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EFFECTIVE USE OF THE RESERVES IN THE RCAF

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EFFECTIVE USE OF THE RESERVES IN THE RCAF

AIM

1. The Air Reserve is a personnel resource that should be utilized to the fullest extent possible by the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF). The aim of this service paper is to inform on how the RCAF can best employ our Air Reserve personnel by augmenting operational units and using them as force multipliers to free up regular force positions in order to better meet operational commitments. This paper will describe a way forward using the Long Range Patrol (LRP) community as an example in how they use Air Reserve personnel to keep expertise in their units and increase operational outputs.

INTRODUCTION

2. Currently there are approximately 2000 personnel in the Air Reserve, spanning 26 trades, and employed throughout the RCAF¹. Their effective employment comes with unique challenges relating to technical expertise and the length of training to obtain proficiency. As mentioned by the former Commander RCAF Lieutenant General Hood, “Our occupations are highly technical and require long periods of training”². The LRP community has mitigated many of these challenges by carefully selecting who they employ and the reserve positions they occupy. The LRP model, along with some further recommendations, can be used by the RCAF to employ the Air Reserve effectively in other operational communities.

¹ Royal Canadian Air Force, “RCAF Reserve Organizational Structure”, last modified [or accessed] 15 October 2018, <http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/about-reports-pubs-report-plan-priorities/2017-canadas-reserve-force.page>; RCAF Association, “RCAFA Position Paper”, last modified [or accessed] 15 October 2018, <http://rcafassociation.ca/advocacy/position-papers/2018-2/01-2018/>.

² Royal Canadian Air Force, “Managed Shortfall”, last modified [or accessed] 15 October 2018, <http://www.rcaf-arc.forces.gc.ca/en/article-template-standard.page?doc=managed-shortfall/jg2k237m>.

3. Following the 1987 White paper, and then further developed in the 1994 White Paper, the three Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) service components adopted a Total Force construct for the employment of its Reserve Force³. The Total Force concept outlined the integration of full and part-time reservists within the CAF and its services. It summarizes that the “Reserve Forces are intended as augmentation and sustainment for Regular units, and, in some cases, for tasks that are not performed by Regular Forces”⁴. The RCAF decided to implement augmentation and sustainment strategies, fully integrating their reserve personnel within regular force RCAF units rather than have a separate and autonomous RCAF reserve capability. This strategy contrasts with the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) and Canadian Army (CA) where reserve forces have been assigned distinct tasks for employment in the CAF⁵. The RCN has assigned its reserve forces to “specific maritime defence responsibilities including Coastal operations, naval Control of Shipping and mine countermeasures”⁶. The CA has assigned its reserve forces to primarily serve “as a link between the Army and communities across Canada, and augments the Regular Force on deployments and operations”⁷. The strategies will each have advantages and disadvantages for the service component. For the RCAF, there are numerous advantages to employing the full integration strategy that are further described in the discussion below.

³ Royal Canadian Air Force, “RCAF Reserve Organizational Structure”, last modified [or accessed] 15 October 2018, <http://www.rcaf-arc.forces.gc.ca/en/air-reserve/organizational-structure.page>.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

DISCUSSION

4. There are approximately 28 500 Reserve Force positions allocated within the CAF. With the adoption of the Government of Canada's 2017 defence policy *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy* (SSE), the CAF will attempt to expand its current Reserve Force positions with the desired end-state being 30 000 personnel.⁸ This will be a challenge for the CAF and the RCAF. The growing demand of aircrew and technicians in the civilian sector has put manning pressures on the Air Force. Lieutenant Colonel Rich Kohli from the Directorate of Air Personnel Strategy acknowledges, "We are seeing an uptick and it has increased the pressure."⁹ However, the purpose of this paper is not to solve the attrition issues of the CAF, but instead it will discuss how to effectively use the Air Reserve. If done correctly, the policy changes brought forward with SSE will give the RCAF and its units more access to reserve positions. The RCAF must capitalize on the SSE policy and direct its units on how best leverage the new positions for maximum operational outputs.

5. There are four considerations that need to be addressed when discussing how to integrate the new SSE reserve positions into the RCAF. First, the new reserve positions must be available for use by the RCAF. These positions should also then not be limited in how the RCAF decides to employ them. Second, the new positions can and will be filled by appropriate applicants. There must not be caveats on the positions that restrict commanders from hiring the right personnel for the job. Third, the focus of the RCAF's reserve positions should be on air operations and the delivery of Air Power. The reserve positions discussed must aid in relieving current RCAF manning pressures and help offset the strains on aircrew, groundcrew, and air

⁸ Canada. *Strong, Secure, Engaged Canada's Defence Policy*. Ottawa: Canada, 2017, p 69.

⁹ Royal Canadian Air Force, "Managed Shortfall", last modified [or accessed 15 October 2018, <http://www.rcf-arc.forces.gc.ca/en/article-template-standard.page?doc=managed-shortfall/jg2k237m>].

operations personnel. Fourth, there must be an increase in allotments for the reserve funding envelopes. Funding increases need to accompany any positional increases in order to maximize flexibility in hiring both A-Class and B-Class reservists. These four considerations are essential in order for the RCAF to effectively employ its Air Reserve.

6. The RCAF Reserve Force traditionally employs personnel with previous Air Force experience. These personnel are normally retired regular force members, many of which have recently transitioned from the Regular Force to the Air Reserve¹⁰. Using this model for the sustainment of the reserves has both its challenges and its advantages. The challenges are usually related to the years of service remaining for the individual prior to mandatory retirement from the CAF at age 60. They are also related to positional rank restrictions and limited career advancement. However, there are also some enormous benefits to employing experienced personnel. The three advantages discussed below relate to limited training requirements, quick transition periods, and incumbent job knowledge.

7. The primary and most important benefit of employing experienced personnel is not having to fully train new Air Reserve members. This is an important to acknowledge, especially when considering the training costs of aircrew and groundcrew personnel. To fully train ab-initio aircrew and technicians for part-time employment takes away valuable and limited training spots that are at a premium in the RCAF, and are needed to generate its Regular Force members. Furthermore, it would not be cost effective to train new personnel who are not tied to RCAF Regular Force mandatory service requirements. Air Reserve personnel have the ability to vacate their positions with minimal notice. Investing valuable resources and costly training into

¹⁰ Eric Tremblay, Howard Coombs, "Canadian Armed Forces Reserves – Quo Vadis?", *Canadian Military Journal* 16, no. 3, (2016): 16-28.

personnel with no retention ability is not desirable. Hiring reserve personnel with previous Air Force experience limits training requirements and is an enormous benefit when filling reserve positions at operational units.

8. The second advantage of employing personnel with previous RCAF experience is the ease in transition. Members with previous CAF experience can make a relatively quick transition from their retired or active duty status into the Air Reserves. These members do not have ab-initio training requirements when compared to off-the-street hires, and the transition period from hire to effective employment is very short.

9. The third advantage to employing experienced members is that they are familiar with RCAF operations. These members can be employed at operational units with little to no adjustment period. Their learning curve for any on-the-job training (OJT) is shallow and compacted. They also act both directly and indirectly as mentors to junior line aircrew, and as advisors to squadron leadership. Junior regular force members can quickly and easily call upon the experienced reservist for job knowledge, while unit leadership can draw on their past experiences for insight and problem solving. The three reasons outlined above offer clear advantages as to why the RCAF should continue to use experienced personnel in reserve positions. This is the preferred recruiting method for RCAF operational units.

10. There are two types of reservists that best integrate with RCAF units. The Class-A reservist offers part-time employment, allowing up to 12 working days per month¹¹. The advantage of part-time work is the flexibility offered for the unit and the member. A good example is the employment of an air reservist as the lessons learned officer at 14 Wing

¹¹ Canadian Armed Forces, "The Reserve Force and Reserve Classes of Service", <http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/news/article.page?doc=the-reserve-force-and-reserve-classes-of-service/hnmx1bib>.

Greenwood. Although an important position, it does not require full time employment, but it does require more skill and attention than being a secondary duty of a junior Regular Force member. The Class-A contract may also be the most attractive option for reserve personnel. Members from the Regular Force considering retirement may still want to serve in the CAF but not in full time capacity. A Class-A position allows them to still serve but with the benefits of only part-time work.

11. The second reservist contract that integrates well with operational units is Class-B service. The Class-B reservist is able to work 13 or more consecutive days per month¹². The advantage for the unit is full-time employment capacity for specific durations of time. A good example of where this may be beneficial is the air reservist working in squadron operations during surging flying periods (usually fall and spring for LRP). There the unit can continually employ a member in a key position that requires continuity to ensure effective flying operations. The Class-B contract can also offer advantages for the member. Not all reserve members want only part-time employment and a full time position may be appealing for personnel who have not yet achieved pensionable service.

12. Regardless of which class of reservist is used, both can be employed effectively at an operational unit. The key concept to understand is determining the needs of the unit, the wants of member, and resources of the Air Reserve Flight. These three things must be aligned in order to best serve all parties involved. In order to accomplish this task, unit Commanding Officers (COs) must have maximum flexibility in the contract options and positions available to them. They must also have minimal constraints on reserve contract funding. This means that a good working

¹² *Ibid.*

relationship with a Wing's Air Reserve Flight is essential in order to ensure a unit's Class-A and surging Class-B positions have the necessary allocations. If COs are afforded this flexibility, they will have more success in integrating Air Reserve personnel at their units.

13. The LRP community has been using the Air Reserve in place of active aircrew positions for many years. 404 Long Range Patrol and Training Squadron (LRP & T Sqn) is the Operational Training Unit (OTU) for the LRP community. It employs three reserve positions within their squadron operations flight. All three positions had previously been Regular Force aircrew line positions that were filled by the Air Combat Systems Officer (ACSO), Pilot, Airborne Electronic Sensor Operator (AESOp), or Flight Engineer (FE) trades. The positions required experienced aircrew in order to ensure efficient and effective squadron operations for their force generation and force employment tasks. They were also working in a limited flying or non-flying capacity. In 2011 the Operations Flight Commander became a Class-A reservist position, and more recently, two reservists were hired for the operations flight captain and warrant officer positions. All three positions were filled by retired LRP personnel and the results have been very beneficial. The squadron retains experience in vital positions, offering stability and continuity to the flying program. Furthermore, their employment has pushed line aircrew positions back to where they can be best used in the OTU, instructing junior aircrew as they become qualified on the CP-140 Aurora.

14. 404 LRP & T Sqn have also recently expanded its use of reserve positions to include pilots. Two LRP pilots were contemplating full retirement from the RCAF in order to pursue positions within the commercial aviation industry. However, instead of losing the members completely, 404 LRP & T Sqn were able to retain them as Class-A reservists. This will benefit the community immensely as the members' experience is retained to augment flying, develop

aircrew lesson plans, and improve OJT packages for flying category progression. These duties would have normally fell on the line aircrew at the unit who are already overtasked as instructors trying to increase aircrew throughput. The use of pilot reservists at the OTU will no doubt improve the effectiveness of 404 LRP & T Sqn.

15. Reservists have also been extremely beneficial for LRP's West Coast squadron. Similar to 404 LRP & T Sqn, 407 LRP Sqn has integrated reservists into its squadron operations. Four Class A contracts, two Captain and two Warrant Officer positions, serve as the backbone for planning and executing all squadron flying operations. This has allowed the unit to free up aircrew line positions and return them to flying duties. Additionally, in 2015, the unit created three reserve training positions for its new simulator cell. These positions have become vital to 407 Sqn's ability to force generate its aircrew. The reservists, along with civilian staff, operate the newly acquired Procedures Crew Trainer, enabling 407 Sqn to better facilitate category progression of its ACSOs and AESOps. This in turn has assisted 407 Sqn in their ability to fulfill its operational commitments by both producing and maintaining proficient LRP air crews.

CONCLUSION

16. The integration of reservists into operational units has been beneficial for the LRP community. Employing experienced flyers in non-flying roles in both part-time and full time capacities has ensured efficient and effective flying operations for the community. They have freed up aircrew positions from non-flying roles and returned them to line flying positions. Additionally, the community has been able to retain valuable LRP experience which now trains and mentors its junior aircrew. The RCAF can benefit from employing the LRP model throughout its operational units.

17. The RCAF must also consider contract type and funding available when employing the Air Reserve. The use of Class-A and Class-B contracts offer solutions for both the unit and the reserve member. They allow part-time work for applicable positions, and full time capacity when needed. In order to be successful in their use, there must be flexibility in contract options offered to unit COs. This requires good coordination between the unit and Air Reserve Flight to ensure resources and funding are allocated accordingly.

18. This paper has shown that the current structure of the Air Reserve can be effective in aiding operational units to meet their operational commitments. However, to achieve this aim air reservists must be employed in positions where their experience can be maximized. By doing so, the RCAF will be able to keep experience at their operational units, free-up Regular Force line positions, build aircrew proficiency, and ultimately increase operational outputs.

RECOMMENDATION

19. It is recommended that the RCAF consider drawing upon the successes of LRP's use of the Air Reserve, and if not already doing so, apply it to other operational communities. The RCAF should also investigate further the use of reservists in maintenance and other air operations positions. The benefits observed with aircrew can easily be applied to groundcrew positions. This may be especially true in regions that are competing with the civil aviation industry where part-time employment may be preferred by members, or attrition levels within lower ranks is high.

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