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## LAND COMPONENT INTELLIGENCE FORCE GENERATION

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## **LAND COMPONENT INTELLIGENCE FORCE GENERATION**

### **AIM**

The primary aim of this paper is to identify the opportunities and risks presented by the current model for the establishment of the Canadian Army Intelligence Regiment. The secondary aim is to emphasise the importance of modifying the Army's force structure in order to allow the generation of scalable intelligence mission elements in support of land component contributions to joint operations.

### **SCOPE**

This paper will begin by describing the background of the Canadian Army Intelligence Regiment, the reasons behind its coming into being, and its intended role within the Army as well as the Canadian Armed Forces at large. It will then describe the main issues and challenges that stand between the Regiment and its ability to fulfil its mandate. If these issues are not addressed, the newest unit in the Army will be at risk of failing to address the critical force generation capability shortfall it was intended to remedy.

### **BACKGROUND**

The Canadian Army Intelligence Regiment (hereinafter simply the Regiment) was formally established on 28 June 2015 by order of the Minister of National Defence.<sup>1</sup> Its role is to deliver an agile, scalable, sustainable, professionalized, knowledge-based land intelligence enterprise that will enable the land component contribution to joint, interagency, multinational, public (JIMP) operations across the full spectrum of conflict.<sup>2</sup> Its mission is to generate trained intelligence groupings and personnel, produce ground intelligence, and contribute to capability, force and doctrine development in order to enable the Army to meet its operational and

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<sup>1</sup> In accordance with Ministerial Organization Order 2015008, dated 28 June 2015.

<sup>2</sup> *Master Implementation Directive -Canadian Army Intelligence Regiment* (Canadian Army Headquarters: file 1901-1 (DLFD 2-2), 6 February 2014).

institutional requirements.<sup>3</sup> The Regiment owes its existence directly to lessons learned in the last decade of the Army's involvement in complex land operations, especially southern Afghanistan from 2006-2011.

During the Army's deployment in southern Afghanistan, deficiencies became evident in regards to its ability to generate an intelligence capability of the scale required to support commanders in what turned out to be an extremely complex environment. At the time of the Afghanistan deployment, as would remain the case throughout, the institutional Army had no unit or formation capable of generating a deployed all-source intelligence centre (ASIC), a company-sized element. In the field force, the only permanently established intelligence groupings were small G2 staff branches within the three Canadian Mechanized Brigade Group (CMBG) headquarters. At the regiment/battalion level, intelligence staff functions were either nonexistent or carried out in a perfunctory manner by supernumerary junior officers from the various arms. The large intelligence staffs required to support the Kandahar mission were therefore drawn from various intelligence staffs across the Canadian Forces, the largest among these being the staff of the Chief of Defence Intelligence (CDI) organization.<sup>4</sup>

By 2007, permanent intelligence staff positions were being established within the nine Regular Force infantry battalions. Ultimately, according to the plan at the time, each battalion would have within its peacetime establishment one junior officer, one NCO and five other ranks from the Intelligence Branch. The purpose of this was to increase the battalions' capacity to generate battlegroup headquarters staffs without relying entirely on external augmentation for intelligence staff. These permanent positions had the additional effect of increasing trust and cohesion between the battalion intelligence staff and the battalion headquarters to which they

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<sup>3</sup> Quoted from internal (unpublished) briefing documents.

<sup>4</sup> The CDI organization has since been reorganized as Canadian Forces Intelligence Command Headquarters.

belonged, rather than the previous force generation model in which BG intelligence staffs would consist of strangers attached to the unit shortly before deployment. This first step demonstrated the Army's recognition that it had to take on the responsibility for the force generation of full-time intelligence staffs from within its own means. The effect was immediate; intelligence "cap badges" became fully integrated into the battalions' daily routines, and as such, trust and cohesion were built to levels that would have been impossible in hastier arrangements.<sup>5</sup>

At the same time as this was going on, the establishments of the CMBG intelligence staff branches were increased to 12 positions each, including a senior officer, two junior officers, a master warrant officer, and the rest of various other ranks. This allowed each CMBG's Headquarters and Signal Squadron to generate a brigade-level task force headquarters intelligence staff along the lines of that deployed with Task Force Kandahar Headquarters, but it did not solve the problem of ASIC force generation. Throughout the Afghanistan deployment, ASIC force generation remained an *ad hoc* affair at best. The CDI organization, never intended to be involved in force generation, found itself almost entirely responsible for the force generation of the deployed ASIC on a rotational basis. For various reasons, it was never fully possible to synchronize CDI's ASIC force generation cycle with the Army's expeditionary task force generation cycle. This meant that ASICs, as formed units, were not integrated into their respective task forces until very late in the readiness cycle, with predictably deleterious effects on integration and interoperability. The high operational tempo made it impossible to sort out this arrangement, and despite its flaws it remained in place as a necessary expedient until the end of the deployment.

The vision for an Army Intelligence unit was first promulgated by the Army G2 in 2008 in a document entitled "Army Intelligence Strategy 2016." The document outlined the way ahead

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<sup>5</sup> This is from personal experience.

for creating a permanent intelligence sub-unit within each CMBG in order to form the basis for ASIC force generation in future deployments. The Strategy document was not an order, although it was sanctioned by the Army leadership at the time. Establishment changes followed, although no new units were established or resourced. This was an awkward transitional period, as the split between line and staff organizations was not clear and command relationships were uncertain. Possibly the most disruptive change was the addition of a second intelligence major position within each CMBG, intended to be the officer commanding each new sub-unit. In the early stages, this caused friction by making the brigade G2's role less clear and creating room for interpretation as to the new officer's accountabilities, responsibilities and authorities. Nonetheless, a critical mass of intelligence personnel began to form within the brigades.

The Army came home from Afghanistan having learnt that the ability to generate certain key enablers,<sup>6</sup> which had been put together out of necessity in Kandahar, were lacking within its permanent force structure. Most notable among these was a scalable, deployable land intelligence line capability (as opposed to staff only) of sub-unit or unit size capable of integrating into and supporting a brigade- or battlegroup-sized task force in full-spectrum operations. It was within this context that the establishment of a permanent Army Intelligence unit was envisioned, in order to "institutionalise the enabler." With the new positions within the CMBGs already mostly created, a concept was needed to tidy up the line and staff functions, delineate roles and responsibilities, and mandate the appropriate resource allocations to support the new structures. This came in 2013 as the Army's Master Implementation Plan for what was, at the time, going to be known as the "Army Intelligence Group."

The proposed Army Intelligence Group was a formation-sized element that was envisioned as gathering all Regular Force and Primary Reserve Army Intelligence line elements

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<sup>6</sup> Or, as they later became known perhaps optimistically, "campaign-winning enablers."

under one commander, albeit while leaving all these elements geographically dispersed and detached to local formations. The creation of a headquarters would be required, in addition to the formalization of the company-sized elements that had been gradually forming within the CMBGs. As well, the existing Reserve intelligence companies would come under command. All line sub-units would be detached to the permanent operational and administrative control of their local commanders, with the group HQ retaining responsibility only for coordination, career management oversight and collective training standards. With time, budgetary constraints, and pushback from the Reserves, this original vision was reduced in scope to a unit rather than a formation. In 2014, the Army issued its Master Implementation Directive (MID) for the establishment of the Regiment.

This new unit would be composed of a small regimental headquarters (RHQ) based in Kingston, and would incorporate as its sub-units the intelligence company-sized elements then forming in 1, 2 and 5 CMBG in Edmonton, Petawawa and Valcartier. These were given the temporary designations of 11, 12 and 15 All-Source Intelligence Company<sup>7</sup>, respectively. Also under command of the unit would fall the Joint All-Source Intelligence Centre, attached to 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division Headquarters in Kingston as well as the Land Force Intelligence Centre (LFIC), a newly-formed ground intelligence production centre based in Ottawa. The LFIC included the Level 2 Exploitation Capability, a mixed military/civilian technical intelligence (TECHINT) organization which had originally been part of the Army's Counter-Improvised Explosive Device Task Force, formed during the Kandahar deployment. Finally, it was envisioned that No. 7 (Reserve) Intelligence Company (7 Int Coy), also based in Ottawa, would come under command as the Regiment's reserve component. 7 Int Coy was the "odd man out" among the Reserve intelligence companies, since it was the only one not associated with a

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<sup>7</sup> "*Compagnie du renseignement de toutes sources*" in French.

division headquarters and therefore had no clear role. The MID envisioned 7 Int Coy as forming the nexus for the force generation of reservists trained in one of the specialist intelligence operator disciplines, *i.e.* imagery analysts, human intelligence (HUMINT) source handlers, interrogators, counter-intelligence (CI) operators, etc. The Regiment was to be formed incrementally, with its RHQ established in 2014 and its sub-units coming under command sequentially through 2017. Total effective strength at full operating capacity would be 368 all ranks.

## **DISCUSSION**

The creation of the Regiment came with several important challenges, most of which stem from the selection of the decentralized model whereby the Regiment's sub-units are dispersed across various geographic locations. The primary challenge is that of sustainment, since the Regiment's force structure does not include any organic support element. This means that each detached sub-unit, and even the RHQ itself, must rely external sources of support for even basic day-to-day logistical needs, technical requirements, and service support. Each CMBG ASIC, as it was forming, had to rely entirely on the goodwill of its local brigade staff to coordinate the meeting of its sustainment needs. The MID only dealt with this problem in an indirect manner, leaving it to the Army G4 to develop the sustainment concept for the Regiment. This was not addressed from the top down, and bottom-up solutions were hashed out through various "handshake" deals and, at best, locally generated service level agreements between lower formations. As the Regiment formally came into existence, this problem became slightly easier to deal with thanks to the creation of distribution accounts and appropriate budgetary envelopes, but the sought-for top down sustainment concept promised in the MID failed to materialize.

The second, although no less important, challenge posed by the distributed nature of the new Regiment is one of command and control. The officer commanding the Regiment is a



Commanding Officer (CO) with all the commensurate powers of punishment and delegations of authority. However, the exercise of these functions, particularly in the disciplinary context, is problematic when most immediate subordinates are on other bases. Even with the officers commanding the sub-units having the maximum possible authority delegated to them, the geographic dislocation of a unit-level command structure is manifestly deleterious to good order and discipline. In order to exercise positive command, as is a CO's right and privilege, an officer must be able to demonstrate a consistent physical presence; in the Regiment's case this is rarely if ever possible. Government travel funding restrictions being what they are, the assembly of the CO's entire orders group requires ministerial approval and is not likely to occur more than once or twice per fiscal year. The assembly of the entire Regiment on one parade square will likely never happen at all. This is a problem very few if any other units face, and it is not yet clear how its negative effects might be mitigated over time. Video teleconferencing technology is an unsatisfactory surrogate for the face-to-face interaction which is so critical to the cohesion and esprit de corps which give a military unit its unity of purpose. In a way, the Regiment's permanent dispersal stretches the very definition of the word "unit."

A third issue which is currently at an impasse is the subordination of 7 Int Coy to the Regiment. Currently, 7 Int Coy is an established unit of the Primary Reserve allocated to the 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian Division. The MID states repeatedly that 7 Int Coy shall be placed under full command of the Regiment. As noted above, the role envisioned for 7 Int Coy within the Regiment is to provide Reserve augmentation to the Army's intelligence force generation requirements in the form of "specialized enabler personnel" trained in CI, HUMINT, imagery analysis and TECHINT. It is not at all clear that a sustainable way exists for reservists to gain and maintain these qualifications, all of which require extensive training currently not available in modular or

incremental form. Moreover, the MID explicitly leaves open the question of whether or not 7 Int Coy shall retain independent unit status. However, as an independent unit, 7 Int Coy cannot legally be placed under full command of another unit.<sup>8</sup> In order for this to happen, 7 Int Coy would have to be disbanded first and its established positions reallocated to the Regiment to form a sub-unit. This question has not yet been resolved and until it is, the Regiment cannot be fully formed as envisioned in the MID.

## CONCLUSION

The Regiment is currently at initial operational capacity. It reached this milestone behind schedule due mostly to the challenges posed by the issues outlined above, which created frictions not envisioned in the MID. Like all plans and directives, the MID is imperfect and it would be unreasonable to expect it to be otherwise. It is clearly well-articulated enough to allow the new unit to come as far as it has, which is farther than any previous attempt at creating an Army Intelligence unit, a concept first proposed at the end of the Second World War.<sup>9</sup> However, the Regiment rests on fragile a foundation. Its dispersed nature and lack of organic support make it vulnerable to dismemberment, competing interests, and budgetary pressures. The failure to address the complexities of subordinating a Reserve element to a Regular Force unit put the Regiment at risk of going the way of the failed experimental “total force” units of the 1990s. Nonetheless, the Army’s needs are clear and if the Regiment fails as a concept, the hard-won lessons of Afghanistan will go unlearned, to the detriment of the effectiveness of land component contributions to future operations.

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<sup>8</sup> The genesis of this issue lies with the original vision of the Army Intelligence Group as a formation-level establishment. Had this been implemented, there would be far less of a problem with subordinating 7 Int Coy to the new organization. The MID seems to dodge the issue precisely because, with the final scaled-down unit-sized organization, there is no easy answer.

<sup>9</sup> *First Canadian Army Final Intelligence Report* (First Canadian Army: file 42-1-0/Int, July 1945).

The joint operating environments for which the Army will generate land capabilities in the future will be at least as complex as Afghanistan and likely more. Recent conflicts in Ukraine and Syria have demonstrated the inherent and growing complexity of hybrid warfare and the enduring asymmetric threat posed by non-state actors. The prevalence of information in warfare will continue to rise exponentially, hand in hand with technology, which also cannot be ignored. This gives intelligence capabilities a central role in the achievement of information dominance. The Army's ability to generate, field, command, control and sustain scalable, task-tailored intelligence mission elements depends upon a force structure with the built-in capability to do exactly what the Regiment has been established to do. Sustained effort at the Army level is therefore crucial to ensure that the vital operational capability embodied in this new Regiment does not wither on the vine.

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