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RESTRUCTURING FOR THE FUTURE: HOW THE CANADIAN ARMY CAN LEARN FROM THE AUSTRALIAN ARMY'S "PLAN BEERSHEBA"

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References:
A. Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy 7 June 2017
B. Army Operating Plan 2017/2018 v2
C. Australian Government 2013 Defence White Paper 3 May 2013

AIM

1. The future security environment (FSE) is ever changing and requires the Canadian Army (CA) to maintain a "scalable, agile and responsive land force prepared to deliver operational excellence as part of the Government of Canada (GOC)."[1] Its elements must be capable of undertaking operations across the spectrum of conflict, at times simultaneously, in accordance with reference A's concurrent operations forecast.[2] A key force amongst these elements is the Royal Canadian Armour Corps (RCAC). However, does it possess the right structure to maintain its capability and flexibility as the CA evolves to respond to the FSE? This service paper will argue that it does not currently have the optimal structure. It will use the Australian Army's (AA) recent restructuring under Plan BEERSHEBA to illustrate the increased capability and flexibility that moving to symmetrically structured armour regiments could bring to the CA.

[1] Canadian Army, *Army Operating Plan 2017/2018 v2* (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2017), 1-3/15.
[2] Government of Canada, *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy* (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2017), 81.

INTRODUCTION

2. To date, the RCAC has demonstrated a considerable ability to force generate combat-capable forces for everything up to and including combat operations, as demonstrated by the multiple tank and reconnaissance squadron deployments to Afghanistan. However, despite the consistent output of squadrons, much of the burden to force generate tank squadrons was placed on the single tank regiment, the Lord Strathcona's Horse, Royal Canadians (LdSH(RC)), while the two reconnaissance regiments, The Royal Canadian Dragoons (The RCD) and 12ième Régiment Blindée du Canada (12 RBC), were able to share the force generation of reconnaissance squadrons. The current RCAC structure has also limited the continued exposure to tanks for training and sustainment purposes as the fleet is split primarily between the LdSH(RC) in Edmonton and the Royal Canadian Armour Corps School (RCACS) and C Squadron of The RCD, both of which are located in Gagetown, New Brunswick. Since it re-rolled to a tank squadron in 2012, C Squadron has had limited training opportunities with other 2 Canadian Mechanized Brigade Group (CMBG) units, less the 2nd Battalion, Royal Canadian Regiment (RCR), who is also in Gagetown. This is due to C Squadron's requirement to support individual training (IT) and another brigade's collective training.[3] Together, these situations highlight how the RCAC structure has reduced the CA's flexibility to force generate and sustain tank forces and maintain a high standard in combined arms training across the three CMBGs.

3. A close examination of the AA's recent restructuring under Plan BEERSHEBA provides an excellent example of how a force of comparable size managed to restructure itself to "provide

[3] The Royal Canadian Dragoons, "C Squadron," last accessed 29 January 2018, http://www.dragoons.ca/csquadron.html.

the widest range of sustained and effective land forces possible to meet future circumstances."[4] The focus of this examination will be on the Royal Australian Armour Corps (RAAC), who like its Canadian counterpart, was composed of a single tank regiment and three reconnaissance regiments, known as cavalry regiments, each in different brigades.[5] In conducting this examination, this paper will first explain why the AA decided to execute Plan BEERSHEBA and how it restructured the RAAC. The paper will then demonstrate how a similar restructuring could address three issues facing both the RCAC and CA, which are: combined arms training inefficiencies, reduced tank sustainment capability, and solidifying the role of the armour regiment.

DISCUSSION

4. The AA first announced Plan BEERSHEBA in 2011, when the former Chief of the Army, Lieutenant General (LGen) David Morrison stated that "our modern army is moving into the future with a new perspective and a smarter way of doing business and delivering capability within the resources we have."[6] Reference C then reaffirmed the plan, detailing the force development work that drove the change, which included the Adaptive Army and Enhanced Land Force initiatives as well as recent capability reviews.[7] Ultimately, the main impetus for the change was best explained by LGen Morrison in 2012 when he said that "for too long we maintained single capabilities within brigades with deleterious effects on our force generation

[4] Targeted News Service, "Prime Minister and Minister for Defence – 2013 Defence White Paper: 'Plan BEERSHEBA' – Restructuring the Australian Army," last accessed 23 January 2018, https://search.proquest.com/docview/1348275887?accountid=9867.

[5] Australian Army, "Royal Australian Armoured Corps," last accessed 24 January 2018, https://www.army.gov.au/our-people/corps/royal-australian-armoured-corps.

[6] The Courier Mail, "Plan Beersheba to reinvent our army," last accessed 29 January 2018, http://www.couriermail.com.au/ipad/plan-beersheba-to-reinvent-our-army/news-story/44c59b0aefb3630acde8538465ed33e4?sv=8ed914761ded8af0f22b4f8e363e49e4.

[7] Australian Government, *Defence White Paper 2013* (Canberra: Department of Defence, 2013), 85.

and career planning cycles." [8] Plan BEERSHEBA would resolve this problem by creating three Multi-role Combat Brigades (MCBs) that would all possess the same enablers.[9]

5. For the RAAC, Plan BEERSHEBA converted its tank regiment and three cavalry regiments into three symmetrical Armoured Cavalry Regiments (ACRs), each with a tank squadron, two cavalry squadrons, a combat service support (CSS) squadron, as well as an armoured personnel carrier (APC) squadron to transport attached infantry units.[10] The restructuring was a large endeavour that saw numerous M1A1 Abrams tanks and Australian Light Armoured Vehicles (ASLAV), similar to our Coyote and Bison armoured vehicles, get relocated to ensure the ACRs were co-located with their three regular force MCBs. The final phase of the plan was completed in late October 2016 with the rollout of the vehicles that would support 7 Brigade in Brisbane.[11]

6. The RAAC's restructuring into three ACRs increased the AA's capability in a key area: combined arms training. Before Plan BEERSHEBA, "the Australian Army's organisation and the temporary nature of its approach to combining arms precluded 'mutual acquaintanceship' and thus constrained its combined arms."[12] To conduct combined arms training, a non-tank brigade commander required the AA Force Command's (FORCOMD) involvement to facilitate the

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[8] David Morrison, Royal Australian Navy Maritime Conference, Sydney, Australia, 31 January 2012.

[9] Australian Army, "Modernisation from Beersheba and Beyond," Power point, slide 8.

[10] Australian Army, "Combat Brigades," last accessed 29 January 2018, https://www.army.gov.au/our-future/modernisation-projects/plan-beersheba/multi-role-combat-brigades.

[11] Army Technology, "Australian Army completes final phases of Plan Beersheba," last accessed 29 January 2018, http://www.army-technology.com/news/australian-army-completes-final-phase-plan-beersheba/.

[12] Craig Bickell, "Plan Beersheba: The Combined Arms Imperative Behind the Reorganisation of the Army," *Australian Army Journal* X, no. 4 (Summer 2013): 37.

training.[13] Now, the pairing of the two infantry battalions and artillery regiment with the ACR within each MCB allows the formations to internally generate and train combined arms teams.

7. In Canada, the absence of tanks in each CMBG has led to an erosion of the combined arms expertise that was more prevalent prior to 2004, when tank regiments could be found in all the brigades. This loss in capability is especially significant as reference B states that "combined arms training at the sub-unit level (Level 5) is the Army's vital ground."[14] To mitigate this, the CA has assumed risk in mandating that units training for High Readiness (HR) as part of the Managed Readiness Plan (MRP) achieve Level 5 live, while those in the support phase practice Level 5 only if the resources allow it.[15] However, this approach significantly reduces the opportunities for units to conduct combined arms training as they are generally only brought together for the occasional large scale field exercise or computer assisted exercise (CAX).

8. The level of integration amongst armour and infantry units has also been reduced, with the exception of 1 CMBG, where the LdSH(RC) and the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry (PPCLI) battalions are able to train more regularly. In 2 CMBG, C Squadron of The RCD is often tasked to support its own brigade's training as well as 5 CMBG's training. This arrangement is stated in reference B's regular force foundation training plan, where 4 Canadian Division (Cdn Div), the higher division for 2 CMBG, has been tasked to "be prepared to support 2 Cdn Div with C Sqn, RCD during RTHR at key integration points (specifically Cbt Tm trg)."[16] These cross-division groupings create a complex command and control situation given the different authorities between the giving and receiving divisions and differences in operating

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[13] *Ibid*., 46.
[14] Canadian Army, *Army Operating Plan*…, 1-8/15.
[15] *Ibid*., 1-9/15.
[16] *Ibid*., 3-B-2-3/4.

procedures. Symmetrical armour regiments, with both tank and reconnaissance squadrons, would not only address the issue of integration but would also allow the brigades to conduct combined arms training more regularly instead of during the mandated windows of the MRP. This would raise the CA's standard in combined arms training, which it considers the thing that "separates professional armies from all others."[17]

9. The Plan BEERSHEBA restructuring greatly improved the AA's combined arms capability while also enhancing another key function, sustainment, in its three brigades. Under the new structure each MCB received a CSS battalion that was outfitted to support all types of units within the brigade, including the ACR, in turn providing an integral second line (2nd line) capability to complement the first line (1st line) capability held at the regimental level.[18] The same support structure can be found in all Canadian CMBGs, though the ability to sustain tanks is only integral to 1 CMBG. Since 2004, this capability all but disappeared in 2 and 5 CMBG with the departure of the tanks. Since the return of C Squadron, little has been done to develop the service battalion's tank maintenance capability as C Squadron's 2nd line maintenance is provided by the 5 Canadian Division Support Base (CDSB) Maintenance Company, which is not under the command of the brigade.

10. When C Squadron is deployed outside Gagetown, C Squadron's 2nd line support becomes a CA task to coordinate, as stipulated in reference B's tasking matrix.[19] Though feasible, this support plan does little to develop sustainment expertise within 2 CMBG as it draws on resources from across the CA to create a temporary support structure. The effects of this were evident during Exercise MAPLE RESOLVE 1701 (Ex MR 17), when C Squadron deployed to

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[17] Canadian Army, *Army Operating Plan*…, 1-8/15.
[18] Australian Army, "Modernisation from Beersheba and Beyond," power point, slide 8.
[19] Canadian Army, *Army Operating Plan*…, 2-A-10/17.

the Canadian Manoeuvre Training Centre (CMTC) to be The RCD's tank squadron. For 1st line sustainment, C Squadron was primarily self-sufficient as it had deployed with its echelon, spare parts, and a small maintenance section. It was unable to draw heavily from The RCD's CSS squadron as it too lacked tank maintenance capability. When 2nd line repairs were required, the tanks had to be back loaded to a 1 CMBG maintenance detachment as 2 CMBG's service battalion had no tank maintenance capability. It also did not hold any 2nd line spare parts, which meant that parts had to be sourced through either the 1 CMBG maintenance detachment or the local supply depot, often causing delays. Despite the efforts from organizations across the CA to successfully execute the exercise, this situation highlighted the need to improve tank sustainment within the brigades that have tanks.

11. The adoption of symmetrical armour regiments would reinvigorate tank sustainment in 2 and 5 CMBG by placing the onus to sustain tanks on the brigades and not the CA. There is no doubt that the provision of resources, training of personnel, and likely restructuring within the service battalions and tank regiment CSS squadrons would be a complex endeavour. However, unlike in 2004, each service battalion would only need to accommodate a tank squadron and two reconnaissance squadrons, not a tank regiment. Ultimately, the end-result would be self-sufficient brigades capable of supporting combined arms teams in both foundation training and force generation. This would align well with reference A's outlook for the CA, which sees the brigade-group as the minimum level to conduct joint operations and sustain a joint force.[20]

12. Beyond improving both combined arms training and sustainment within the AA, Plan BEERSHEBA's restructuring into the ACRs also helped solidify the RAAC's role within the MCBs and AA. Under their old structure, the tank regiment could provide offensive firepower

[20] GoC, *Strong, Secure, Engaged*…, 36.

and shock action for one brigade, while the cavalry regiments were able to locate and disrupt the enemy for their own brigades.[21] Despite being equally important roles, they provided different capabilities to the brigades, indicating a lack of unity in armour's role. The transition to the ACRs unified the roles by providing MCBs with the ability to locate and disrupt the enemy with the two cavalry squadrons, and destroy the enemy with the tank squadron. In Canada the RCAC still has distinct roles based on the type of regiment. Going forward it will require what Lieutenant Colonel (LCol) Fraser Auld terms a unifying "value proposition" to ensure it can solidify its place within the CA. This would encompass identifying the benefits and capabilities that differentiate it from other arms, which is an important task given that infantry battalions possess the same platforms and firepower as reconnaissance regiments.[22]

13. The adoption of symmetrical armour regiments would unify the offensive action of tanks with the locating and defining capabilities of reconnaissance, thus enhancing the RCAC's value proposition. From a brigade perspective, there would now be a fourth manoeuvre battle group (BG) that could provide enhanced direct fire in addition to reconnaissance while facilitating combined arms operations. At the CA level, the ability to force generate tank elements or combined arms teams would be spread across three brigades, aligning better with the MRP.

[21] Australian Army, "Royal Australian Armoured Corps," last accessed 30 January 2018, https://www.army.gov.au/our-people/corps/royal-australian-armoured-corps.

[22] Fraser Auld, "The Royal Canadian Armoured Corps Needs a Value Proposition," *2016 Armour Bulletin* (Spring 2017): 42.

CONCLUSION

14. The FSE requires that the CA remain "a professional, medium force (reinforced with light forces and armour) ready to fulfill all missions assigned by the GoC."[23] Within this force, the RCAC has the key task of providing enhanced direct fire while forming an integral part of the combined arms team. However, despite its success in recent operations, the RCAC does not have the optimal structure to continuously provide this capability as the CA evolves. Its current structure has restricted tank employment to two units and in turn has created inefficiencies for combined arms training, reduced the CA's tank sustainment capability, and given armoured regiments differing roles. To address these issues, this service paper examined the RAAC's move to ACRs under Plan BEERSHEBA to gain insight on how it improved the RAAC and AA's capabilities in those same areas, and how a similar restructuring could benefit the RCAC. Through adopting symmetrical armour regiments, the CA would increase armour/infantry integration while giving brigades more opportunities to conduct such training, thus raising the CA's overall standard in combined arms operations. Having armour in all three brigades would also reinvigorate tank sustainment in the armour regiments and service battalions, making brigades more self-sufficient for support. Finally, symmetrical armour regiments would unify the armour roles under one type of regiment, making them able to locate, define, and defeat the enemy using integral assets.

[23] Canadian Army, *Army Operating Plan*…, 1-6/15.

RECOMMENDATIONS

15. Based on the increased capability that ACR-model regiments could bring to the CA, it is recommended that the RCAC implement a restructuring of its regiments to form symmetrical armour regiments over the next 5-7 years, given it took the AA close to 6 years. These regiments would each be composed of a tank squadron, two reconnaissance squadrons, of which one would remain the brigade reconnaissance squadron, a CSS squadron, and a regimental headquarters. The restructuring would be PY neutral within the regiments, requiring only a re-allocation of positions based on the squadron type. External to the regiments, the implementation would require a combined approach between the RCAC and Logistics branch to ensure all support and training requirements were properly developed or re-allocated. Basing would then need to be determined based on existing infrastructure and training area feasibility. Vehicle movement could then be driven by infrastructure availability. In adopting this structure, the CA would substantially increase its ability to force generate agile and responsive elements to conduct operations in the FSE.

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