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FUTURE CAPABILITIES OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO REGIMENT

Maj J.Y.M. Affonso

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Maj J.Y.M. Affonso

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FUTURE CAPABILITIES OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO REGIMENT

Service paper for the Commanding Officer, Trinidad and Tobago Regiment

AIM

1. This paper aims to address the capability gaps of the TTR in its functions of command, act and sustain in order to contribute effectively to the national effort to deal with illegal drug trafficking, violent crime and disaster management.

INTRODUCTION

2. In Trinidad and Tobago, three of the major problems that every elected government is burdened with and for which the solution appears to be elusive are illegal trafficking of drugs, violent crime and natural disasters. While there are other issues, these three will be explored because they represent the most significant ones based on public interest¹. In the future, the Trinidad and Tobago Regiment(TTR) has to develop better integration with the agencies and components that typically lead such operations such as the Trinidad and Tobago Coast Guard (Coast Guard), the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service(TTPS), and the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management (ODPM) along with its associated agencies to deal with disasters.

3. In this paper, illegal trafficking of drugs will be presented. Then, the issue of violent crime will be examined. Finally, the threat of disaster will be discussed.

DISCUSSION

Issues Affecting Trinidad and Tobago

4. Illegal trafficking of drugs is an enormous problem in Trinidad and Tobago. In August 2005, authorities discovered 1749 kilos of cocaine on Monos Island, a small islet of Trinidad and

¹ <http://foreignpolicy.com/2010/03/11/trouble-in-paradise-2/>

Tobago. The find was worth over US\$110 million². This may seem like a significant dent in drug trade through Trinidad and Tobago, but as evidenced by other reports over time, this was far from truth. Some nine years later, in January 2014, a US\$100 million shipment worth of cocaine from Trinidad and Tobago was intercepted by the US Customs and Border Protection agency in Virginia³. Even after that, as recently as November 2015, another cocaine bust was made at the Port of Halifax, Nova Scotia. Though this shipment was just 44 liters of liquid cocaine compared to 700 cans in the previous incident, it still highlights the point that trafficking continues unabated through Trinidad and Tobago⁴. If anything, these incidents suggest that large businesses with capital, resources and network are involved. Furthermore, since the island does not produce cocaine, then it is obviously being smuggled into the country and re-packaged for onward transmission. The interception of drugs on entry is where TTR can contribute to a solution, as will be discussed ahead.

5. Another issue facing Trinidad and Tobago, and attracting great public concern, is violent crime. The countries of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), a group of English speaking countries in the region, have been making an effort to understand the problem⁵ and develop solutions⁶ but that seems too elusive⁷. This scourge does not go unnoticed⁸ by other countries⁹ and has even been reflected in tourism advisories¹⁰. The crime situation shapes the issues of

² <http://www.trinidadandtobagonews.com/blog/?p=509>

³ <http://www.trinidadexpress.com/news/600-million-in-cocaine-from-TT-seized-at-US-port-240786121.html>

⁴ <http://www.caribbean360.com/news/two-canadians-charged-for-importing-cocaine-in-juice-from-trinidad>

⁵ "CARICOM Reveals Initial Results of Pilot Project to Reduce Youth Violence." *EFE News Service*, Jan 15, 2015. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1645752455?accountid=9867>.

⁶ Miller, Derrick. "OPINION: Policing, Politics, Crime, and Complexities Inside a Few Caribbean Islands." *McClatchy - Tribune Business News*, Sep 29, 2015. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1717234202?accountid=9867>.

⁷ *Caribbean Politics: Violent Crime Rises in English-Speaking Caribbean*. New York: The Economist Intelligence Unit N.A., Incorporated, 2014. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1477291179?accountid=9867>.

⁸ <http://www.refworld.org/docid/4b20f034c.html>

⁹ <http://www.coha.org/gangs-are-the-new-law-in-urban-trinidad-and-tobago/>

¹⁰ <http://gocaribbean.about.com/od/trinidadandtobago/a/TrinidadTobagoCrimeSafety.htm>

elections, such as in the recent election of 2015¹¹. The TTR is committed to being part of the solution.

6. Yet another issue facing Trinidad and Tobago is the threat of disaster due to perennial acts of nature. According to the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, a disaster is when an event occurs which is of such proportions, with such loss, whether it is of life and/or property that it overwhelms the resources available to deal with it¹². Trinidad and Tobago faces the possibility of disaster primarily from flooding. The heavy rainfall occurs each year during the rainy season from July to December and causes tremendous flooding in different parts of the country with destructive consequences, which was experienced as recently as 2013¹³ and 2014¹⁴. Rainfall can also come from hurricanes, though Trinidad and Tobago lies just outside of the typical hurricane path, called the hurricane belt. The tail of a hurricane can bring massive amounts of rainfall leading to the same result. Another natural incident that should be of great concern is earthquakes¹⁵. While Trinidad and Tobago has not had a major occurrence, experts at the University of the West Indies Seismic Research Centre are signaling that the probability of just such an event is growing¹⁶. Also, there are volcanic points close to Trinidad and Tobago that could cause problems if they erupt with sufficient force. One such is a submarine volcano known as Kick'em Jenny, which is located about 8km north of the island of Grenada¹⁷. It may erupt viciously in the future thereby causing a tsunami, which will have direct consequence to Trinidad and Tobago.

¹¹ <http://www.msn.com/en-ca/news/other/trinidad-pm-in-election-fight-over-crime-corruption-claims/ar-AAAdZPg1>

¹² <http://www.ifrc.org/en/what-we-do/disaster-management/about-disasters/what-is-a-disaster/>

¹³ <http://floodlist.com/america/floods-trinidad>

¹⁴ <http://www.guardian.co.tt/news/2014-10-04/flash-floods-hit-south-trinidad>

¹⁵ <http://www.trinidadexpress.com/20160105/news/uwi-warning-as-50-quake-hits-tt>

¹⁶ http://www.caribbean360.com/news/barbados_news/seismologist-warns-powerful-earthquake-a-warning-for-the-caribbean

¹⁷ <http://www.uwiseismic.com/General.aspx?id=27>

Capability Gaps

7. In order to contribute effectively to the national effort to deal with illegal drug trafficking, violent crime and disaster management, the TTR has to address its capability gaps that prevent the development of its functions of command, act and sustain. Three agencies that it has to better integrate with as mentioned before are the Coast Guard, the TTPS, and the ODPM. The TTR has to remain relevant and capable to contribute in any way it could to operations in the three areas noted and with the agencies cited¹⁸.

Coast Guard

8. TTR needs to operate more cohesively with the Coast Guard in dealing with illegal trafficking¹⁹. Among the many roles that the Coast Guard has, there are two to which the TTR ostensibly can help. They are monitoring of the coast and anti-smuggling operations²⁰. The two are in fact connected since the patrolling of the coastlines can ebb the tide of illegal drugs that enter the country to be later repackaged and then shipped to North America and Europe. Due to limited capacity of the Coast Guard, this task cannot be effectively accomplished, particularly with respect to Trinidad where drugs can be smuggled in unnoticed at any point. It cannot do sufficient patrols offshore, and even more so, the complementary waterborne and shoreside operations. The TTR can develop these skills to assist the Coast Guard. Its special forces already do waterborne operations training and from time to time small portions of regular troops are exposed to it, but it does not get put to use. Further to that, the Coast Guard has no amphibious capability to operate close to the shore, nor in swampy areas, nor even in riverine environments.

¹⁸ <http://www.ttdf.mil.tt/ttr/about%202.html>

¹⁹ National Anti-Drug Plan of Trinidad and Tobago.
http://www.cicad.oas.org/Fortalecimiento_Institucional/ENG/National%20Plans/Trinidad%20and%20Tobago%20008-2012.pdf

²⁰ <http://www.ttdf.mil.tt/ttcg/index.html>

9. The TTR has a location readily available to develop such a capability. The main barracks of the TTR is just one mile away from the main Coast Guard station and it is on the shore. There is a dilapidated jetty that can be rebuilt. Moreover, this main TTR barracks is used for training recruits, non-commissioned officers and officers. So, it is already organized for training. All that is needed is training for instructors and procurement of equipment for waterborne, riverine and amphibious operations. With regard to the latter, at times a task may require troops and equipment to be ferried to and from Coast Guard vessels at different points around the islands. However, without proper equipment and training, the Coast Guard will always be forced to return to station to do that. Further to these points, for TTR to work with the Coast Guard, it will need to develop command and control procedures to operate cohesively.

TTPS

10. Joint patrols have been occurring on an almost continuous basis for about 20 years. The aim of course is to halt the increase in violent crime, and reverse the trend. However, there have been increasingly bolder attacks on these patrols by criminal elements and neither the TTPS nor TTR is equipped and trained to properly deal with the problem²¹. As time goes by the growing spate of violent crime is getting out of control²². The TTR is doing whatever it can to support the police in this effort. Violent crime affects everyone including personnel, whether on and off duty²³. The government's response exposes its desperation, such as deploying soldiers permanently on the streets²⁴. These tactics are not of much use if TTR is neither equipped nor trained to handle this role. Of course, this state of affairs would not have come to such a pass if there was a comprehensive plan based on a clear understanding of the problem. Furthermore, the

²¹ <http://newsday.co.tt/news/0,196658.html>

²² <http://newsday.co.tt/news/0,196658.html>

²³ <http://www.newsday.co.tt/news/0,219286.html>

²⁴ <http://www.trinidadexpress.com/20160126/news/rowley-wants-aggressive-action-on-security>

said plan must involve Whole-of-Government approaches instead of just simply undertaking to deploy police and soldiers on the streets in force. This sort of response is not only useless, it endangers and alienates citizens. Moreover, the increased stress to both soldiers and police will lead to greater frustration, which would further lead to unprofessional behavior, forming a vicious cycle that may create more problems. Thus, the TTR must train the skills necessary and develop the proper command and control procedures and monitoring mechanisms for these kinds of operations.

ODPM

11. TTR has to become prepared to assist the agencies under the coordination of the ODPM, which is part of the national apparatus to deal with disasters²⁵. For instance, in times of flooding, the ODPM would coordinate a response by agencies both public and private, of which the 1st Engineer Battalion of the TTR is one. However, the Engineer Battalion is severely limited in many capabilities to be effective. It lacks an amphibious capability. This applies to both engineering equipment and mobility. Flood waters prevent normal equipment and vehicles from operating, so relief operations have to wait until flood levels subside sufficiently first. Mobility becomes even more of a problem in areas of the country where roads and villages are positioned very close to marshy ground. There is also a problem of dealing with situations where roads may be impassable for heavy equipment but could be accessed along the shoreline. With the right amphibious carriers, for instance, access can be achieved to do relief work. Further to those points about equipment, the TTR needs the right training for its personnel. For instance, training

²⁵ National Response Framework, 2010. (Trinidad and Tobago). Pg 5
<http://67.23.224.218/sites/default/files/Review%20of%20National%20Response%20Framework%202010.pdf>

is needed to develop a collapsed structure rescue capability which would be useful in some instances after a flood, and also in the aftermath of earthquakes.

CONCLUSION

12. The major problems in Trinidad and Tobago that were discussed are illegal trafficking of drugs, violent crime and natural disasters. In order for TTR to be prepared for the future, it has to develop better integration with the Coast Guard in dealing with illegal trafficking, with TTPS for Joint patrols, and agencies under the coordination of the ODPM for disasters. This will take the form mainly in development of better command and control mechanisms and operating procedures that enable better integration on operations with these three, and addressing the capability gaps as discussed. In this way TTR will be able, in the future, to contribute effectively to the national effort to deal with these issues in Trinidad and Tobago.

RECOMMENDATION

13. The TTR needs to develop better command and control capability, especially operating procedures that enable better integration on operations with Coast Guard, TTPS and ODPM. When it comes to planning and execution of operations with the Coast Guard, the Defence Force Headquarters can set up a Joint Command Centre with responsibility to plan and coordinate missions that require not only Army and Coast Guard, but the Air Guard as well. At present there is a Joint Operations Centre at Headquarters of the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force, but it is a good idea poorly executed. At present, operations involving TTR and Coast Guard are managed by the Chief Staff Officer at Defence Force Headquarters, with cooperation from the respective commanding officers of the three components. Neither the J3 nor the Joint Operations Centre plays a significant part in fusing intelligence or coordinating operations. Also, certain departments could set up jointly to integrate existing capabilities such as communications. Such

a department could have signalers with equipment and training to handle communications between the two components during an operation and also have the capacity to attach teams to deployed joint groups. This can be extended to the Air Guard as well. Canada can help with the training, advice and assistance in all the above mentioned areas. In addition to these points, TTR needs to develop amphibious capability for the infantry units and the engineers.

14. To operate better with police, there can be a liaison desk established at the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force Headquarters in the J3 Operations department. It would serve to discuss future operations and prepare briefs for the Chief of Defence Staff and the commanders of the three components specific to police operations. It can also serve as a fusion point for intelligence gathered by military personnel to later merge with that of the police. As part of its framework, it should have duplication in the G3 Operations at Regimental Headquarters so that current operations that require more direct liaison with Regiment assets and police can occur. Canada can help with specialized training that develops the expertise of land forces to operate with TTPS, as well as advice and assistance to set up command and control frameworks and pertinent guidelines and doctrine. This could also serve to improve operational activities at the National Operations Centre of Trinidad and Tobago²⁶. This facility is another example of a good idea poorly executed, and the evidence of that is the rate of violent crime increasing unabated. Advice from Canada would also be welcomed in the preparation of specifications for the procurement of relevant equipment for the dangerous operations involving violent crime.

15. As far as operations with the ODPM goes, liaison occurs between the Chief Staff Officer at Defence Force Headquarters, and then to the components. The Engineer Battalion has

²⁶ National Operations Centre (NOC) Air Division recovers body of missing fisherman.
<http://www.news.gov.tt/content/national-operations-centre-noc-air-division-recovers-body-missing-fisherman#.VrfdkMvbLIV>

developed an informal relationship with ODPM where it can deploy assistance to a certain extent and then alert higher command, but this is rather untidy and becomes even more so when other units of the TTR or other components are needed to assist. The solution can be similar to one suggested above in the form of a liaison desk in J3 Operations at Defence Force Headquarters. This liaison will coordinate actions from the three components. It will be mirrored in G3 Operations at Regimental Headquarters so that all units of TTR can be coordinated properly. At the unit level, the Battalion Second-in-Command, who serves as the operations officer for the Battalion, would coordinate actions of that unit. The thing that is needed now is expertise in operating with civilian agencies. Canada can help with training to develop that expertise for operation between TTR and civilian agencies such as the Trinidad and Tobago Fire Service, municipal agencies such as the Ministry of Local Government, ambulance services such as the Global Medical Responders of Trinidad and Tobago, and the Ministry of Works and Transport with responsibility for public works, engineering and public transportation²⁷.

²⁷ National Response Framework, 2010. (Trinidad and Tobago). Pg 6-7
<http://67.23.224.218/sites/default/files/Review%20of%20National%20Response%20Framework%202010.pdf>

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