée par un stagiaire du Collège des Forces canadiennes pour satisfaire à l'une des exigences du cours. L'étude est un document qui se rapporte au cours et contient donc des faits et des opinions que seul l'auteur considère appropriés et convenables au sujet. Elle ne reflète pas nécessairement la politique ou l'opinion d'un organisme quelconque, y compris le gouvernement du Canada et le ministère de la Défense nationale du Canada. Il est défendu de diffuser, de citer ou de reproduire cette étude sans la permission expresse du ministère de la Défense nationale.

Four brave men who do not know each other will not dare attack a lion. Four less brave, but knowing each other well, sure of their reliability and consequently of their mutual will, attack resolutely.

Colonel Charles Ardant du Picq¹

INTRODUCTION

The importance of cohesion to military science has been the topic of much discussion over the centuries as researchers pursued techniques that would guarantee its successful establishment with military forces. Be its impacts upon professional sports teams, engineering design groups, work-place sections, or more importantly for this paper, within a military construct, cohesion is a desirable characteristic much sought after by all groups, but captured by only a few successful ones. In the past, military forces have often hunted for a solution, recognizing it as some indefinable force, which if gained and maximized, could change the tide of battle in their favour.

Today, cohesion is still seen as a critical characteristic of military forces, with more emphasis being placed on its value. Achieving and maintaining cohesion affords the unit the opportunity for higher morale, increased effectiveness and hopefully greater retention. Without it surely brings quick disintegration to the fighting force, low morale and little desire to stay the course, one fraught with high operational tempo and increasingly long periods of time separated from family and friends on dangerous missions abroad. Unfortunately, “. . . international and domestic realities have resulted in a paradox of declining military resources and increasing military missions.”² Canada,

¹ Ardant du Picq, *Battle Studies: Ancient and Modern* (Harrisburg: Military Service Publishing, 1947), 110.

² Sam C. Sarkesian, John Allen Williams, and Fred B. Bryant, *Soldiers, Society, and National Security* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publications Inc., 1995), 149.

like many nations, is being called upon to participate in many non-traditional operations that pose new challenges.³ Be it Haiti, Afghanistan or Sudan, these operations are calling more often upon our soldiers to work in a number of diverse locations under stressful and unfamiliar conditions, while simultaneously having to deal with government dictated force structures for each mission, which may be unsuitable for the tasks assigned.⁴ This operationally focused environment is the Canadian Forces (CF) of the future. With greater emphasis being placed on failed and failing states by many western governments, the utilization of the CF as one tool in the Canadian government's box of diplomacy options, will see ever increasing, high risk operational deployments for the CF as Canada attempts to become a larger player on the international stage.

The Canadian Land Force, also known as the Canadian Army, has and will continue to play a major role in projecting foreign policy while promoting Canadian values in failed and failing-state regions of the world.⁵ The impacts of high operational tempo of these recurring deployments are not yet fully understood, but one can postulate that morale, motivation and retention are impacted in some way. There are concerns that the situation may in fact be made worse by the introduction of Land Force Managed Readiness Plan (MR). For operations, MR will utilize deployable 'task tailored plug-and-play units' from across the CF, pulled together as a 'custom fit' solution instead of the

³ Brian J. Reed and David R. Segal, "The Impact of Multiple Deployments on Soldiers' Peacekeeping Attitudes, Morale, and Retention," *Armed Forces & Society* 27, no. 1 (Fall 2000): 57; <http://search.epnet.com/>; Internet; accessed 3 March 2006.

⁴ Reed and Segal, *The Impact of Multiple Deployments on Soldiers' Peacekeeping Attitudes, Morale, and Retention* . . . , 57.

⁵ Department of National Defence, *Advancing with Purpose: The Army Strategy* (Ottawa: Canadian Defence Academy – Canadian Forces Leadership Institute, 2005), 4.

‘one size fits all’ model of the past. Although an efficient and flexible model, the long term impacts of its use are yet to be quantified. MR currently draws sub-units from across the country already belonging to larger formations and has the reach to task individual soldiers. The task force gathers at a predetermined location where it will train together before it is declared operational ready for deployment. The cohesion challenges facing this new task force are undefined. In addition, the cohesion of the remaining sub-units from where many of these augmentation forces have been drawn, require further study.

Cohesion data is collected regularly in the CF utilizing the CF Human Dimensions of Operations (HDO) survey that is used for deployed operations and the Unit Morale Profile (UMP), which is administered in a garrison or static environment.⁶ Both seek to determine correlating variables which could be manipulated to influence cohesion as a strategy to mitigate stress and disenchantment while increasing the dedication and hopefully retention of CF members in this new unpredictable security era.

Cohesion, although measurable through survey and analysis, is still a very difficult characteristic to quantify. Two fighting forces, equal in personnel and combat power, can be significantly differentiated by the factor of cohesion. Thus, all fighting forces work diligently to achieve and maintain it. Using a conceptual model of cohesion, it will be shown that the variables of leadership, trust, shared experience/time, and realistic training all strongly influence cohesion in units and must be thoroughly addressed within the new MR construct if it is to be successful. These variables require

⁶ Major Lisa Noonan, Section Head Operational Effectiveness and Leadership, Director Human Resource Research and Evaluation, email with author, 15 December 2005.

increased attention within the land force as it moves with great haste into the un-chartered waters of MR. If the soldier is stressed, unmotivated, disillusioned and loses his dedication to serve, leading to his release from the Army, a lack of cohesion is the nexus of this problem. If MR is to succeed, it must do so with the dedication and professionalism of the individual soldier.

This essay will provide a literature review of cohesion research, identifying key influencing variables which are presented in a conceptual model of cohesion. It will suggest how the input variables can be manipulated, leading to the final desired end state of increased motivation, efficiency, dedication and retention. How the identified variables can be shaped and managed to positively affect cohesion in today's MR environment will be offered, leading to the identification of those variables which require greater emphasis within the CF as a whole.

LITERATURE REVIEW

“As early as 400 BC, Xenophon had discovered that . . . not numbers or strength bring victory in war; but whichever army goes into battle stronger in soul, their enemies generally cannot withstand them.”⁷ Performance in battle is essential to winning decisively. When the soldier is exhausted from physical combat, chilled by the environment and mentally shattered from the sights and sounds of the operation, commanders rely on cohesion to hold the unit together. Literature regularly mixes and interchanges the definitions of morale and cohesion thus it is important to define its meaning. Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines cohesion as, “the act or state of sticking

⁷ Frederick J. Manning, “Morale, Cohesion, and Esprit de Corps,” in *Handbook of Military Psychology* (New York: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 1991), 453.

together closely.”⁸ “A cohesive group is one that will work together as a team. They have confidence in the ability of their fellow combatants, they have a strong sense of identity and social support, that is, other members of the group are interested in their well-being.”⁹ US Army Chief of Staff Edward Myer defined cohesion as, “the bonding together of soldiers in such a way as to sustain their will and commitment to each other, the unit, and mission accomplishment, despite combat or mission stress.”¹⁰

To aid in the further understanding of cohesion, it is important at this time to provide additional clarification and refinement of the two distinct types of cohesion, that of task and social cohesion. Task cohesion is more closely related to what the CF identifies as professional cohesion, “. . . a group of people voluntarily performing a service to society and unified by a common body of expertise and code of conduct.”¹¹ Literature identifies that both types have a role to play, but more recently, task cohesion has been cited to correlate more positively with morale and performance and that there is the possibility of having too much of social and not enough task cohesion.¹²

⁸ Merriam-Webster Dictionary, “Cohesion,” <http://www.m-w.com/dictionary/cohesion>; Internet; accessed 3 March 2006.

⁹ Stasiu Labuc, “Cultural and Societal factors in Military Organizations,” in *Handbook of Military Psychology* (New York: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 1991), 486.

¹⁰ E.C. Myer, “The Unit,” *Defence* 82, (1982): n.p., quoted in Frederick J. Manning, “Morale, Cohesion, and Esprit de Corps,” in *Handbook of Military Psychology* (New York: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 1991), 457.

¹¹ Department of National Defence, *Leadership in the Canadian Forces: Conceptual Foundations* (Ottawa: Canadian Defence Academy – Canadian Forces Leadership Institute, 2005), 13.

¹² Margaret C. Harrell and Laura Miller, *New Opportunities for Military Women - Effects Upon Readiness, Cohesion, and Morale*, (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 1997), 53; http://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph_reports/MR896/; Internet; accessed 3 March 2006.

Task cohesion refers to the shared commitment among members to achieving a goal that requires the collective efforts of the group. A group with high task cohesion is composed of members who share a common goal and who are motivated to coordinate their efforts as a team to achieve that goal.¹³

Social cohesion refers to the nature and quality of the emotional bonds of friendship, liking, caring, and closeness among group members. A group displays high social cohesion to the extent that its members like each other, prefer to spend their social time together, enjoy each other's company, and feel emotionally close to one another.¹⁴

That is not to say that social cohesion should be discounted completely, as there are many examples in history where social cohesion was seen as the deciding factor in victory, and where, more recently, social cohesion is used to explain the overwhelming success of military actions. The great American combat historian S.L.A Marshall states, "I hold it to be one of the simplest truths of war that the thing which enables an infantry soldier to keep going . . . is the near presence or presumed presence of a comrade."¹⁵ He later concludes his thoughts by summarizing, ". . . friendship, loyalty to responsibility and the knowledge that he is a repository of the faith and confidence of others,"¹⁶ is the reason young men fight together. More recently it has been stated that "cohesion, or the emotional bonds between soldiers, appeared to be the primary factor in combat

¹³ University of California, "Unit Cohesion and the Military Mission," http://psychology.ucdavis.edu/rainbow/html/military_cohesion.html; Internet; accessed 3 March 2006.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹⁵ S. L. A. Marshall, *Men against Fire* (New York: William Morrow, 1947), n.p., quoted in Frederick J. Manning, "Morale, Cohesion, and Esprit de Corps," in *Handbook of Military Psychology* (New York: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 1991), 456.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 456.

motivation.”¹⁷ There are many more examples of the same theme, “I do it for my buddies” or “I can’t let my buddies down” which seem to support social cohesion as a correlated construct to group morale, motivation and performance. Unfortunately, there are discrepancies in the methodology in some of the findings and others are not supported by cited work.¹⁸ However, it is difficult to argue with the scenes broadcast over the airwaves recently, the deaths of Canadian soldiers in Afghanistan on Operation ARCHER. The statements from their loved ones that the soldiers, even knowing the dangers of the mission which lay ahead of them, could not stand idly-by back in Canada while their friends and comrades departed for the war torn country. These comments, although not scientifically supportive, intuitively suggest that social cohesion does, on some level, positively effect morale leading to higher motivation, performance, dedication, and effectiveness.

With all of these definitions, it has been noted that there are many instances where the meanings are misused or misunderstood. Many researchers group survey results together or refer to cohesion as a single entity, which indeed it is not. Thus the concept of cohesion is an abstract one, which is thought to be well understood by the laymen, but actually quite complex to grasp in reality.¹⁹ “No definition of cohesiveness has become a

¹⁷ Leonard Wong, Thomas A. Kolditz, Raymond A. Millen, and Terrence M. Potter, “Why They Fight: Combat Motivation in the Iraq War,” *The US Army Professional Writing Collection* 1, (Fall 2003) [journal on-line]; available from http://www.army.mil/professionalwriting/volumes/volume1/september_2003/9_03_1.html; Internet; accessed 3 March 2006.

¹⁸ Robert J. MacCoun, Elizabeth Kier, and Aaron Belkin, “Does Social Cohesion Determine Motivation in Combat,” *Armed Forces & Society* 32, no. 1 (2005): 3; <http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~maccoun/SocialCohesionAFS.pdf>; Internet; accessed 3 March 2006.

¹⁹ Guy L. Siebold, “The Evolution of the Measurement of Cohesion,” *Military Psychology* 11, no. 1 (2000): 5; <http://search.epnet.com/>; Internet; accessed 3 March 2006.

generally accepted standard, and no uniformity has characterized the measurement or the operationalization of the construct.”²⁰ Cohesion, however, is believed to be so important to group performance, motivation and effectiveness that the preceding challenges should not stop researchers from pursuing answers.

Most military officers are familiar with the likes of Sun Tzu, Clausewitz and Jomini, and few would question the validity of cohesion and its impacts on tactics, organizational design of forces and synchronization of effects. This interest has not been degraded over the years; in fact, military interest in cohesion has been steadily growing. It has been suggested that the increasing lethality on the battlefield, disproportionate force strength and capabilities of potential adversaries, lessons learned from the Vietnam War, and military organizational design brought about by the new security environment consisting of non-linear asymmetric threats, have made cohesion a force multiplier to be sought after and exploited.²¹ If this is assumed to be true, it is critical that organizational design of MR forces be constructed in such a way as to increase cohesion or, at the very least, set the conditions to improve it. This challenge can be accomplished by focusing efforts directly on variables that influence cohesion, by manipulating the inputs into these variables to leverage the cohesion that currently exists, or commencing with activities to build it before the MR task force deploys on operations.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 6.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 8.

MODEL OF COHESION

This paper hypothesis is that leadership, trust, meaningful employment, shared experiences/time, and realistic training all strongly influence cohesion. A conceptual model in Figure 1 depicts this relationship and how these variables directly influence morale and further impact motivation, performance, effectiveness, dedication and retention. “Unit cohesion should thus be seen as a contributor to morale, albeit a very important one, rather than a synonym or a related but independent concept.”²²

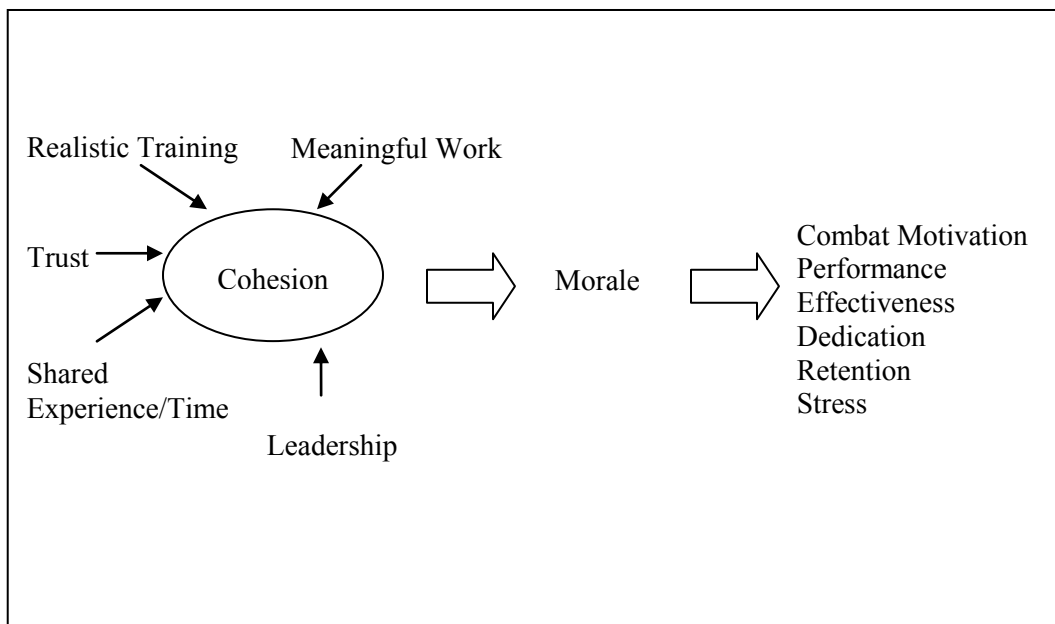


Figure 1: Conceptual Model of Variables Affecting Cohesion

Leadership

The military has always been focused on developing leaders who are required at all levels of the institution. “Military analysts have identified the quality of leadership as

²² Frederick J. Manning, “Morale, Cohesion, and Esprit de Corps,” in *Handbook of Military Psychology* (New York: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 1991), 457.

a key factor in determining whether units are cohesive.”²³ Leaders who can display high levels of motivation and set the standard for others to emulate, become a model of inspiration for others to follow.²⁴ This is crucial as the MR task force begins to take shape. From the moment the command and control nucleus of the high readiness task force receives its order to mobilize, the leadership needs to demonstrate its determination because, “. . . leaders appear to have substantial influence on cohesion among their subordinates.”²⁵ From their physical fitness level to dress and deportment, the leadership is looked to for guidance and motivation. If this is lacking at the leadership level, it will not flourish at the troop level. “By caring out your duty and striving for excellence, a positive statement is made to the soldiers under you.”²⁶ The abilities of the leadership will also be closely monitored by subordinates. Can they articulate mission statements and orders? Are they competent with their personal weapons? Leaders at all levels must regularly demonstrate their skills for subordinates to witness because, before operations begin, the soldier must know beyond the shadow of a doubt, that their leader is competent and those competencies will lead the unit to success in battle. “If they [soldiers] doubt his [leader] knowledge they will hesitate to commit their lives to his judgment – they will

²³ Robert J. MacCoun, “Unit Cohesion and Military Performance,” *National Defense Research Institute*, (1993): 302; <http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~maccoun/GMILch10.pdf>; Internet; accessed 3 March 2006.

²⁴ Sergio Catigani, “Motivating Solders: The Example of the Israeli Defense Forces,” *Parameters*, (Autumn 2004): 112; <http://carlisle-www.army.mil/usawc/Parameters/04autumn/catignan.pdf>; Internet: accessed 3 March 2006.

²⁵ Paul T. Bartone and Amy B. Adler, “Cohesion Over Time in a Peacekeeping Medical Task Force,” *Military Psychology* 11, no. 1 (2000): 87; <http://search.epnet.com/>; Internet: accessed 3 March 2006.

²⁶ du Picq, *Battle Studies: Ancient and Modern . . .*, 110.

not act as a cohesive unit.”²⁷ As the deployment date for the unit approaches and the tempo of preparations intensifies, stress within the unit will build. This is viewed as a normal emotional outcome of pre-deployment operations, which must be managed. “A leader’s professional competency is the primary leadership factor that soldiers say decreases their stress.”²⁸ Therefore, MR unit leadership must work hard to demonstrate their competency quickly as they will be dealing with many new personalities unfamiliar with them, arriving from formations outside the geographical area.

Once subordinates are comfortable with the competency of the leadership, they will seek assurances that their welfare and the welfare of their families will be addressed. “When leaders take adequate care of their soldiers, then their soldiers will more diligently carry out their duties, typically without the need for much supervision.”²⁹ A leader who routinely demonstrates care, compassion and competency sets the conditions to influence cohesion in a positive way.³⁰ Thus, the importance of MR units in establishing rear-party social support networks, hosting briefings for families during pre-deployment preparations are invaluable. Having unit leadership explain the mission objectives and answer questions during regular informal gatherings with families before deployment is invaluable to provide clarifications to those unanswered questions families will have. It is essential that MR leadership appoints a competent and effective rear party, lead by

²⁷ Manning, *Morale, Cohesion, and Esprit de Corps* . . . , 464.

²⁸ Donald M. Bradshaw, “Combat Stress Casualties: A Commander’s Influence,” *Military Review* 75, no 4 (July/August 1995): 20; <http://search.epnet.com/>; Internet; accessed 3 March 2006.

²⁹ Catigani, *Motivating Soldiers: The Example of the Israeli Defense Forces* . . . , 114.

³⁰ Paul T. Bartone, Bjorn H. Johsen, Jarle Eid, Wibecke Brum, and Jon C. Laberg, “Factors Influencing Small-Unit Cohesion in Norwegian Navy Officer Cadets,” *Military Psychology* 14, no. 1 (2002): 4; <http://search.epnet.com/>; Internet; accessed 3 March 2006.

individuals who exude confidence and have the interpersonal skills to interact with worried and nervous families. “Soldiers perceptions of leaders as caring and competent can influence the development of cohesion.”³¹ After the MR unit deploys for operations, regular social activities for the families, internet sites, and local newsletters will go a long way in demonstrating to subordinates that the leadership cares. There exists strong positive correlation between the knowledge that a soldier’s loved ones are being taking care of and unit cohesion.³²

Once deployed, soldiers will work long hours, encountering many stressful and unfamiliar situations. In today’s contemporary environment, one of high risk and high tempo operations, the chances of developing stress injuries have increased. “In a unit under stress, the strength of unit cohesion and leadership may tip the delicate balance from a prevalence of combat stress reaction to valour.”³³ Unit leadership must establish the environment cohesion needs to foster. “The cohesion and leadership in the unit are related to the soldier’s perceived chances of survival.”³⁴ Every soldier wants to survive, and every leader wants to bring their soldier’s home. Developing cohesion early in the MR unit through solid, well documented leadership practices, and nurturing its growth will only enhance the likelihood of success.

³¹ Paul T. Bartone and Amy B. Adler, “Cohesion Over Time in a Peacekeeping Medical Task Force,” *Military Psychology* 11, no. 1 (2000): 87; <http://search.epnet.com/>; Internet: accessed 3 March 2006.

³² *Ibid.*, 96.

³³ Shabtai Noy, “Combat Stress Reactions,” in *Handbook of Military Psychology* (New York: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 1991), 513.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 518.

Trust

If trust is nurtured, soldiers will feel secure depending on others for their survival even under intense stress. If that trust is broken or misused, soldier will feel powerless and unable to cope with the anger that will develop.³⁵ Trust needs to be earned and once earned, kept. Communicating truthfully with subordinates is essential. Leadership will be looked to for answers and must be seen as the portal from where information comes, good or bad. Leadership must never lie to their soldiers or give conflicting answers, because their trust will be lost forever. Establishing trust must begin immediately when the MR unit forms. The leadership needs to create an environment that opens communication channels and fosters dialogue. Soldiers are inquisitive and will seek answers to the unfamiliar. This needs to be recognized upfront and planned for. “Communication and trust between the provider and the recipient are crucial, because informing soldiers during combat of the real state of affairs will help lesson the fear caused by the unknown.”³⁶ Trust needs to be earned and is gained through displaying a balanced level of care and compassion for soldiers and being seen as an accurate source of timely information. Only through regular face to face contact with subordinates will trust in the leader’s capabilities be forged.³⁷ This can be reinforced by conducting informal exchanges with the soldiers, either while walking through their work lines, exchanging in dialogue along the way or by conducting ‘junior leaders hours’ at the lower end of the leadership hierarchy.

³⁵ Ibid., 513.

³⁶ Catigani, *Motivating Solders: The Example of the Israeli Defense Forces* . . . , 112.

³⁷ Ibid., 115.

This reasoning is not only true for communications, but applicable to every facet of the leader-follower relationship, as well as between soldiers themselves. “If the soldier trusts his comrades, he will probably perceive more safety in continuing to fight alongside them, than in rearward fight away from them and the enemy which they face.”³⁸ Limited but intense combat engagements are becoming more prevalent, as the implementation of Canada’s new foreign policy agenda is exercised. The MR units will find themselves employed in dangerous remote areas, where each person will be counting on the other for support. “In combat, the social support network is often crucial in importance. Expressed in a high level of unit cohesion and in the trust in effective leadership, it instigates a sense of optimism and hope for survival.”³⁹ Soldiers are very conscious of the fact that their survival is dependent on others in the group. If this awareness is ever in doubt, cohesion will suffer significantly.⁴⁰ If engagements with enemy combatants occur, soldiers need to clearly understand their rules of engagement and be able to apply them accurately, with the certainty that they will be supported by the chain of command. “Therefore, trust in one’s commander and comrade’s [*sic*] remains the most important factor for security.”⁴¹

Developing this level of trust between soldiers has the potential to be a significant stumbling block for MR and requires greater attention. Although our military ethos will

³⁸ William L. Hauser, *The Will to Fight in Combat Effectiveness: Cohesion, Stress, and the Volunteer Military* (London: Sage, 1980), 190.

³⁹ Noy, *Combat Stress Reactions* . . . , 513.

⁴⁰ Manning, *Morale, Cohesion, and Esprit de Corps* . . . , 464.

⁴¹ Noy, *Combat Stress Reactions* . . . , 518.

provide soldiers with the foundations of commonality, it may not achieve the desired level of trust required under stressful operational conditions. Ways of achieving high levels of trust will need to be studied more closely.

Shared Experiences/Time

It has always been postulated that spending time together was the universal key which would open all the barriers and permit unit cohesion to thrive. Time was consistently mentioned by those opposed to MR as one of the reasons it would fail. Units that spent long times together would be cohesive units; therefore MR units, knowing that they would only be together for the duration of the operation, would never achieve the level of cohesiveness required for high tempo demanding operations. There is a documented level of merit to this concern. “Spending time together thus appears as a necessary, although not sufficient, condition for unit cohesion to develop.”⁴² The quality of the time being shared and what is accomplished within that time become important factors here much like any relationship.

In order to foster cohesion and give it an opportunity to flourish, soldiers need time to share experiences, interact and get to know one another.⁴³ There are multiple ways to achieve this goal, from unit sporting events to social activities. “In the absence of shared experiences that can occur when individuals of a group spend time together, unit identity and cohesion have no opportunity to develop.”⁴⁴ Understanding the pre-deployment period is very busy time, this may be hard to achieve, but MR unit leadership

⁴² Bartone and Adler, *Cohesion Over Time in a Peacekeeping Medical Task Force* . . . , 101.

⁴³ Manning, *Morale, Cohesion, and Esprit de Corps* . . . , 462.

⁴⁴ Bartone and Adler, *Cohesion Over Time in a Peacekeeping Medical Task Force* . . . , 87.

needs to ensure ample time is given to the unit to gel per se, to feel each other out, exchange ideas and have some fun. Tackling small tasks and accomplishing them successfully is also important. “There is considerable evidence that successful performance experiences promote cohesion,”⁴⁵ so making more out of the time spent together is essential. Cohesion enhancing experiences must, “derive some feeling of success or accomplishment and the more interdependence among the members is necessary for success, the greater the payoff in cohesion.”⁴⁶ Units which spend time together undergoing common experiences are pillars on which cohesion is built.⁴⁷

Although very unlikely for MR units, what the units cannot afford is wasted time or just sitting around. Boredom saps the life straight out of cohesion and there must be a never-ending struggle to ensure boredom is not permitted to take hold. “Boredom is an increasingly important negative correlate of cohesion.”⁴⁸ Missions that last for years, tasking soldiers to return often to conduct the same mission year after year does not lend itself to foster cohesion. It has been shown that cohesion generally increases over the deployment, however, will drop off quickly over time if the members find their efforts unchallenging and unrewarding.⁴⁹ If the MR unit leadership senses boredom setting in, various types of specific technical professional development (PD) training are

⁴⁵ MacCoun, *Unit Cohesion and Military Performance* . . . , 303.

⁴⁶ Manning, *Morale, Cohesion, and Esprit de Corps* . . . , 462.

⁴⁷ David J. Lemelin, “Force XXI: Getting it Right,” *Military Review* 76, no. 6 (Nov/Dec 1996): 82; <http://search.epnet.com/>; Internet; accessed 3 March 2006.

⁴⁸ Bartone and Adler, *Cohesion Over Time in a Peacekeeping Medical Task Force* . . . , 102.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 100.

recommended.⁵⁰ A maintainer should delve into new maintenance procedures and issues, medical personnel into medical journals and forums, and so on. Making soldiers do seemingly meaningless or general PD will not work.

“Shared experiences while in the military thus become the glue which holds the work group together.”⁵¹ Soldiers must bear witness for themselves that their fellow soldiers have the capability and resolve under stressful conditions to react, and only then will shared experiences build cohesion.⁵² “This confidence, that in times of difficulty one has someone who is willing and able to help is at the heart of unity cohesion.”⁵³

Realistic Training

Soldiers frequently complain about the mundane and repetitive training schedule in units. It is often felt that the soldier skill or technical trade is well enough understood and that proficiency had been attained long ago; more training is just a waste of time. Although this point of view is presented often, the requirements to train on lessons learned from past operations and adapt old tactics, techniques and procedures to the new era of the non-linear, asymmetric battle space, must be accomplished. This is the reality confronting HR units struggling to achieve cohesion, and is only compounded with the introduction of new soldiers into a new unit, deploying to a new mission area where the possibility of encountering a multitude of new threats is very real. All is not lost, however, and building cohesion is very achievable. Leaders must never allow training to

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 103.

⁵¹ Manning, *Morale, Cohesion, and Esprit de Corps* . . . , 462.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 463.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 463.

become irrelevant or unchallenging, “because it is in training that unit cohesion is built before combat troops go on any military operation.”⁵⁴

HR unit training must be built around realistic scenarios, or scenarios that they are likely to encounter on operations. “. . . training them to become seasoned soldiers who could survive on a battlefield, because they are technically, physically, and mentally proficient,”⁵⁵ is the true objective. Cohesion will build, as soldiers watch each other become more competent and skilled, accomplishing tasks which they will be asked to perform under significantly more pressure and stress. HR units cannot wait idly for orders to deploy on operations; they must train aggressively and with vigour, in preparation for their impending departure.⁵⁶ “Rigour and frequent training fosters unit cohesion, which is so crucial to combat effectiveness that Martin van Creveld⁵⁷ includes it in his definition of an army’s fighting power.”⁵⁸ The level of training required to build cohesion is achievable, within the HR unit construct, with careful planning and the requisite resource allocation. Although certainly more difficult with new mission deployments, current mission rotations must take advantage of lessons identified, and more vigorously employ, from the mission area, serving soldiers as mentors to achieve this goal more so than is presently conducted.

⁵⁴ Catigani, *Motivating Soldiers: The Example of the Israeli Defense Forces* . . . , 112.

⁵⁵ Daniel F. Sullivan, “The Platoon Leader: Keys to Success,” *Infantry*, (May-June 1989): 14; <http://search.epnet.com/>; Internet; accessed 3 March 2006.

⁵⁶ Noy, *Combat Stress Reactions* . . . , 521.

⁵⁷ Martin van Creveld is a Professor at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and is Israel’s most prominent military historian.

⁵⁸ Lemelin, *Force XXI: Getting it Right* . . . , 82.

“Historically, armies that entered a conflict with good equipment and unprepared units either lost the conflict to better-trained armies or suffered ghastly losses until their training, paid in blood, caught up to the enemy’s.”⁵⁹ The early twentieth century German Army recognized the significance of training, spending an inordinate amount of effort honing the skills of its soldiers and officers alike into unyielding cohesive units.⁶⁰ There is the potential for HR units to fall into this trap, especially if training is viewed as an afterthought or taken too lightly. Through realistic training, soldiers will learn from one another, build bonds, suffer collectively, and triumph as one. They will proudly work in concert to accomplish the mission, drawing on the credible training of the past for inspiration and guidance. Knowing that collectively they were successful during training will instil confidence in one another when faced with threatening challenges. When soldiers know that other soldiers care and are interested about their well-being, group cohesion is reinforced and will prosper.⁶¹

CONCLUSION

Cohesion is a characteristic that will enhance group effectiveness, and is essential for combat forces to attain before being committed into harms way. This paper has suggested that there are variables that directly influence cohesion and can be manipulated to enhance cohesion in units. “It is essential to strengthen unit cohesion because during

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 81.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 83.

⁶¹ Labuc, *Cultural and Societal factors in Military Organizations* . . . , 488.

combat, isolation and loneliness assaults the cohesive power of a unit.”⁶² With the introduction of MR, the Army is experiencing the challenges in building and fostering cohesion within the HR unit. Significant attention has been focused on the Army’s plan of bringing together small groups of soldiers from across the country to form one cohesive task-tailored force for operations. Although the task is a difficult one, it is one that is achievable.

As was presented in the conceptual model of cohesion, and validated through literature, by concentrating more effort on the variables of leadership, trust, shared experiences/time and realistic training, it is suggested that cohesion can take hold and become well established. “These findings suggest that it is the combined effects of being already familiar with one another and then experiencing as a group a stressful task or exercise that together seem to have more impact on cohesion than either factor alone.”⁶³ “Confidence in the ability and willingness of peers and leaders to protect one in combat and a feeling of obligation to do the same for them are at the heart of unit cohesion.”⁶⁴ Before soldiers depart on operations, it is critical that cohesion has an opportunity to foster well in advance.⁶⁵ An enemy aware of his adversary’s centre of gravity will attempt at all cost to dislocate him from it. Leaders must diligently guard against this, as with the demise of unit cohesion, motivation, effectiveness and performance will fail.⁶⁶

⁶² Catigani, *Motivating Soldiers: The Example of the Israeli Defense Forces* . . . , 117.

⁶³ Bartone, Johsen, Eid, Brum, and Laberg, *Factors Influencing Small-Unit Cohesion in Norwegian Navy Officer Cadets* . . . , 16.

⁶⁴ Manning, *Morale, Cohesion, and Esprit de Corps* . . . , 468.

⁶⁵ Catigani, *Motivating Soldiers: The Example of the Israeli Defense Forces* . . . , 119.

⁶⁶ Catigani, *Motivating Soldiers: The Example of the Israeli Defense Forces* . . . , 117.

Researching this paper has drawn the same conclusions as others, and that is that there is a, “strong relationship between cohesion, soldiers’ level of morale, and combat efficiency.”⁶⁷ What is well understood, at least conceptually, is that cohesion plays a major role in group dynamics and is critical in organizations to shape unit morale and set the conditions for improvements in performance, motivation, effectiveness and retention. “This is an especially important issue for the military because modern operations rely more heavily on rapidly organized task forces tailored for particular missions than did those in the past.”⁶⁸ Clearly this is the Canadian MR construct, which is now fully operational. The struggle continues to clearly identify the effects of cohesion and what variables can be influenced to make cohesion stronger. “Few studies have empirically addressed this issue.”⁶⁹ There is a need for future research to clearly identify, quantify and articulate each variable directly impacting upon cohesion so they can be more carefully managed to ensure MR units depart on operations as cohesive as possible.

⁶⁷ Nora K. Stewart, "Military Cohesion," in War, ed. Lawrence Freedman (Oxford.: Oxford University Press, 1994), 148.

⁶⁸ Bartone, Johsen, Eid, Brum, and Laberg, *Factors Influencing Small-Unit Cohesion in Norwegian Navy Officer Cadets . . .*, 3.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bartone, Paul T. and Amy B. Adler. "Cohesion Over Time in a Peacekeeping Medical Task Force." *Military Psychology* 11, no. 1 (2000): 85-107; <http://search.epnet.com/>; Internet; accessed 3 March 2006.
- Bartone, Paul T., Bjorn H. Johsen, Jarle Eid, Wibecke Brum, and Jon C. Laberg. "Factors Influencing Small-Unit Cohesion in Norwegian Navy Officer Cadets." *Military Psychology* 14, no. 1 (2002): 1-22; <http://search.epnet.com/>; Internet; accessed 3 March 2006.
- Bradshaw, Donald M. "Combat Stress Casualties: A Commander's Influence." *Military Review* 75, no 4 (July/August 1995): 20; <http://search.epnet.com/>; Internet; accessed 3 March 2006.
- Canada. Department of National Defence. *Advancing with Purpose: The Army Strategy*. Ottawa: Canadian Defence Academy – Canadian Forces Leadership Institute, 2005.
- Canada. Department of National Defence. *Duty With Honour: The Profession of Arms in Canada*. Ottawa: Canadian Defence Academy – Canadian Forces Leadership Institute, 2003.
- Canada. Department of National Defence. *Leadership in the Canadian Forces: Doctrine*. Ottawa: Canadian Defence Academy – Canadian Forces Leadership Institute, 2005.
- Canada. Department of National Defence. *Leadership in the Canadian Forces: Conceptual Foundations*. Ottawa: Canadian Defence Academy – Canadian Forces Leadership Institute, 2005.
- Catigani, Sergio. "Motivating Solders: The Example of the Israeli Defense Forces." *Parameters*, (Autumn 2004): 108-121; <http://carlisle-www.army.mil/usawc/Parameters/04autumn/catignan.pdf>; Internet; accessed 3 March 2006.
- du Picq, Ardant. *Battle Studies: Ancient and Modern*. Harrisburg: Military Service Publishing, 1947.
- Farley, Kelly M. J. "Measuring Morale, Cohesion and Confidence in Leadership: What are the Implications for Leaders?" *The Canadian Journal of Policy & Security Services* 1, no. 4 (Winter 2003): 353-364; <http://search.epnet.com/>; Internet; accessed 3 March 2006.

- Griffith, James and Mark Vaitkus. "Relating Cohesion to Stress, Strain, Disintegration, and Performance: An Organizing Framework." *Military Psychology* 11, no. 1 (1999): 27-55; <http://search.epnet.com/>; Internet; accessed 3 March 2006.
- Harrell, Margaret C. and Laura Miller. *New Opportunities for Military Women - Effects Upon Readiness, Cohesion, and Morale*. Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 1997; http://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph_reports/MR896/; Internet; accessed 3 March 2006.
- Hauser, William L. *The Will to Fight in Combat Effectiveness: Cohesion, Stress, and the Volunteer Military*. London: Sage, 1980.
- Labuc Stasiu. "Cultural and Societal factors in Military Organizations." Chap 24 in *Handbook of Military Psychology*. New York: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 1991.
- Lemelin, David J. "Force XXI: Getting it Right." *Military Review* 76, no. 6 (Nov/Dec 1996): 81-85; <http://search.epnet.com/>; Internet; accessed 3 March 2006.
- MacCoun, Robert J. "Unit Cohesion and Military Performance," *National Defense Research Institute*, (1993): 283-306; <http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~maccoun/GMILch10.pdf>; Internet; accessed 3 March 2006.
- MacCoun, Robert J., Elizabeth Kier, and Aaron Belkin. "Does Social Cohesion Determine Motivation in Combat." *Armed Forces & Society* 32, no. 1 (2005): 1-9; <http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~maccoun/SocialCohesionAFS.pdf>; Internet; accessed 3 March 2006. linked.
- Manning Frederick J. "Morale, Cohesion, and Esprit de Corps." Chap 23 in *Handbook of Military Psychology*. New York: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 1991.
- Marshall, S. L. A. *Men against Fire*. New York: William Morrow, 1947. Quoted in Frederick J. Manning, "Morale, Cohesion, and Esprit de Corps." Chap 23 in *Handbook of Military Psychology*. New York: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 1991.
- Merriam-Webster Dictionary. "Cohesion." <http://www.m-w.com/dictionary/cohesion>; Internet; accessed 3 March 2006.
- Myer, E.C. "The Unit," *Defence* 82, (1982): n.p. Quoted in Frederick J. Manning. "Morale, Cohesion, and Esprit de Corps." Chap 23 in *Handbook of Military Psychology*. New York: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 1991.
- Noy, Shabtai. "Combat Stress Reactions." Chap 26 in *Handbook of Military Psychology*. New York: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 1991.

- Reed, Brian J. and David R. Segal. "The Impact of Multiple Deployments on Soldiers' Peacekeeping Attitudes, Morale, and Retention." *Armed Forces & Society* 27, no. 1 (Fall 2000): 57-78; <http://search.epnet.com/>; Internet; accessed 3 March 2006.
- Reeves, Lieutenant (N) D. T. and Captain R. J. Hansen, "Development of the Human Dimension Combat Readiness Index-Experimental (HDCRI-X)," Technical Note, Canadian Forces Personnel Applied Research Unit, 1989.
- Sarkesian, Sam C., John Allen Williams, and Fred B. Bryant. *Soldiers, Society, and National Security*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publications Inc., 1995.
- Siebold, Guy L. "The Evolution of the Measurement of Cohesion." *Military Psychology* 11, no. 1 (2000): 5-26; <http://search.epnet.com/>; Internet; accessed 3 March 2006.
- Stewart, Nora K. *Military Cohesion in War*. Edited by Lawrence Freedman (Oxford.: Oxford University Press, 1994).
- Sullivan, Daniel F. "The Platoon Leader: Keys to Success." *Infantry*, (May-June 1989): 1-14; <http://search.epnet.com/>; Internet; accessed 3 March 2006.
- University of California. "Unit Cohesion and the Military Mission." http://psychology.ucdavis.edu/rainbow/html/military_cohesion.html; Internet; accessed 3 March 2006.
- Wong, Leonard, Thomas A. Kolditz, Raymond A. Millen, and Terrence M. Potter. "Why They Fight: Combat Motivation in the Iraq War." *The US Army Professional Writing Collection*, (July 2002). Journal on-line; available from http://www.army.mil/professionalwriting/volumes/volume1/september_2003/9_03_1.html; Internet; accessed 3 March 2006.