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CONTRACTING AS A SUSTAINMENT ENABLER FOR DEPLOYED OPERATIONS

LCol R.D. Miedema

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LCol R.D. Miedema

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CONTRACTING AS A SUSTAINMENT ENABLER FOR DEPLOYED OPERATIONS

AIM

1. The aim of this service paper is to recommend options to the Logistics Branch with an aim to increase training and employment opportunities for contracting officers across the three elements. By deliberately focusing more time and effort on proper contracts training for expeditionary operations, the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) will increase the rapidity of its deployment and boost the deployed commander's flexibility. By treating contracting skills as a trade sub-specialty, it would facilitate the rapid deployment of contracting logisticians around the world to procure goods and services in austere operational environments.

INTRODUCTION

2. Sustain is the operational function that incorporates strategic, operational and tactical level support in order to force generate and maintain force capability. In order to be effective, the sustain function must be able to anticipate requirements and be adaptable to high tempo operations within a fluctuating tactical situation.¹ In the CAF, the Logistics Branch and the Royal Canadian Electrical Mechanical Engineer (RCEME) Corps oversee the majority of the requirements of the Sustain function, in conjunction with Health Support Services. The Logistics Branch, which includes Army, Air Force and Navy logisticians, generally train their officers in five sub-specialties, which include transportation, human resources (HR), supply, finance and postal services. Non-commissioned members may select from seven occupations including resource management support, cook, postal, supply, ammunition, traffic and mobile support equipment.

¹Department of National Defence, B-GL-340-000, *Sustain: The Operational Function, Army Doctrine* (Kingston: DND Canada, 2015), 8.

3. Unlike the United States military, very little emphasis in both our doctrine and occupational training is placed on contracting in either a domestic or expeditionary setting. This has placed the CAF in a difficult position in Canada but even more noticeably on deployed operations. In order to mitigate this training and skill shortage, ad hoc training has been organized through the Canadian Joint Operations Command (CJOC) J4 Contracts cell. Logisticians can also take a deployed operations contracting course at the Canadian Forces Logistics Training Centre (CFLTC) up to two times a year. Lastly, if a member is posted into a contracting position within the National Capital Region (NCR) in Ottawa, it is possible to access civilian training through Assistant Deputy Minister (Materiel) (ADM(Mat)). Notwithstanding these less than ideal solutions, without a deliberate plan to address this key skill shortage, the CAF will continue to find itself with less operational flexibility, which could potentially expose Task Force Commanders to increased risk on operations.

4. On 4 December 2015, the Speech from the Throne stated, “to keep Canadians safe and be ready to respond when needed, the Government will launch an open and transparent process to review existing defence capabilities, and will invest in building a leaner, more agile, better-equipped military.”² An increased investment in contracts training and building proficient contracting officers could help to improve CAF responsiveness and make the CAF more agile. Contracted support reduces the military’s dependencies when there is a firm cap on the Table of Organization and Equipment (TO&E), limiting the number of personnel the government permits on a given deployment. It also limits the amount of equipment and infrastructure that is required to support soldiers in theatre. Contracted support ensures that vital TO&E positions can be

²Government of Canada, “Speech from the Throne,” last accessed 04 February 2016, <http://speech.gc.ca/en/content/making-real-change-happen#Security-Opportunity>.

assigned to the war fighter, reducing the overall “tooth to tail” ratio, and supports the Government’s vision of a leaner military.

DISCUSSION

5. Despite the small number of trained contracting officers, most joint operations in which Canada participates include contracted support. In an effort to reduce Canada’s dependence on the domestic supply chain and to force project into a theatre of operations as much as possible, support from the Host Nation (HN), contracted services, United States Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA) and Mutual Logistics Support Arrangements (MLSA) are leveraged as much as possible.³ Contracted support can act as a significant force multiplier, as it’s not only restricted to logistic support but may include the provision of services for numerous requirements. In order to be effectively integrated into operational planning, contracting officers and contractor managers must be integrated early in the operational planning process (OPP).⁴ Establishing effective contracting mechanisms into the first theatre rotation, also known as Roto 0, can significantly reduce the logistics footprint overseas, and reduces the number of personnel and equipment deployed from Canada.

6. In 2008, the United States military established the Army Contracting Command, as a subordinate command of the U.S. Army Materiel Command. This organization is responsible for the majority of the contracting work for the U.S. Army and is divided into three parts: Expeditionary Contracting Command Brigades, Mission Installation Contracting Commands, and Contracting Centers. The Expeditionary Contracting Command, under a one-star general, has nine Contracting Support Brigades, 17 Contingency Contracting Battalions, 16 Senior

³Colonel C.A. Mathe, “Operational Level Sustain” (lecture, Canadian Forces College, Toronto, ON, 28 Jan 2016), with permission.

⁴Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Operational Contract Support*, JP 4-10 (Washington, D.C.: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2013), I-9.

Contingency Contracting Teams, and 92 Contingency Contracting Teams.⁵ The U.S. Expeditionary Contracting Command's mission is to "plan and execute effective and agile support for U.S. Army Service Component Commanders in support of Army and Joint Operations." This Command is designed to provide a range of contracting support on humanitarian relief operations, natural disaster response missions, combat operations and contingency operations.⁶ While the CAF, in particular the Army, does not have the same size of personnel to draw from, it is important to note that in the U.S. Army contracting is a specific trade and these soldiers can quickly deploy worldwide in support of a wide variety of operations.

7. In the CAF, contracting and procurement skills are not ingrained in our training system. Usually, for logistics officers and senior non-commissioned officers (Sr NCOs) within the logistics branch, these are skills that are acquired as a result of a posting into a contracting position or being assigned a contracting position on a task force. Generally, these are viewed as skills that members can acquire through on the job experience or through civilian training. On smaller deployments, such as the Operational Support Hubs (OSH), contracting responsibilities may be a secondary duty for a CAF member who is already assigned several other primary duties. Due to the relatively small numbers of staff we have at each OSH, unless the CAF is using the OSH for reception, staging, onward movement and integration (RSOMI), there will be no stand-alone contracts officer employed. This has led to a lot of complications and challenges at CJOC, the Operational level headquarters. Recognizing a distinct lack of training available to officers and Sr NCOs, the CJOC J4 Contracts section developed the first pilot course for deployed operational contracting in 2014. This course is run at CFLTC, under the oversight of

⁵U.S. Army Expeditionary Contracting Command, "Mission," last accessed 04 February 2016, <http://www.acc.army.mil/files/ECC.pdf>.

⁶*Ibid.*

the Canadian Forces Support Training Group (CFSTG). One to two serials of approximately 36 students per class can take this course, although the last two serials have run over capacity. The aim of the course is to train CAF members, specifically from the Logistics Branch, the fundamentals of being a contracts officer in theatre. It is comprised of 14 training days and covers the basics of writing, competing and awarding contracts, and also teaches contracting policy so that members may act as contracting advisors to their commanders. This is the first recognized and accredited military course available to logisticians in Canada. This finally allows operational level taskers to be able to search the Canadian Forces Taskings, Plans, and Operations (CFTPO) system for qualified contracting officers.

8. There are many benefits to growing the CAF deployed contracting capability. While contracting and procurement in Canada is a deliberate and prescriptive process, contracting in theatre can be more complex and the time frame is often condensed. The rules for deployed contracting follow the same regulations of those in Canada, but there are usually added challenges that include language barriers, translation requirements, competition for Host Nation resources, and foreign governmental constraints. These factors are often further complicated if a CAF contracts officer is working within a UN, NATO, or multinational context where there may be a lead nation for a specific commodity or competition among nations for certain resources. These are not skills that can be garnered from a single 14 day training course at CFLTC. These are skills that come with time and experience working on operations. The CJOC J4 Contracts section, and ADM(Mat) Director Major Procurement 7 (D Maj Proc 7) are the operational and strategic level resources available to deployed contracts officers. However, these sections are small and cover all of CJOCs expeditionary and domestic operations. CJOC J4 Contracts is currently under staffed, with only eight of 14 positions filled. D Maj Proc 7 only has two military

positions, both of which are currently unfilled. Their remaining six positions are covered off by civilian public service procurement specialists. This section is incredibly knowledgeable due to the static nature of employing civilian experts, but they have limited ability to deploy and are not easily employed in non-permissive environments.

9. Growing a core capability of deployable contracting officers will greatly enhance CAF operations. These skills could greatly improve our efficiency in a number of areas. Firstly, it is cost effective. Investing in more training leads to more proficient contracting. This reduces errors and the potential for confirming orders (entering into an illegal contract) or contracting irregularities. The most difficult skill for a contracting officer to acquire is the development of the requirements. Without experience, this is where the most problems occur. If the contract cannot properly articulate what the expected contracting outcome is, whether it is a good or a service, there is a high likelihood of a deficient outcome. The proper definition of requirements is complex and requires a proficient contracting officer to be able to work with the end user to ensure they translate what is needed into simple but comprehensive terms. If this is not done properly, it could result in potential bidders being non-compliant or the end user receiving the wrong good or service. When it is done properly, and in theatre, transportation costs from Canada are greatly reduced and the delivery time is shortened. An experienced contracting officer also acts as a contracting manager in theatre to solve any problems on the ground before they evolve into larger issues. This relationship holds contractors accountable and can save considerable costs to the Crown.

10. The current government has expressed an interest in returning to peacekeeping or peace support operations, which will most likely be under NATO context. The NATO school in Oberammergau, Germany, offers a five day training course in Contingency Contracting designed

to provide students “with the knowledge and develop the skills required for a coordinated contracting approach throughout NATO to ensure sufficiently trained and qualified contracting forces for current and future operations.”⁷ If our Canadian training is limited through CFLTC, this could be a key opportunity for Canadian logisticians to gain valuable contracting experience for future operations. We could also leverage the experience from our American allies, as they have extensive experience in military contracting and procurement. By creating more professional development opportunities or visiting U.S. Army Contracting Command, CAF contracting officers could broaden their skill sets. If a relationship could be developed between U.S. Army Contracting Command and CJOC, there could be potential for Canadian participation on U.S. contracting courses or exercises.

11. In order to expand opportunities and training for deployed contracting officers, it is imperative that the Logistics Branch Integrator (LBI) be involved. This is the strategic level organization whose mission is “to cultivate operationally focused professional Logisticians who utilize their expertise competently and objectively, at all levels, using the full range of available logistics systems in the accomplishment of the CAF mission.”⁸ If the CAF training curriculum is to be amended or expanded, this is the organization that can influence change from the top down. It is their responsibility to develop the Branch training and personnel management framework. They are the organization that ensures CAF tactical and functional requirements are addressed within the Logistics training system. Without consideration for change at the strategic level, there will be little impetus for change at the tactical level. CJOC has been imperative in this

⁷NATO School Oberammergau, “Course Catalogue,” last accessed 04 February 2016, <http://www.natoschool.nato.int/Academics/Resident-Courses/Course-Catalogue?keyword=contract&code=&startdate=&enddate=&exactdatematch=False&durationfrom=1&durationto=3084&residentcourse=True&onlinecourse=True&adlmodules=False&department=#175aid-aid>.

⁸National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces Logistics Branch, “Logistics Branch Integrator,” last accessed 04 February 2016, <http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/caf-community-branches-logistics/about-us.page>.

process, identifying the deficiencies on deployed operations and developing the first Canadian military course, but leveraging their lessons learned from existing operations could help force generate a new group of better skilled logisticians.

12. Proposing a new trade sub-specialty is not without its drawbacks. Namely, CAF schools are over stretched and training days are extremely limited for each course. Proposing an expanded curriculum or a supplementary contracting course comes at a cost. This would place an increased burden on CFSTG and an increased burden on the need for incremental staff to teach these courses. The CAF is still in the early stages of growing this capability and it will likely take several more serials of the deployed ops contracting course to grow a skilled cadre of personnel with relevant experience to instruct. The CAF has traditionally kept this limited pool of contracting expertise centralized at the operational level, but by spending more funding on training, there will be more of a critical mass available to decentralized procurement both in Canada and on expeditionary operations.

CONCLUSION

13. The sustain function must be synchronized with all the other operational functions to ensure the right people, supplies and equipment are delivered to the right place, at the right time. Deployed contracting supports the commander's plan and can deliver substantial resource savings in terms of the number of personnel and equipment required. It acts a sustainment enabler and if properly executed, reduces support dependencies. In order to embody the Government's vision for a leaner and more agile CAF, increased focus on contracting through funding and training opportunities should be made available to logisticians. By growing this sustainment capability, a short term surge in funding could produce a generation of long term savings on deployed operations.

RECOMMENDATION

14. It is recommended that CJOC J4 Contracts and ADM(Mat) D Maj Proc 7 work together to develop combined lessons learned from their experiences working with deployed contracting officers. Based on their experiences, they can pass on recommendations to the LBI, and evaluate which part of the Deployed Ops Contracting course should be reviewed and expanded. They could also make further recommendations for supplemental training, be it through NATO or American exchanges, to further round out Canadian training. If further training can be obtained, an opportunity for an official sub-specialty under the Logistics Branch could be developed. More opportunities should be leveraged for CAF contracting officers to grow their skill set and further enhance this vital deployable capability.

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