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CANADIAN FORCES REGULAR/RESERVE INTEGRATION – IT'S ABOUT TIME

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Exercise Solo Flight

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CANADIAN FORCES REGULAR/RESERVE INTEGRATION – IT’S ABOUT TIME

INTRODUCTION

The most dangerous phrase in the language is “we’ve always done it this way.”

--- (Late) Rear Admiral Grace Hopper USN Reserve

The nature of the work force in Canada is changing. No longer is the white male the dominant group in this population. The demographics of our nation’s working population is, on one hand, rapidly becoming older and, on the other hand, fast becoming more diverse in both gender and race. As one of the largest employers in the country, the Department of National Defence (DND) must consider options to maintain and even increase the size of its work force in the face of profound demographic and social changes.¹ Policy changes to recognize such shifts in society are essential to address the evolving nature of the modern work force in Canada.

The nature of the role of the Reservist has also changed dramatically. No longer are the Reservists simply “weekend warriors” – over the past 25 years Reservists have served in several expeditionary operations such as the Balkans, the Middle East, Africa and Afghanistan in addition to humanitarian missions to Haiti and the Philippines. The past few major Operations have relied heavily on Reservists, and a future heavy reliance on the Reservist augmentation is highly likely.²

¹ Jeffrey G. Reitz, “Multiculturalism Policies and Popular Multiculturalism in the Development of Canadian Immigration.” In *The Multiculturalism Question: Debating Identity in 21st-Century Canada*, edited by Jack Jedwab (Kingston: School of Public Policy Studies, Queen’s University Press, 2014), 108-109.

² Department of National Defence, *Report to the Minister of National Defence “Part-Time Soldiers with Full-Time Injuries – A Systematic Review of Canada’s Primary Reserve Force and Operational Stress Injuries”* (Ottawa: Office of the Canadian Forces Ombudsman, 2016), 5.

Members of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) have been subject to many policies that have attempted to address changes in society. GBA+ and OP HONOUR are two examples that have attempted to address the societal changes that are affecting the CAF workplace. Changes in federal employment laws have also been enacted in the past few decades, including superlative maternity/paternity benefits, equal pay, non-gender identifying Personnel Evaluation Reports (PERs), and proactive career progression to name a few. However, fiscal austerity and a discrepancy between the benefits of Regular and Reserve members has engendered an increasing gap between the “haves” and the “have nots” in the CAF. An example of this accessibility gap is seen in Operation Stress Injuries (OSI) that may be incurred to either Regular or Reserve members. The Regular Force member would ostensibly have access to ongoing health care for such an injury as part of their employment contract. In contrast, the Reserve Force member who was most likely doing exactly the same job, would not have such access to care and would be reliant on either provincial health care or their civilian employer’s health care plan, if they even have a plan.

Issues such as OSI’s emphasize the discrepancy which exists between the Regular and Reserve Force soldiers. If the government mandates equal pay for equal work, and no discrimination based on sex, gender, etc. then why not take that one extra step and ensure all CAF soldiers are treated equitably? Not only is the treatment unavailable to the Reservist, but the Reserve leadership is left to flounder, wondering how to deal with this individual who is now far removed from their cadre of soldiers they served with, often in a remote/isolated location lacking in base support services.³ The reality is that “the system” still relies on policies that were

³ Major Christian Steven Hugh Borland SBStJ CD, personal interview with author, 18 May 18, 2018. Maj Borland is a veteran of 3 deployments – SFOR Roto 9 (Bosnia), Task Force Afghanistan Rotos 1, 4, 5. Major Borland is Critical Care Nurse who has been a Reservist for 32 years.

developed in the early 1990/2000's and have yet to reflect the reality of the wider scope of Reserve employment in augmentation. These policies, which confer entitlements and eligibilities to Reservists, also often lack clarity and the inconsistent and/or unfair application of these policies can adversely affect their careers. Other policies specifically exclude Reservists from entitlements to which their Regular Force counterparts have access.⁴

The author proposes that the DND must harness this rapid societal evolution by abolishing the segregation of the Regular and Reserve Forces and to fuse both into a fulltime/part time organization. By integrating both Regular and Reserve components, leadership, training, and benefits would be more equitably applied and reflect the increased role of the Reservist in the CAF. It would also reflect the changes in how society demand the ability to work full or part time during various phases in their career – thereby discounting the effects of difficulty in recruiting and retention which are confounding the growth and stability of the CAF.

DISCUSSION

The Regular/Reserve Force Division - a Brief Summary

Where did the division between the Regular and Reserve Forces begin, and what is its rationale? The early colonial militia (17th and 18th centuries) were local groups of citizen soldiers recruited from the adult male population in 17th century New France. In fact, Governor Frontenac required two months service per year from all males aged sixteen to sixty. This continued until the capitulation of Montreal in 1760 when the British disarmed the miliciens of

⁴ DND Report to the Minister of National Defence ..., p 11.

New France.⁵ The British established “fencible regiments” who served alongside deployed regular force British units, but it was not until 1855 that the Militia Acts were established, with a nucleus of five thousand members which has since grown into the volunteer Reserve Force of Canada today.⁶

After the Fenian Raids of 1866 and 1870, the idea of universal military service was discussed, but abandoned by the government of the day. Between 1867 and World War I, the volunteer system was improved upon, and a headquarters organization was placed under the auspices of the Minister of Militia and Defence, after the British model. In addition, a training system and special services (e.g. the Canadian Army Medical Corps and the Canadian Army Service Corps) were established for primarily for garrison and defence duties. Even during World War I, with over one million men eligible for service, the Reserve Force didn’t number more than 60,000. There was no means of tracking those who had previously served, and the defence mobilization stores were hopelessly inadequate. In fact, Wallace is quoted as saying “the volunteer system produced great inequalities”⁷ due to the uneven distribution of resources, and “had it been necessary to mobilize immediately... the invasion would have been over before mobilization had begun.”⁸ Today, we see the same disorder and confusion in the modern “militia” – as the Auditor General Report of 2016 indicates, the Canadian Army Reserve has three areas of deficiencies:

⁵ S.F. Wise, W.A.B. Douglas, Jason Ridler, Richard A. Preston and Desmond Morton, “Armed Forces,” *Historical Canada, The Canadian Encyclopedia*, (14 September 2016): 1-2. <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/armed-forces/>.

⁶ W.S. Wallace, ed., “Militia.” In *The Encyclopedia of Canada Vol IV* (Toronto: University Associates of Canada, 1948): 290-294.

⁷ *Ibid.* 292.

⁸ *Ibid.* 292.

- “Guidance on preparing for missions
 - Army Reserve units lack clear guidance on preparing for major international missions
 - Army Reserve units and groups were not fully prepared for domestic missions

- Sustainability of Army Reserve units
 - Army Reserve units did not have the soldiers they needed
 - Army Reserve funding was not designed to be consistent with unit training and other activities

- Training of Army Reserve soldiers
 - Army Reserve soldiers received less training than Regular Army soldiers
 - Army Reserve and Regular Army unit training was not fully integrated.”⁹

Past Efforts to Modernize and Revitalize the Reserves

Note that the 2016 Auditor General report on the Reserves focused mainly on the Army component of the CAF Reserves. In the 1980’s and 1990’s, the Land Force (especially the militia/Army Reserves) was reorganized to implement the Total Force Concept which was reflected in the Reserve augmentation to the United Nations mission in Yugoslavia.¹⁰ The Navy and Air elements have since implemented various schemes to more closely align their Reserve elements with their Regular Force counterparts. The author interviewed two senior members of the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) Reserve and of the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) Reserve to garner their thoughts on past and future efforts to revitalize their component forces.

⁹ Canada, Office of the Auditor General, *Report 5 – Canadian Army Reserve – National Defence* (Ottawa: 2016): 6.

¹⁰ Michael Rossignol, “The Reserve Force of the Canadian Forces: Restructuring Process,” *Parliamentary Research Branch, Political and Social Affairs Division* (10 May 1996): 3, <http://publications.gc.ca/Collection-R/LoPBdP/MR/mr138-e.htm>.

LCdr John Bel (RCN, Ret'd)¹¹ stated that unlike the Army Reserve, RCN Reservists have been assigned specific tasks to augment Regular Force Navy capabilities. For example, the HMCS GRIFFON (a RCN Reserve unit based in Thunder Bay) has members assigned to specific ships and to perform harbour security functions. The 1987 White Paper on defence policy (*Challenge and Commitment*¹²) assigned two tasks to the RCN Reserve – the control of shipping and maritime defence. These missions involve harbour defence, naval control of shipping, mine countermeasures, and administrative and logistic support.¹³ It was recognized that the world threat situation had changed since the previous White Paper in 1971 (the 1971 White Paper envisioned a more peaceable world¹⁴), and that Canada must employ all available resources to ensure its national security. Currently, the largest role which the RCN Reserve fills is the manning of Coastal Defense Vessels – 10 out of 12 of which are manned by reservists.¹⁵

Colonel Mark Larsen, Director Air Reserve RCAF¹⁶, stated that although the dynamics vary between the three services, the air force view is a multifaceted model with most Reserve positions already integrated within the wings. For example, in Greenwood, there are approximately 200 Air Force Reservists who are assigned various supporting functions to Total Force Units, such as Search and Rescue (SAR) technician Reservists, air crew, and ground crew. There are some standalone RCAF Reserve units, but these would not be deployed collectively, rather the members would be deployed individually as augmentees to a Regular Force RCAF expedition force. He also stated that the RCAF has a problem with retention of skilled trades

¹¹ LCdr John Bel RCN (Ret'd) personal interview with author 17 May 2018.

¹² Department of National Defence, *Challenge and Commitment a Defence Policy for Canada* (Ottawa: Canada Communications Group, 1987), p 30.

¹³ F. Sauvé, "Fully Integrated and Domestically Focused: The Future Canadian Army Reserve" (JCSP 41, Canadian Forces College, 2015), 6.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁵ Richard Weitz, *The Reserve Policies of Nations: A Comparative Analysis* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2007): 59.

¹⁶ Col Mark Larsen RCAF personal interview with author 20 May 2018.

when Regular Force members apply for release. Although there is a robust tracking system, they still rely on word of mouth to seek Reserve positions upon release. There is also a process in place to develop a new Reserve-only trade (i.e. Air Operations Supporter – primary duties would be force protection, SAR and maintenance support). The RCAF Reserve also has recruiting challenges, with 60-70% of new members being component transfers (CT) from the Regular Force, but the Strategic Intake Plan (SIP) has an ever-increasing delta. He stated that if the CT was modified or streamlined, this would be of great benefit to the RCAF. If the two Components were integrated, this would no longer be a problem as members could transfer between full and part time employment throughout their career without regard to pension and other benefits being affected. The end result would be increased retention of members and of their corporate knowledge. Yet again, another reason to fuse the Regular and Reserve Forces.

Current Concerns with Budgets, Recruiting and Retention

Neither the Regular nor Reserve forces are able to maintain their current force numbers.¹⁷ Some say this is due to a decreased post-Afghan interest/profile of the CAF, and others point to the “millennium factor” blaming changes in the way younger people want to serve their country. Indeed, the CAF is looking to foreign recruits to boost its numbers.¹⁸ In any event, both components are having difficulty with recruitment and retention. For the Reservist, their career rarely extends beyond the four to five years that the member is in school, and usually ends when

¹⁷ Colonel Marc Bilodeau, 1 Health Services Group Command Team Conference, 21-23 September 2017.

¹⁸ Kathleen Harris, “Military looks at foreign recruits to boost ranks,” *CBC News*, 25 May 2018.

the member finds full time work after graduation.¹⁹ So, all the money spent on training and developing that member are lost – we must find new ways to retain that member.

Budgeting for the Reserves is also an issue. For example, even though the Army Reserve budgets for 21,000 members, and only 13,900 take part in active training, the units still have insufficient funding. As such, many of the Army Reservists have limited ammunition and equipment to continue their training missions. This leads one to suspect whether they would be adequately prepared for deployment on expedition operations.²⁰ Morale is also hit hard as a result of precarious employment and low impact training. Members release and the cycle of futility begins again.

How Can Integration of the Reserve/Regular Forces be Beneficial to Canada

There is a requirement to stabilize and realign the Primary Reserve workforce in order to meet current and future requirements established in the *Canada First Defence Strategy* (CFDS)²¹. The four pillars of the strategy (personnel, equipment, readiness and infrastructure) are sorely lacking in the Reserve Force when compared with the Regular Force. Notably, the strategy outlines the number of personnel required to sustain a major operation. It mentions that to sustain a force of 2,500 soldiers, a pool of 12,500 is required, a ratio of about 6:1. Since both the Regular and Reserve Forces are having difficulty in recruiting and retaining the numbers

¹⁹ Dan A. Doran, "Attrition and Retention in the Reserves," *Canadian Military Journal* Vol 16, no. 2 (Spring 2016): 59, <http://www.journal.forces.gc.ca/vol16/no2/PDF/CMJ162Ep59.pdf>.

²⁰ Jonathon Wade, "The Canadian Army Reserve is in Terrible Shape", *HUFFPOST EDITION CA* (blog), 5 June 2017, https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/jonathan-wade/canadian-army-reserve_b_9839984.html.

²¹ Department of National Defence, *Canada First Defence Strategy* (Ottawa: Canada Communications Group, 2006). Last accessed 18 May 2018. <http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/about/canada-first-defence-strategy.page>.

required to current manning levels, one has to question if the CAF itself is able to conduct major expeditionary operations now and in the future even with massive Reserve Force augmentation.

The DND recently tabled a report which indicates a shortage of nearly 1,900 Regular Force and 5,300 Reserve Force personnel compared with a shortage of 900 Regular Force and 4,500 Reservists the previous year.²² In response, work force requirements are currently being reviewed across the defence team to determine the force structure needed to meet our operational and institutional commitments. Reviews are being done to consider the way in which our Primary Reserve are managed, funded, trained and employed. As a result of this review, there should be improved oversight, enhanced monitoring methods and updated personnel policies allowing a greater flexibility for the Reserves. Key priorities of the current Liberal government are to...

...develop the Canadian Armed Forces into an agile, responsive, and well-equipped military force that can appropriately respond to a spectrum of operations within a whole of government context.²³

By merging the Regular and Reserve components, the strengths of both would be heightened by harnessing the synergistic capabilities of each. For example, in the Health Services, many Reserve specialists (e.g. orthopaedics) are called upon to augment expeditionary operations due to the paucity of such resources in the Regular Force. By eliminating the

²² Postmedia News, "Canadian military losing soldiers at increasing rate as headcounts drop to levels not seen in years," *National Post*, 27 January 2017 (last accessed 19 May 2018), <http://nationalpost.com/news/canada/canadian-military-losing-soldiers-at-increasing-rate-headcount-drops-to-level-not-seen-in-years>.

²³ Martin Shadwick, "Defence and the 2015 Election," *Canadian Military Journal* Vol 15, no. 1 (Winter 2015): 68, <http://www.journal.forces.gc.ca/vol16/no1/PDF/CMJ161Ep67.pdf>.

Reserve/Regular Force distinction, the ability to augment would be easier (no need to transfer from Class A to Class C) and the expertise of such specialists would be more readily available.

Other of our allied countries, e.g. the United States of America and the United Kingdom, have already recognized the importance of the Reserves and have incorporated their strengths into their operational capabilities both domestically and for expeditionary operations. The United States has recognized that the Reserves have unique skills that could readily cross over from their civilian employment.²⁴ The United Kingdom pairs each Reserve unit with a Regular Force unit to more fully integrate training as well as to foster a closer tie to local communities.

Thus, perhaps a first step would be to do likewise for Canadian Army Reserves, with a view towards full integration after the Air, Navy and Army elements are more closely tied with their Regular Force counterparts.

Good Stewardship Demands Effective Use of Available Resources

The author questions the relevancy of another review... why not create one fully-integrated force without regard to Reserve of Regular differences and be done with it? There is constant confusion about Reserve Force classification (Class A, B or C) and how the benefits, pension, health care and so on are applied across these classifications. Compound this with the staggering costs of sustaining a parallel system which, as has been shown, is not effective nor is it beneficial to the DND, and this points to a good argument for its abolition. As leaders, we are constantly held to a high standard of resource stewardship.

²⁴ Richard Weitz, *The Reserve Policies of Nations: A Comparative Analysis* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2007): 5.

Likewise, the Reserve Units, at they are currently positioned, are widely dispersed geographically across the nation. Canadian security policy must be flexible enough to adapt to changing circumstances, but many elements of our geostrategic situation are immutable.

Canada might have enjoyed a relatively benign geo-strategic environment in the post-Cold War period but we cannot assume such circumstances are permanent. To do so would only leave Canada vulnerable to what commentators have called the revenge of geography – as great powers once again compete for power and influence.²⁵

If we consider the geographic impact of the Regular Force Units (mostly localized in highly urban areas) versus the Reserve Units (widely dispersed, often in smaller rural towns), we can effectively leverage our existing establishments to augment their geographical capabilities. When one considers that the primary role of the CAF is the defence of Canada (“keeping our citizens safe and secure, defending our sovereignty...²⁶”), the reinforcement of existing reserve establishments (via integration with the Regular Force) to form a cross-country chain of defence strongholds is a pragmatic idea, especially when considering routine domestic operations and plans for national security. Local knowledge of geography and links to the community are valuable resources in the defence of our nation. These strengths have long been overlooked and are essential to the defence of our nation. By combining these with Regular Force assets, and linking them together with regard to individual Regular or Reserve capabilities, we can synergistically increase our defence capabilities.

²⁵ Andrew Pickford and Jeffery Collins, “Lessons from history and the Australian experience for Canada’s strategic outlook – Reconsidering Canada’s Strategic Geography: Lessons from history and the Australian experience for Canada’s strategic outlook,” *Macdonald-Laurier Institute Publication*, (April 2018): 4, https://macdonaldlaurier.ca/files/pdf/20180327_MLI_Strategic_Geography_WebF.pdf.

²⁶ DND, *Canada First Defence Strategy*... p. 1.

Finally, when revisiting the Canada First Defense Strategy of 2006, it is seen that the planning for defence acquisition did not come to fruition as expected. Massive deficit spending of hundreds of billions of dollars to revive the economy after the world economic downturn of 2008 resulted in a 2012 budget which slashed defence spending. As a proportion of GDP, defence spending is now where it was during the “decades of darkness”²⁷ at 1.1%, down from 1.9% in 2009.²⁸ Considering the current jaded outlook for massive defence acquisitions, it would be wise to consider alternate courses of action (COA) to increase our capabilities. One of these COAs could be to disband the Regular/Reserve components and create a unified, more flexible CAF which is harmonized to reflect today’s societal changes.

CONCLUSION

In this “Age of Nonpolarity”²⁹ where the world is no longer dominated by two, three, or even several states, Canada would be wise to harness the potential of our diverse culture and the changes it has effected in our society. We must be able to consider options not currently thought of as possible in order to secure our national and international security policies, as states are now being challenged by non-state actors both globally and regionally. We must also consider changes in the nature of the threats that could affect the security of our country and be able to respond appropriately.

²⁷ Martin Shadwick, “Defence and the 2015 Election,” *Canadian Military Journal* Vol 16, no. 1 (Winter 2016): 70, <http://www.journal.forces.gc.ca/vol16/no1/PDF/CMJ161Ep67.pdf>.

²⁸ Jeffrey F. Collins, “Reviving and Revising the Canada First Defence Strategy,” *C2C Journal*, (30 November 2014): <http://www.c2cjournal.ca/2014/11/reviving-and-revising-the-canada-first-defence-strategy/>.

²⁹ Richard N. Haas, “The Age of Nonpolarity – What Will Follow U.S. Dominance.” *Foreignaffairs.com* (May/June 2008): 1-2. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2008-05-03/age-nonpolarity>.

“Power is now found in many hands and in many places.”³⁰ It is finally time for the CAF leadership along with the DND and the Minister of Defence take one final step and merge the Regular and Reserve Forces to create a streamlined and equitable work place. A work place that will not only be better structured to allow its members to more effectively serve the nation, but also one which takes advantage of the seismic changes occurring in today’s society.

³⁰ Ibid., 2.