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THE MISALIGNMENT OF POLICY, DIRECTIVES AND PERFORMANCE REPORTING IN DEFENCE PROCUREMENT

Lieutenant-Colonel Leigh J.J. Holland

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Solo Flight

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Defence Procurement**

Lieutenant-Colonel Leigh J.J. Holland

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The Misalignment of Policy, Directives and Performance Reporting in Defence Procurement

Strong, Secure, Engaged (SSE), *Canada's Defence Policy*, lays out a plan to “modernize, renew and restore” the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) through aggressive investment to equip the CAF with modern equipment to give them the “tools they need to succeed in – and return safely from – operations.”¹ The strategy comprises dozens of major capital equipment projects worth billions of dollars and includes major equipment and weapon systems such as new combat, patrol, and support ships for the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN), armoured combat support vehicles, armoured vehicles, weapons and intelligence systems for the Canadian Army (CA), and the promise to replace no less than three entire aircraft fleets and modernize others for the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF). But the Department of National Defence (DND) has a questionable record for executing defence spending on major projects and is currently accumulating substantial delays, cost overruns, and significant scope changes on many of these key equipment projects,² threatening to leave the CAF with capability gaps that must be managed by other means.

Accepting that defence procurement in Canada is highly problematic, this essay will argue that the current intersection of procurement policy and governance with performance reporting under the Department Results Framework (DRF) and the Management Accountability Framework (MAF), fails to align to meaningfully measure the true effectiveness of procurement

¹ Department of National Defence. *Strong Secure Engaged*. Ottawa: Government of Canada, 2017, page 33.

² Perry, David. “2016 Status Report on Major Defence Equipment Procurements” Canadian Global Affairs Institute, September 2017, page 6.

of capabilities and does not drive amelioration of the issues that plague defence procurement. To make this argument, this paper will provide a brief overview of recent major equipment acquisitions and some of the clear problems exposed in defence procurement. The applicable policies and directives that shape major procurement will then be reviewed, as will DND's Project Approval Directive (PAD) which forms the basis of DND's compliance with Treasury Board policies and directives for major capital projects. Finally, the two major government level performance reporting frameworks will be discussed, as will the role and efficacy of internal audits. Throughout, the alignment of the policies and directives with the performance reporting framework will be explored, working back to whether major issues of procurement are in fact addressed within the performance indicators.

Recent Major Equipment Procurement Projects

In order to assess the alignment of policy and directives with performance measurement, a review of two projects (the Joint Support Ship project and the Standard Military Pattern (SMP) Project) is undertaken to provide a basis for discussion.

The Joint Support Ship Project was originally approved in 2004 to deliver logistic support to Naval Task Groups via three Joint Support Ships and in-service support for a total cost of \$1.99B. In 2008, PWGSC ended the definition phase after both vendors that submitted proposal failed to meet the cost criteria. The project entered definition for the second time in 2010 with a revised budget of \$2.33B, approval for two ships and an option for a third, and the expectation that the first ship would be delivered in 2018, and the second ship in 2019.³

³ Department of National Defence. ADM(RS) Internal Audit of the Joint Support Ship Project, 2011. Ottawa: Government of Canada, 2011, page iii.

As of 2020, the first of the two JSS is expected to be delivered in 2022-23, and the last ship in 2024,⁴ and the total price now sits at approximately \$3.4B.⁵ The delays have resulted in over half a billion spent to lease a supply ship to fill the logistics void until the new ships are built.⁶ The project has accumulated years of delay, is more that 50% over the originally approved budget, and has an altered scope for two ships instead of three.

The Standard Military Pattern (SMP) Project is part of the larger Medium Support Vehicle System (MSVS) Project. When the project was approved in 2006, the initial delivery for 1,500 SMP vehicles was set to start in 2008 and complete in 2012.⁷ The project then experienced several setbacks including a cancelled RFP when it was determined that the project was likely insufficiently funded, resulting in a delay to contract award.⁸ A 2019 update shows that the project is set to deliver 1,500 trucks in five variants with delivery commencing in FY 18/19 and within the 2015 approved budget.⁹ Still incomplete, the project is almost eight years delayed.

In fact, a recent summary of the causes of delays to over 100 DND projects identified issues such as realistic scheduling during the project approval stage, political delays, and issues

⁴ Department of National Defence. Status report on transformational and major Crown projects. Ottawa: Government of Canada, 2019.

⁵ Brewster, Murray, "\$1 billion and counting: Inside Canada's troubled efforts to build new warship." CBC, 25 Feb 2020. Accessed on 11 May at <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/frigates-joint-supply-ships-navy-procurement-canada-1.5474312>

⁶ Berthiaume, Lee. "More than 100 military procurement projects facing delays." The Canadian Press, 20 Feb 2020. Accessed at <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-more-than-100-military-procurement-projects-facing-delays/>

⁷ Sloan, E. "Something has to give: Why Delays are the New Reality of Canada's Defence Procurement Strategy." Canadian Global Affairs Position Paper, October 2014. Accessed at https://www.cgai.ca/something_has_to_give_why_delays_are_the_new_reality_of_canada_s_defence_procurement_strategy#MSVS

⁸ Perry, David. "2016 Status Report on Major Defence Equipment Procurements" Canadian Global Affairs Institute, September 2017, page 51.

⁹ Department of National Defence. Status report on transformational and major Crown projects. Ottawa: Government of Canada, 2019.

in industry beyond government control.¹⁰ The actual approval process itself, meant to ensure requirement and compliance, is another source of delay, evidenced in 2014/2015 by Treasury Board and ministerial approvals that were half the number as that registered in 2009/2010 despite no decline in demand.¹¹ Finally, issues of costing, both in terms of accuracy and in terms of projecting increases over time, as well as a dispersal of “ministerial responsibility among multiple government departments”¹² including DND, Public Service and Procurement Canada (PSPC), Treasury Board, Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS), and Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada were also identified.

As the largest procurer of equipment and services in the Government of Canada, with procurements projected at a value of more than \$33 billion over the next 20 years,¹³ one would expect procurement to be a more practiced undertaking in which pervasive issues and delays are the exception rather than the rule. So the question becomes, what guides project management of major equipment acquisition in Government of Canada departments?

Application of government policies and directives

The management of major projects across government departments is governed through Treasury Board by the Policy on the Planning and Management of Investments, whose objective is to ensure that “The Government of Canada has the necessary assets and services in place to

¹⁰ Barthiaume, Lee. “More than 100 military procurement projects facing delays.” The Canadian Press, 20 Feb 2020. Accessed at <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-more-than-100-military-procurement-projects-facing-delays/>

¹¹ Perry, David. “2015 Status Report on Major Defence Equipment Procurements” Canadian Global Affairs Institute, December 2015. Accessed at <https://www.policyschool.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/defence-procurement-perry.pdf>

¹² Perry, David. “2015 Status Report on Major Defence Equipment Procurements” Canadian Global Affairs Institute, December 2015, page 4. Accessed at <https://www.policyschool.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/defence-procurement-perry.pdf>

¹³ Department of National Defence. Strong Secure Engaged. Ottawa: Government of Canada, 2017, page 45.

support program delivery to Canadians”¹⁴ and the Directive on the Management of Projects and Programmes to ensure “projects and programmes are effectively planned, implemented, monitored and controlled, and closed to enable the realization of the expected benefits and results for Canadians.”¹⁵ The policy establishes a requirement for each department to have an investment plan and prioritization for investment, methods for the effective life cycle management of assets, and effective governance and oversight. The directive establishes that each department must develop processes for effective project management, performance reporting and measures, as well as a governance framework. These policies and directives do not provide a framework or methodology to fulfill their stated requirements. This must be developed and applied within each department.

The MAF, also among the Treasury Board Suite of policies, provides the feedback to confirm that individual departments are “well managed, accountable and that resources are allocated to achieve results. The MAF also ensures that Treasury Board Policy suite requirements and expected results are met.”¹⁶ Because this policy is predominantly a reporting framework, it will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

Within DND, the PAD outlines the means by which DND satisfies the requirements of Treasury Board Policy on the Planning and Management of Investments and the Directive on the Management of Projects and Programmes for major equipment acquisition. The PAD was updated in 2019 to reflect changes in Treasury Board policy. The updated PAD states its aim to

¹⁴ Treasury Board. Policy on the Planning and Management of Investments. Ottawa: Government of Canada, 2019. Accessed at <https://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pol/doc-eng.aspx?id=32593>

¹⁵ Treasury Board. Directive on the management of projects and Programmes. Ottawa: Government of Canada, 2019. Accessed at <https://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pol/doc-eng.aspx?id=32594>

¹⁶ Treasury Board. Management Accountability Framework. Ottawa: Government of Canada, 2016. <https://www.canada.ca/en/treasury-board-secretariat/services/management-accountability-framework.html>

“improve departmental management practices by emphasizing direction in various project and program management areas as reflected in the [Organizational Project Management Capacity Assessment] OPMCA.”¹⁷ The PAD describes DND/CAF’s Defence Services Program (which encompasses “all DND-approved services, activities, projects, programmes, and portfolios deemed to be essential to the delivery of affordable and effective Defence services to the Government and Canadians.”)¹⁸ and the Investment Plan (IP), which connects resources to activities, projects and programmes¹⁹ and provides full direction on governance, oversight, and management requirements at each stage of the project. Document templates are provided to document the requirements, adherence to process, approvals and decisions as projects move through the phases of project process. Best practices and guides for key aspects of project management are also outlined.

In light of the difficulties with major equipment acquisition, DND has undertaken a number of initiatives meant to resolve or limit some of the most significant suspected causes of project delays. Among these initiatives is the Defence Procurement Strategy, the professionalization of the role of project managers and procurement professionals, analytics, and improved costing capabilities.²⁰

With objectives and requirements laid out in Treasury Board policies and directives, and processes and tools provided in the PAD, the next key element is to assess performance.

¹⁷ Department of National Defence. Project Approval Directive. Ottawa: Government of Canada, 2019, page 4.

¹⁸ Department of National Defence. Project Approval Directive. Ottawa: Government of Canada, 2019, page 26.

¹⁹ Department of National Defence. Project Approval Directive. Ottawa: Government of Canada, 2019, page 29.

²⁰ Department of National Defence. Project Approval Directive. Ottawa: Government of Canada, 2019, page 1.

Government Performance Reporting and Audit and Evaluation

The Treasury Board approaches the measurement of performance from two perspectives. The first is the performance and health of the “system,” through the Management Accountability Framework (MAF). The second perspective is driven by Treasury Board’s Directive on Results and is meant to assess the quality of the “product,” which in the case of defence procurement, is the right equipment at the right time to deliver the right capability, all within the allocated cost. Understanding the measurement of major equipment acquisition requires an exploration of both perspectives.

The MAF is a Treasury Board oversight tool that provides the feedback to confirm that individual departments are “well managed, accountable and that resources are allocated to achieve results. It also ensures that Treasury Board Policy Suite requirements and expected results are met.”²¹ The MAF defines the performance measures and compels each department to provide inputs to “help organizations to continuously improve management capabilities, effectiveness and efficiency.”²² One of the department specific areas of management assessed under the MAF is the management of acquired services and assets with the objective to assess compliance, and improve management oversight and practices. A complete list is provided in Annex A. The results should enable the identification of emerging issues, improvement of management practices, and facilitate evidence-based analysis of results, among others. Among the 11 total questions on project management and procurement, only four are relevant to major equipment purchase and appear in Annex B.

²¹ Treasury Board. Management Accountability Framework. Ottawa: Government of Canada, 2016. Accessed at <https://www.canada.ca/en/treasury-board-secretariat/services/management-accountability-framework.html>

²² Treasury Board. Management Accountability Framework – MAF Assessment Process. Ottawa: Government of Canada, 2016. Accessed at <https://www.canada.ca/en/treasury-board-secretariat/services/management-accountability-framework/assessment-process.html>

Interestingly, performance measures related to scope, cost and schedule are only assessed against projects completed during the reporting period (in other words, a small subset of projects) and require a binary yes/no assessment of scope/schedule/cost against the scope/schedule/cost when the project was first approved for implementation. A three month delay has the same effect to the performance measure as a three year delay, and minor deviation from the project's expected outcomes has the same effect on results as a significant change to the project's expected outcomes, and 2% over budget is as bad as 50% and more over budget.

Given that defence procurement projects are typically ten years or more, the structure of the performance measures to use completed projects effectively creates a lag in the data and shows project performance that was likely experienced three to ten years earlier and would not be representative of real-time project performance with all the effects of contemporary policies, directives, initiatives and improvements. As an example, the JSS project will not contribute data to the MAF assessment until project closure, likely in 2023 or later. Original project approval was in 2004, with a second project approval in 2010. Issues with scope, schedule and cost (all of which would earn "0" in questions 4,5,6) were experienced for multiple reasons over the life of the project, beginning in 2004. MAF results would express performance up to 19 years old but imply that issues are current and could impact policy and programme decisions. Circling back to the stated objectives of the MAF, the performance indicators provide little information to assess compliance or guide improvements to management practices, and do little to shed light on the cause of delays or the effect of initiatives.

Although similar to the MAF in that the Treasury Board Policy of Results is meant to provide information to “improve the achievement of results”²³, the Policy on Results is also meant to “..enhance the understanding of results..”²⁴ The policy does this by requiring each federal department to have a performance measurement framework (DRF) in place to provide information to help manage and improve programs, policies and services, to guide the allocation of resources to optimize results, and to provide a means to be transparent in reporting success to parliament and the public.

Under the DND’s Department Results Framework, equipment procurement projects are captured under the Procurement of Capabilities Core Responsibility, DR 5.1 and 5.2, results and indicators. Indicators under 5.1 are new for FY 18/19 and measure success at meeting project development and approval timelines and the number of contracts that are awarded within established performance targets. Indicator 5.2 “Defence equipment acquisition is well-managed” measures the number of projects that remain on approved scope, schedule and cost compared to the approved scope, schedule and cost at project approval. While the exact means of measuring adherence to scope, schedule and cost is not readily available, the 2018/19 Department Results Report reports that 100% of defence acquisition projects were on scope and within approved expenditure authority, while 81.25% remained on the approved scheduled. However, the small print notes that the performance indicators reflect the performance of just 16 projects, although they are reported to be amongst the most complex or the most important.²⁵ Given the size of

²³ Treasury Board. Policy on Results. Ottawa: Government of Canada, 2016. Accessed at <https://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pol/doc-eng.aspx?id=31300§ion=html>

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ Department of National Defence. Departmental Results Report (2018-2019). Ottawa: Government of Canada, page 47. Accessed at <http://intranet.mil.ca/en/deptl-mgmt/perf-report-gov.page#rpp> Department of National Defence.

DND's acquisition project portfolio, the inclusion of only 16 projects immediately calls into question whether this performance indicator is indicative of overall project performance. Also, given the binary nature of the measure (on-schedule or not on-schedule, on-scope or not on-scope, within expenditure authority or not within expenditure authority), it is likely that these measures suffer the same weakness of the MAF measures in that a project delay suffered years ago will drive the project off the original schedule for the remainder of the life of the project and affect the performance measures accordingly. In one sense, this aligns with the intent of the DRF, which is to be transparent in reporting success to parliament and the public, however, it also fails transparency in that the performance measure lags actual government performance. In addition, the measures do not link back to the requirements laid out in the Directive on Results to provide information to help manage programs or guide the allocation of resources.

In addition to MAF and DRF performance measures, DND's PAD defines the project performance measurement framework with required indicators for scope, schedule and cost, and although the indicators appear similar to MAF and DRF indicators, the nuances of schedule performance measurement appear to make the PAD measures a much more powerful tool to assess and understand project performance and aid decision making. The PAD measures schedule changes experienced during the reporting period, as well as "project to date" (which may include the performance lags described in the MAF section). The PAD also permits re-baselining of the schedule upon project leader approval such that a project returns to "on schedule" and is assessed in future years against this new baseline, again, allowing the indicator to show a measure of current performance vice the effects of delays that may have been incurred 10 or more years ago. The performance of scope also carries the same nuance of reporting period, providing a count of the number of changes during a reporting period. However, the

threshold appears arbitrary, with one or two changes assessed as “yellow” and greater than 2 “red.” The budget/expenditure performance measure tracks annual expenditure progress, but also appears arbitrary in that spending more than 65% of the planned budget before the end of Q2 is “yellow.” In this case, the effects of initiatives such as improved costing, analytics, professional training and certification for procurement and project management, and strategies such as the Defence Procurement Strategy, begin to be seen in overall trends year over year.

The final tool available for evaluation of project performance is via audit from the Office of the Auditor General (OAG) and from Assistant Deputy Minister (Review Services) (ADM(RS)). Both conduct audits in accordance with the requirements of the Policy on Internal Audit and the Directive on Internal Audit. ADM(RS) audited the project in 2011 with the objective of assessing “the adequacy of the governance process, risk management practices and management controls in place in the JSS project to ensure the delivery of a cost-effective and timely operational capability.”²⁶ In other words, the audit assesses the compliance of the project with the requirement of the pressures to today’s Directive on the Management of Projects and Programmes. The audit recommendations include elements of information in the Statement of Requirement to support decisions about a third ship, and observes issues with human resources planning for task completion. Recommendations were also made the JSS contract include more robust use of milestone payments for key deliverables and well as improved costing information in vendor reports to aid project cost forecasting.²⁷

²⁶ Department of National Defence. ADM(RS) Internal Audit of the Joint Support Ship Project, 2011. Ottawa: Government of Canada, 2011, page 2.

²⁷ Department of National Defence. ADM(RS) Internal Audit of the Joint Support Ship Project, 2011. Ottawa: Government of Canada, 2011, page iv.

In 2013, the AOG assessed the National Shipbuilding Procurement Strategy and included aspects of the procurement of the Joint Support Ships. Among other objectives, the audit sought to assess whether the acquisition of the JSS had been managed in a way to support “timely and affordable recapitalization of the naval fleet.”²⁸ Among other issues, the audit noted the difficulty with costing in the early stages, recommending that costs should not necessarily be used as a control. The audit also spoke to larger, more strategic issues, offering assessment on the effectiveness of the strategy to maintain a steady demand to allow Canada’s ship building industry a level of stability that would help it meet the equipment acquisition goals of the Government of Canada.²⁹ Many of these observations trace back to the causes of the initial delays, and while this may very well be a case of “hind-sight is 20/20,” the evaluation also offers insight into the causes of the issues and the potential means to resolve them.

While performance reporting under the MAF, DRF provide indicators of performance (either effectively or not as previously discussed), often in a visually appealing table format that suggests the potential for conclusions, they appear to offer little in the way of a true understanding of project performance. The PAD performance measures offer a chance to see trends in project performance that can be used to correlate current project performance with current initiatives and strategies. But it is the audit function that provides an analysis to inform decision making, offering guidance and observations not provided through the various performance reporting frameworks.

²⁸ Office of the Auditor General. 2013 Fall Report of the Auditor General of Canada. Ottawa: Government of Canada, 2013. Accessed at https://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/parl_oag_201311_03_e_38797.html

²⁹ Office of the Auditor General. 2013 Fall Report of the Auditor General of Canada. Ottawa: Government of Canada, 2013. Accessed at https://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/parl_oag_201311_03_e_38797.html

Conclusion

Major equipment acquisition is critical to the continued readiness and effectiveness of the CAF to fulfill its defence mandate. However, wide-spread and significant delays have left the CAF struggling to cover capability gaps while awaiting delayed equipment. The causes are many and varied, some within the control of the Government of Canada, some within its span of influence, and some out of its control. A review of the Treasury Board policies and directives and DND's PAD indicates that the Government of Canada and DND have established the required objectives and requirements to guide project management. Various initiatives and strategies, including the Defence Procurement Strategy, have been undertaken to try to improve project performance. However, it is clear that performance indicators used as part of the DRF and MAF, which are used to report project performance at the Government of Canada level, do not align with policy requirements and do little to achieve the objectives of performance reporting, and may in fact hinder the evaluation of the effect of initiatives meant to improve project performance. However, performance indicators defined in DND's PAD show a better potential to provide key information to evaluate the effectiveness of those initiatives, and can identify trends to support correlations. Audits, through either the AOG or ADM(RS) show a better alignment with Treasury Board policy requirement for the management of projects and also provide feedback that assists in the evaluation of project performance, the efficacy of initiatives, and have the potential to inform on the requirement for new initiatives.

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Annex A
Management Accountability Framework (MAF)
Objectives

- “assess compliance and monitor progress toward the implementation of key policy requirements under the Treasury Board Policy Framework for the Management of Assets and Acquired Services to ensure value for money and sound stewardship of federal assets
- provide deputy heads with a view of their organization’s investment planning, project management, procurement, real property and materiel management practices, including comparisons with other organizations;
- improve oversight and management practices in departments and agencies;
- encourage conversations within departments and agencies and with other organizations; and
- support the government’s strategic direction for the planning and management of investments.”³⁰

³⁰ (<https://www.canada.ca/en/treasury-board-secretariat/services/management-accountability-framework/maf-methodologies/maf-2018-2019-management-acquired-services-assets-methodology.html>)

Annex B

Management Accountability Framework (MAF)

Performance measures relevant to major equipment acquisition

- Question 2: In the 2017 to 2018 fiscal year, did the department or agency review and consider the lessons learned from past projects when undertaking the project planning and identification phase of new projects?
- Question 4: What percentage of your department or agency's projects that were completed in the 2017 to 2018 fiscal year were delivered on time, based on approved completion date at the time of implementation approval?
- Question 5: What percentage of your department or agency's projects that were completed in the 2017 to 2018 were delivered on budget, based on estimated project cost at the time of implementation approval?
- Question 6: What percentage of your department or agency's projects that were completed in the 2017 to 2018 fiscal year were delivered on scope, based on the approved scope at the time of implementation approval?³¹

³¹ <https://www.canada.ca/en/treasury-board-secretariat/services/management-accountability-framework/maf-methodologies/maf-2018-2019-management-acquired-services-assets-methodology.html>