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## REGIONAL CAREER MANAGERS FOR THE RCAF RESERVES

Maj Lyle Holbrook

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## **REGIONAL CAREER MANAGERS FOR THE RCAF RESERVES**

### **AIM**

1. At present, there is a general lack of process or administrative over-watch that provides reservists with much needed career guidance, mentorship, progression support as well as succession management and occupational training oversight. Aside from the Air Reserve Augmentation Flight (ARAF) Commanders at the unit or Wing/ Base level Air Reservists are almost solely dependant on their respective supervisors or on their own when it comes to information or assistance pertaining to their careers and progression in the RCAF.

2. The aim of this service paper is to propose a more formal means for reservists, to receive what is currently lacking with most Reserve trades. Specifically there needs to be a more robust career guidance and management system implemented, that will better support reservists across Canada. This effort will in turn increase the efficiencies of the RCAF and better employ the RCAF Reservists, thereby having a more contented and productive work force.

### **INTRODUCTION**

3. Traditionally, the reserves had been seen as a strategic asset that could be mobilized relatively quickly in the event of a large national scale war. Obviously, our reserves would still be a natural choice in this type of eventuality. However, the nature of warfare around the world has changed largely, such that it is becoming more *irregular* and much more high-tech. This

presumably means that our national response is likely to be more frequent, smaller deployments, or perhaps even fighting the enemy from computers here in Canada (Cyber warfare). This shift lends itself to reservists being able to participate more in Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) efforts to combat these new enemies.

4. In more recent years, the CAF has utilized the reserves more in the functions of training positions (benefitting significantly from their often extensive military experiences), support to domestic operations (especially when the CAF is heavily tasked to support international operations), back-filling other CAF members domestic positions while they are deployed on international operation and when able, deploying on international operations themselves by augmenting Regular Force (Reg F) units.

5. This paper posits that the above paragraph is still the best utilization of the RCAF Reserve Force (Res F), in a general context. However, one specific area that could and should be improved upon is managing these reservists careers while employed here in Canada. Specifically, there needs to be a better effort to collaboratively assist a reservist in the management of their careers and their career progression, regardless of whether they are employed on part-time (Class A) or full-time (Class-B) service. Having this added level of support should ensure a clearer direction for both the RCAF as well as the members. In turn, this will afford the RCAF and Canada a healthier, more robust force that we can better utilize in the future.

## **DISCUSSION**

6. It has long been recognized that career managers are a necessary part of all Reg F members career management and progression. These career managers comprise a considerable role in a Reg F members service within the CAF, by tracking their members careers, career courses, mentoring them to a certain extent with respect to advice on options for their future and likely projection scenarios, based on member options and choices, as well as other members in similar situations that may be competing for other jobs and promotions. It is therefore wholly rational to take this to the next step and declare that it should also be seen as important enough to have a similar system in place for reservists, where now there is nothing.

7. For the RCAF to implement a career manager for every trade, as the Reg F does, this would obviously present a huge strain on personnel resources with a very large increase in personnel. Rather, it is recommended that owing to the much smaller numbers of RCAF Res F personnel and the fact that a large number of the Res F personnel are A Class, therefore not progressing through the ranks as rapidly as Reg F members, this would not require anywhere near as many managers to oversee all the trades. Also, as will be discussed in the next paragraph, reservists are not as mobile as their Reg F counterparts, so it is suggested that there be an RCAF Res F career management office set up in geographical regions. For these reasons, it is recommended that one Res F manager could possibly manage several similar trades in their geographic area.

8. One of the primary functions of the Reg F career managers is to assist with the very large and often complex posting plot that goes along with a Reg F persons career. As reservists generally do not get posted or move from one base to another, this would be one of the most significant differences and workload savings when comparing the Res F with the Reg F career managers. But it needs to be understood that some movements of reserve personnel to other bases does happen, on occasion. For example, in Ontario, there are Res F personnel that have worked in either Petawawa or Ottawa and some have worked in Toronto then Borden or vice-versa, all while maintaining the same residence. So, this Res F career manager should also be able to identify those Res F personnel that are willing to accept employment opportunities at other bases in that same region.

9. A subsequent logical question is where should these regional Res F career management offices be located. The location of these offices is not terribly critical, within the regions, as long as they have the necessary administrative support and can adequately serve all of the personnel in the region. Owing to this, it is suggested that the current Regional Joint Task Force (RJTF) regions would perhaps be the most logical areas as they are already defined. Perhaps these offices could be co-located with the RJTF Air Component Command (ACC) offices and thus share some of the administrative staff and support. This co-location would also assist the RJTF in better understanding what Res F personnel would be available at a given time for domestic tasks and operations. If not feasible to co-locate these offices with the RJTF ACC offices, then the next best option would be a base that's central to that region, but still large enough to support this office and close enough to major transportation systems for ease of access, such as an airport and train station.

10. As most reservists are unable to move away from their home base, owing to their primary civilian employment, there needs to be an available pathway for Res F personnel to be able to expand their horizons and have sufficient promotion or advancement goals to aspire to. This growth potential is necessary in order to keep our personnel challenged and interested in fulfilling their ambitions to the maximum extent possible. As eluded to earlier, one of the functions that this new Res F career managers office should undertake is ensuring that all the units and wings within the region have enough positions for proper succession planning. This needs to be coordinated such that Res F personnel do not have to leave a base in order to have promotion opportunities within their trade, if at all possible. This also needs to be conducted for both Non-commissioned members (NCMs) as well as Officers.

11. That is not to say that Res F personnel cannot move to jobs on other bases as this should still be open to those that can, but most are unable. Either way, this new office should have a part in coordinating with the local Unit and Wing ARAFs in an effort to develop a comprehensive plan for ensuring possible upward movements and succession planning for all Res F personnel.

12. It would be near impossible to speak about Res F career path management and not delve into the training aspect, at least on a basic level. An entire service paper could easily be written about the challenges and possible solutions to training for Res F personnel, but this paper will only touch on a small portion of this. Where this pertains to the regional Res F career managers office is in the region of career courses for Res F members. As career courses are so linked to employability and possible promotion, it is also suggested that this office also be involved in

ensuring that these courses are made available to Res F members when the members are ready for them.

13. Unfortunately, after many years of military budget cuts and in an effort to streamline our costs, most of the military courses that used to be compartmentalized for A-class personnel, have shifted to a single *one size fits all* time format course that are frequently six months or more in length. In the majority of cases, A-Class personnel just cannot get time off of their civilian work to take these military courses. This, in itself has become extremely problematic in the Res F as entire trades of Res F personnel are now dwindling to dangerously low levels because they are unable to take the military courses they require for advancement.

14. Whether these Res F career management offices would be given the breadth of responsibility and resources to ensure that these courses are offered is doubtful. However, it is proposed that it be essential that these shortcomings in availability of career courses, in a format that can be utilized by an average Res F member, be able to be clearly identified by this office and be provided a voice in a higher headquarters environment that can do something about what is being reported, for the survivability of our future reserves.

15. There has been much talk about the recent DND/CAF imitative called *The Journey*. If it does come to fruition that there will be no more Reg F or Res F personnel and there will just Reg F personnel that will either be part-time or full-time then this concept still works well in that



context. Aside from alleviating the enormous administrative burdens of personnel moving from one force to the other, there will still be a requirement for someone to manage the careers of the part-time force. This proposal for having a regional Res F career management office would very easily be absorbed or transformed into an office of, or perhaps a detachment of, the Reg F career management department.

16. The main hurdle to bound for this Res F career management office to come to pass may well be the money required to open such an office or the personnel to operate it. Although it is not within the scope of this paper to conduct a thorough costing of this initiative, however it is worthy to identify it as a possible detractor to its implementation. On the personnel side however, the new Strong, Secure and Engaged Defence policy calls for a large increase in military personnel for both the Res F and Reg F. The only issue in this realm then might be getting the right number and mix of experienced and knowledgeable personnel to start up such an organization.

17. It is purely speculative on the part of the author, based on personal experiences with the military but it is estimated that each of the regional RCAF Career Management offices would require approx fifteen to twenty-five personnel. This office would be led by a major and primarily staffed with Captains and Warrant Officers owing to the requirement for these personnel to manage careers. Included in these numbers are three to six Corporals and/ or Master Corporals as there would also be a requirement for a small administrative support staff. This means that if they have offices at the RJTFs across Canada, the entire cumulative staff for all of

these new offices would be less than one hundred and fifty new personnel. This should not be an onerous draw against the number of new recruits that will hopefully be joining the RCAF Reserves in the near future.

## **CONCLUSION**

18. Unfortunately, our Reserve Force personnel are, because of their part-time service to the Canadian military, all too often seen as also only “partly committed” to their military careers. By extension they are also perhaps considered less ambitious, less focussed on their military accomplishments and less driven. In the majority of cases, we know that is definitely not true. As these personnel have chosen to continue with a second career, often over and above a full-time civilian job, it shows a great deal of dedication and devotion to the CAF. But, what is most important for the CAF to keep in mind is that these personnel have increasingly more choices for part-time employment in today’s global job market. It is therefore incredibly important that we continue to find ways to keep our reservists interested and engaged in our RCAF work force or we risk a great loss of immeasurable expertise and considerable talent.

19. Actually having an additional department within the RCAF that these reservists are able to better manage their careers and in turn improve their job satisfaction, can only help the CAF better manage and retain this invaluable resource. It should also be noted that the author of this paper is currently a Primary Reservist in the RCAF and has been for his entire twenty-seven and a half year career with the CAF and truly believes that he would have benefitted greatly from

such a capability. Any move in this direction toward Res F career management would be a welcome change for the better. For less than one hundred and fifty personnel across Canada to properly support our reserve force, this would be resources well spent.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

20. It is recommended that the RCAF establish regional Reserve Force career management offices that:
- a. Are located within regions across Canada. It is suggested that they align with the already existing JTF regions and possibly co-located with the ACC offices.
  - b. Works with the Wings/ Bases and units to ensure that there are adequate positions available in the geographic area for proper career advancement as well as succession planning and management.
  - c. Works with the Wings/ Bases and units to coordinate movement of jobs, where applicable (not residences) for those reservists that are able to work at a different base.
  - d. Oversees and advises on issues of career progression for the RCAF Res F members in their area.
  - e. Advise the various commanders of the availability of Reserve personnel for deployments along with their skill sets and experience levels.
  - f. Advocates for proper reserve training programs, training development and career course progressions