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PRIMARY RESERVES AND REGULAR FORCE INTEGRATION

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PRIMARY RESERVES AND REGULAR FORCE INTEGRATION

AIM

1. The aim of this service paper to conduct a review of the factors affecting primary reserve (P Res) integration with the regular force (Reg F) and provide recommendations to mitigate these issues. Specific focus will be placed on the integration of P Res and Reg F Royal Canadian Armour Corps (RCAC) soldiers and units. Analysis of this problem will be conducted in two principal areas: key factors affecting P Res integration into the Reg F in general and the challenges around integration of P Res and Reg F from a RCAC perspective. This paper is primarily a reflection document but will provide some base recommendations for future consideration as this is a complex and challenging problem that will require further research and analysis. Some areas such as job protection legislation that should be considered in the future is beyond the scope of this document as it will require significant changes to both Department of National Defence (DND) and government of Canada policy and legislation.

INTRODUCTION

2. The reserves represent a long-standing tradition in Canada centered around the concept of the citizen soldier. Throughout Canadian history, these citizen soldiers have been called upon to serve their country in times of need and have proven their worth as a viable military resource. This tradition continues today and, the contribution of Canadian reserve forces in support of Canadian domestic and international foreign policy objectives have been demonstrated during recent operational deployments along the full spectrum of operations including domestic,

peacekeeping and combat operations. Moreover, reservists provide an important connection to Canadians and local communities, often being the most visible representatives of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF). In addition to their impact on the domestic front, the reserves provide a strategic and operational resource to the government of Canada. As the Governmental web site states, “A sustainable Reserve Force, trained and equipped to meet the needs and operational challenges of the Department of National Defence (DND) and CAF, is a critical enabler to CAF strategic and operational success.”¹

3. According to the government of Canada web page on the reserves, they serve three primary roles in the CAF:

Operational – trained and ready to respond;

Canadian Forces presence and community connection; and

Citizenship, leadership and commitment to country.²

4. As the security environment evolves and becomes more complex the need for diverse and large resources to stand up to emerging threats to Canada and its allies increases. According to Canada’s new defence policy, Strong, Secure, Engaged (SSE), “To succeed in an unpredictable and complex security environment, defence will:

Actively address threats abroad for stability at home; and

Field an agile, well-educated, flexible, diverse, combat-ready military.³

¹ <http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/about-reports-pubs-report-plan-priorities/2017-canadas-reserve-force.page>

² <http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/about-reports-pubs-report-plan-priorities/2017-canadas-reserve-force.page>

DISCUSSION

5. The reserve force is comprised of four sub-components, the P Res, the Canadian Rangers, the Cadet Corps and the Supplementary Reserve. For the purposes of this staff paper only the Army P Res and the RCAC reservists will be addressed.

6. SSE announced that the P Res would increase in size by 1500 positions to 28 500. To achieve the goals laid out by the Government of Canada the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) issued his CDS Initiating Directive Reserve Strategy 2015: Strengthening the Primary Reserve. In this directive he articulates his Mission: “The CAF will take action to strengthen and grow the Primary Reserve to a sustainable average paid strength of 28,500 over the next four years.”⁴ The P Res is currently at an enrolled strength of 26 500 with an average paid strength, at 21 746.⁵ To be considered on paid strength a reservist must work a 6hr shift once every 30 days. However, what this paid strength does not account for is the readiness level of the reserve personnel. Any restrictions, such as medical categories or personal circumstances, which may preclude them from domestic or international deployments are not captured. However, by extrapolating Ref F left out of battle rates of approximately 15% leads to a potential strength of 18 484.

7. In his most recent directive on the reserves the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) articulates his main effort as “Recruiting and Retention Any growth and strengthening of the P Res is predicated on these two key items Streamlining and facilitating recruiting and improving

³ Canada. Department of National Defence. *Canadian Defence Policy: Strong Secure Engaged*. Ottawa: DND Canada, 2015, 16.

⁴ Canada. Department of National Defence. *Strong Secure Engaged*, 4.

⁵ <http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/about-reports-pubs-report-plan-priorities/2017-canadas-reserve-force.page>

retention are critical to success in achieving the mission.”⁶ However, in line with SSE’s vision of the reserves, and the desire for the deployment of multiple simultaneous operations at home and abroad it is recommended that individual and unit readiness levels be included as part of this mission and main effort. Although it is not reasonable to expect part time soldiers who have other civilian work and school commitments to be at the same level of readiness as Reg F units, they must be at a level which, given an appropriate amount of time, will allow them to achieve the required standard for deployment.

8. The question becomes at this point how to achieve a sustainable, deployable force with a focus on recruitment, retention and readiness and how can this force be properly integrated into the Reg F within the RCAC.

9. Recruiting is a critical component to overall force strength. However, it is not simply about intake of people. It must be focused on recruiting the right people, who are aware of the tasks and obligations being asked of them as part of the P Res and RCAC. There has been a systemic problem, as seen at the Royal Canadian Armour Corps School and other schools within the Combat Training Center (CTC), of individuals failing training or withdrawing from training due to a lack of motivation or desire to be part of the RCAC or part of the CAF. Implementation of a more robust selection system, coupled with appropriate information sessions, which highlight not only the exciting parts of the job but also the demanding ones, would assist in an

⁶ Canada. Department of National Defence. *CDS Initiating Directive Reserve Strategy 2015: Strengthening the Primary Reserve*. Ottawa: DND Canada, 2015. 4.

increase in retention rates. The second order effects are a reduced burden and waste of financial, materiel and personnel resources that are exhausted on individual who did not understand what they were getting into.

10. For many years individual training, including basic trade qualifications and career advancement courses were substantially different between the P Res and Reg F. This included both the amount of time spent in training as well as the content and level of proficiency required between the two streams. Recently the RCACS has worked diligently to eliminate this gap so that all individual training will align with common doctrine and tactics, techniques, and procedures.⁷ The major disparity between P Res and Reg F training in the future will be vehicle platform qualifications, such as Leopard 2 and LAV6 Reconnaissance.

11. Although there have been vast improvements in the alignment and synchronization of training, one of the major obstacles encountered by P Res soldiers attending career courses such as the crew commander, troop warrant, troop leader, squadron sergeant major and squadron commander courses is their level of experience. This is largely due to a lack of consistency in training attendance at their home units, difficulty in conducting meaningful collective training and a lack of resources such as vehicles, communication equipment and training areas.

Furthermore, this experience gap is also evident when a P Res soldier is conducting workup training for deployment. The result is a decreased level of experience and competency, and an

⁷ Canada. Department of National Defence. *Briefing Note for Director Armour: RCAC Primary Reserve Integration Concept*. Ottawa: DND Canada, 2016. 1.

increase in the amount of training required prior to their full integration into a Reg F armour regiment.

12. The current training model does not ensure that the right people are getting the right training at the right time. Although many courses are offered in a modular fashion, the civilian employment obligations and the length of some leadership or key career progression courses preclude many reservists from attending courses. Often, they are forced to use their civilian employment vacation days or must secure leave without pay. This is a notable dissatisfier for many reservists and, coupled with the subsequent difficulties in career progression and rank advancement, greatly impacts morale, motivation and retention.

13. Although a gap between P Res and Reg F experience levels must be expected due to the part time nature of a P Res soldier's employment all efforts must be made to narrow this divergence. To mitigate the experience gap between the reserve and regular forces and to assist in career progression and advancement a number of steps should be considered:

- a. Increase P Res participation in Reg F unit exercises;
- b. Providing additional mentorship, course pre-training and professional development through a combination of distance learning packages and interaction with Reg F armour regiments; and
- c. Decentralizing theory portions of courses with oversight by RCACS standards squadron.

14. Another challenge P Res armour units face is the lack of adequate and accessible equipment to conduct individual, collective and continuation training. This is further exasperated by the increase in the technical complexity of capabilities such as communication, and command and control systems, weapon systems, and combat vehicles that are used by the CAF. The resulting skill fade is further aggravated by the dispersed nature of armour reserve units and the limited service support elements available to them. Subsequently most major equipment such as radios and vehicle are kept in a central pool for all units in a designated area to draw upon. For example, in 4 Division in Ontario, all major equipment is stored at the Division Training Center in Medford Ontario. For most Ontario armour reserve units this location is at a distance which precludes them from taking advantage of these resources during a regular parade night, when the greatest attendance normally occurs. In addition, if a reserve unit needed this equipment to conduct training with the Royal Canadian Dragoons in Petawawa the time and distance would make it impossible. To mitigate these issues the following courses of action should be considered:

- a. Increase distribution of Virtual Battle Space simulation systems to individual armouries to increase the ability to conduct level 1 – 4 collective training;
- b. re-distribution of major equipment at a small scale. To include 2 - 4 Tactical Armour Patrol Vehicles, and their associated weapon and communication systems. This will provide soldiers with hands on experience, and the ability for units to conduct driver and maintenance courses and dry gunnery training; and
- c. conduct a feasibility study into the procurement and distribution of a G Wagon interim replacement vehicles that can be locally serviced and repaired to allow for up to troop level collective training to be conducted.

15. To further increase P Res integration, a review of armour corps regimental force structure should be completed. The RCAC's force employment and generation P Res tasks are assigned as the Persistent Surveillance System Troops, and a Force Protection Reconnaissance Troop for the Forward Support Group.⁸ These are tasks with the Reg F are unable to accomplish due to vehicle and personnel shortages and a lack of established positions to conduct them. Subsequently, based upon establishment restrictions, lack of adequate vehicle resources and manning levels of approximately 90% and 15% left out of battle rates these tasks are well suited for the P Res. In addition, due to the lack of personnel and vehicles Reg F regiments are not resourcing their regimental reconnaissance troops, the reconnaissance squadron light troop or the 3rd patrol in each medium reconnaissance troop. These are capabilities that could be filled by P Res personnel.⁹

16. Designation of individual patrol and troop level P Res augmentation in armour units falls in line with the CDS direction at ref C and with the Army Commanders directive that P Res sub-sub units are to be integrated into Reg F organizations. However, many P Res armour units only consist of a sub-sub unit number of people in their organization and often parade strength is less. Therefore, the ability to achieve formed sub-sub unit integration with Reg F units will continue to be a challenge but can be mitigated through the recommendations indicated in paragraphs 13 and 14.

⁸ Canada. Department of National Defence. *1901-1 (DLFD 5-3) Master Implementation Plan Force 2018 Alignment Towards Land Operations 2021*. Ottawa: DND Canada, 2016

⁹ Canada. Department of National Defence. *Briefing Note for Director Armour: RCAC Primary Reserve Integration Concept*. Ottawa: DND Canada, 2016. 2-3.

17. The last issue which will impact integration of P Res soldiers into the Reg F will be the ability to retain qualified and experienced soldiers. With growing costs and fiscal restraints placed upon the CAF in the future, the need to see a return on investment will grow in importance. Therefore, the need to increase the motivation and incentive for trained individuals to remain in the P Res and to deploy on operations is of the utmost importance. A review of policies and benefits for reserve soldiers is being conducted¹⁰ and should assist in retention issues. However, some other areas, such as the following, should be explored to help mitigate any attritions:

- a. Increase equipment and training resources to armouries;
- b. conduct a further review of training delivery models to improve flexibility while maintaining the required standards;
- c. Look to expand the Reserve employer compensation model, explained at ref A, to include career courses;
- d. increase opportunities to train with Reg F units and equipment, increasing integration capabilities;
- e. increase simulation resources to enhance collective training; and
- f. officially assign tasks and positions in Reg F units to P Res as discussed in paragraphs 15 and 16.

¹⁰ Canada. Department of National Defence. *CDS Initiating Directive Reserve Strategy 2015*, 3.

CONCLUSION

18 Upon review of the operational deployment commitments envisioned in SSE it is clear the reserves will play a vital role in achieving this operational output. Thus, investment in the reserves to achieve a strong, robust and sustainable force is key to CAF mission success. To achieve their integration into the Reg F and in to the RCAC full time units many issues such as recruiting, training, resourcing, force structure integration and retention must be addressed in order to create an agile, effective force that can achieve the missions assigned to it by the Government of Canada.

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