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THERE MUST BE A BETTER WAY TO RECRUIT AND USE THE RCAF RESERVISTS: A CONCEPTUAL WAY FORWARD

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RESERVISTS: A CONCEPTUAL WAY FORWARD**

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AIM

1. The aim of this paper is provide an ideological and conceptual approach to optimize the utilization of reservists for the operational capabilities and performances within the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF). RCAF must revise the primary focus and intent of its Reserve Force in order to enhance their contribution with the Regular Force. This vision can be accomplished by reviewing the recruiting process from coast to coast, analyzing specific employment areas, determining potential specialization for reservists, and elaborating a comprehensive occupational concept of operations to increase the organizational effectiveness with respect to the realities of the 21st century and the Canadian Defence policy; Strong, Secure, Engaged (SSE)¹.

INTRODUCTION

2. This paper notionally discusses the ongoing challenges with the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) Reserve model, and main reasons why the RCAF is unable to fully utilize its Reserve Forces to their ultimate potential. This paper will review the reservist's lifecycle from recruitment to retirement by providing arguments to revise aspects from the recruitment process, basic and occupation training, employment areas, possible specializations, and simplified transfer between Regular to Reserve Forces. The analysis will focus primarily on examples embedded in flying and Air Maintenance Squadrons (AMS); however similar parallels can also be drawn as examples for any RCAF's units such Air Movement Squadrons, Radar Squadrons,

¹ Canada. Department of National Defence. Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy. Ottawa: DND Canada, 2017. Page 67

etc. Consideration in key employment areas will be provided for officers and non-commissioned members by looking into their potential impacts and benefits from a long term employment perspective².

3. The genesis of the situation emanates from the recruitment and employment models that are greatly influenced by the Canadian Army's (CA) Reserve units and militia. Said CA's Reserve units are usually located in major cities, which differs from the RCAF. This model does not work well with the RCAF's reality as the vast majority of the reservists are employed within operational Wings spread across the country, in small communities, where the Wing itself is the main regional employer. Therefore, the recruitment aspects of the model are too restrictive by not allowing direct RCAF recruiting activities at any Wing. The change in the process would require the involvement of the Canadian Forces Recruiting Group (CFRG) for their expertise, assessment of the potential candidates, and knowledge for the multitude of employment opportunities within the RCAF and Canadian Armed Forces.

DISCUSSION

4. First, the recruitment approach must be reviewed due to its inability to properly generate effective Reserve members for the RCAF directly from civilian life. The vast majority of the people entering into RCAF's Reserve positions come from newly retired RCAF's Regular members. Said members are often already trained for their specific occupation, possess significant military experience, and often have already occupied the Reserve position or a related position within the squadron or the Wing. They commonly become reservist due to personal reasons such as an upcoming posting away from their current geographical area, wanting to

² Canada.Government of Canada. Royal Canadian Air Force. *Commander RCAF: "Preparing the Air Force of 2030"*. 2017

move to a specific geographical area that cannot be accommodated within the Regular Forces' posting cycle, or a specific Reserve position of interest has become available. An additional challenge with the RCAF is that most Reserve potential candidates are in the later part of their careers, and hence only have 10 to 15 years left to give to the organization. This reality is quite different than in CA, where reservists are often college or university students. These aspects render recruitment difficult and non-agile for the RCAF. First, as stated before, Wings in the RCAF are located across the country, in small communities such as Greenwood, Nova Scotia, Trenton, Ontario, and Comox, British Columbia. Therefore the RCAF should be able to work closely with CFRG to recruit Reserve candidates from the communities near Wings. These candidates would directly recruited by the units, and already be tentatively assigned to a position within units or Wing conditional upon successfully completing both basic and occupation training. This approach would first remove the reluctance of joining the Forces for certain individuals due the expected move out of the geographical area, and secondly, force the units to adequately select potential candidates. This method would empower units and Wings to play a larger role in the communities and become more linked to their economic characteristics.

5. The second aspect to consider is the basic training and occupation training for the new reservists. Once a candidate has completed all the recruitment requirements, he/she proceeds to a basic training course that usually runs on weekends for a few months at a local militia unit. Occasionally some reservists will be given the opportunity to do their basic training with Regular Forces' members depending on the situation and their availabilities. Furthermore, the occupation training is usually very structured starting with on job training (OJT) at the local Wing with formal training delivered at a 2 Canadian Air Division (CAD)'s training institution. This training process is very rigid and does not provide sufficient flexibility to allow the recruitment and

retainment of reservists from civilian life. The recommended approach would be to give each Wing the ability to conduct its own standard basic training course for the reservist recruited within the region. This approach would require a modest increase in personnel to instruct the basic training on weekends and/or during weekdays to accommodate students, housewives, househusbands, military partners, adults looking for a second job, etc. The administrative and instructional cadres would ideally be reservists themselves. Said basic training would leverage on the current Wing's infrastructures such as the fitness centre, barracks, and classrooms. This approach is nothing new to the RCAF as it has already been done in the last few years at CFB Winnipeg, CFB Borden, and CFB Valcartier, but what is proposed here is to implement as a minimum at every Wing. Occupation training must also be considered in this approach due to its structured and rigid curriculum. This plan would allow units and Wings the ability to instruct, using a compartmentalized method, occupation training. This concept would therefore enable reservists to start being gainfully employed rapidly in specific spheres of their area of employment, thus becoming valued members of the organization while developing a sense of belonging. This change in approach would need support by 2 CAD and its training institutions in order to ensure the delivery of said training meet the performance objectives and are in accordance with the approved standards. This approach would definitely enhance the interaction with the community by providing part-time employment for many of its members. A secondary effect of this approach would be to encourage military spouse and local students to join the Reserve, which is often the first step towards a career in the Regular Forces.

6. The third aspect to this proposal considers the type of employment and areas that could be more focussed for reservist versus Regular members. Currently reservists are employed in nearly all occupations within the RCAF. The intent of this concept would be to capitalize on the

reservists given their experience, acquired expertise, and availability of training to fill certain type of positions within a unit or Wing. Examples of such positions are the following (but not limited to):

- a. Flight Safety Officer and Non-Commissioned member;
- b. Flying Standard Officer;
- c. Wing Auxiliary Security Force (WASF);
- d. Aircraft Servicing;
- e. General Safety Officers;
- f. Environmental Safety Officers; and
- g. Conflict Resolution Agents;

7. These positions are typically primarily occupied by Regular Forces members, which can be problematic as they are the holders, enforcers, and promoters of essential programs that require long term sustained support, expertise, and specific training. Members occupying these positions rotate every two to three years, which is not sufficient to acquire the required expertise in the program, experience in implementing national regulations, and leadership to actively promote specific directives within the units and/or the Wing. Furthermore, these duties often take away time from Regular Forces' members to perform force employment (FE) and force generation (FG) activities. Such example can be seen as Regular Forces' "qualified level A" avionic technicians (AVS) are often filling WASF positions during extended period of time. Position such as WASF and aircraft servicing require limited training beyond basic training, and

thus should be only assigned to Reserve Forces' members. Granted that initiatives as such are currently being tried at 8 Wing Trenton and 19 Wing Comox, they should be expedited throughout the RCAF with additional occupations. A direct benefit of allowing these positions and duties be performed by reservist is that Regular forces' members will be able to focus on FE for domestic and international theatres in line with SSE³.

8. In addition, this approach would review the general areas of employment such as specialization that could be enhanced by local reservists, who already have the skills and experience. Certain specializations shortage within the RCAF could be filled by leveraging on the civilian community professionals such as physicians, nurses, non-destructive testing (NDT) technicians and dentists. Given the limited numbers of these personnel within the Regular Forces, it would make sense to actively attract, using commonly used corporate head hunting practices, local professionals to join the Reserve Forces. As stated before, the fact that Wings are often located in smaller communities is a factor that needs to be considered with respect to the availability of said professionals. The RCAF should pursue this approach, as it would provide these professionals a different and exciting work environment with deployment opportunities that could be beneficial for the individuals, the community, and the RCAF. As described before, the positions related to the instructions of the basic training at the Wings should also be attributed to Reserve Forces' members. Said members would have experience, expertise and skills developed through training, to instruct the new recruits in accordance with approved standards. Furthermore, the fact they would most probably be long term members of the civilian

³ Canada. Department of National Defence. Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy. Ottawa: DND Canada, 2017. Page 81

community, would make them excellent military ambassadors and recruiters for the Reserve Forces. To enable this aspect of the proposal to be effective, there would be a need to review certain employment areas and positions at each Wing in order to identify potential positions to could be assigned as primarily Reserve Forces' positions. Following this step, a review of the occupation training would be required to make the potential candidates effective in limited time using a compartmentalized methodology.

9. The last aspect would consider simplifying the transfer process from the Regular to and from the Reserve, which is already being considered by the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF). From the RCAF's perspective, this aspect is essential since the vast majority of the reservists are newly retired Regular members. This reality is different from the Canadian Army and Royal Canadian Navy as most of their reservist join directly from civilian life. While the CAF continues on this initiative as part of the Journey Project, the RCAF should lead and expedite the process in conjunction with the Reserve group. The RCAF with his noticeable recruiting pool could enable a quick and seamless transfer between the Reserve and Regular Forces with limited impact to all organizations involved. The transfer process on both sides should be as simple as a Regular Forces' member being posted from one unit to another within the same Wing. It would be handled and administered by respective Orderly Rooms, and would require very limited inputs from the member except his/her formal request to initiate said transfer. Pay and pension details would be adjusted accordingly to capture the new position. This is a concept that could be utilized as well for remustering from one occupation in Regular Forces to a different occupation in the Reserve Forces. An example of such suggestion would be for an Aerospace Engineering Officer (AERE) in the Regular force transferring to the Reserve force as a Logistic Officer (LOG O). Granted additional courses and training would be required into fulfilling all the possible tasks

expected of a LOG O, the former AERE could fill in the position of Admin O from a leadership's perspective at a flying squadron based on his/her experience and expertise, and knowledge of his/her support service team. The benefits of such transfer would be that the RCAF would retain the experience and leadership of the Regular Forces' members within the Reserve Forces, and enhance the chance of a long term plan for this position and associated development opportunities. Under the current construct, the AERE would have to retire and probably find employment on the civilian side, which would definitely be a loss of the RCAF and CAF.

CONCLUSION

10. In conclusion, the aim of this service paper was to present an overview of the current challenges that the RCAF faces with respect to effectively recruiting and employing Reserve Forces' members to be enablers aligned with SSE requirements⁴. Many factors could play essential roles into improving the Reserve Forces from the recruitment practices, the location of basic and occupation training to entice new local recruits, the remodelling employment areas and structure, the refocusing of specialization for leveraging on the civilian capabilities, and lastly the reviewing of the transfer process between Regular and Reserve Forces. Conceptual examples and concept of operations were provided to establish a baseline on which the RCAF could innovate with the ultimate goal to optimize the Reserve Forces' employability and utilization.

⁴ Canada. Department of National Defence. Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy. Ottawa: DND Canada, 2017

RECOMMENDATION

11. Given the discussions and concepts presented, the following recommendation are provided for consideration:

- a. Establish a working group comprising of members from 1 and 2 CADs, Reserve System matter experts (SMEs), CFRG's members, and civilian consulting specialists in the area of human resource (HR) and recruiting to review the current practices, access areas for improvements, and provide a phased approach solution.
- b. Use the RCAF "Innovation Basecamp" at Communitech in Waterloo to confirm, comment and validate the proposed phased approach using Regular and Reserve force members⁵.

⁵ Canada.Government of Canada. Royal Canadian Air Force. *RCAF's "Innovation Basecamp" opens minds*. 2017

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