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FOUNDATION TRAINING IS WORTH THE RISK

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AIM

1. The aim of this paper is to address the disparity between the level of collective training (CT) being conducted by Canadian Army units, and the level of training that is required for current operational deployments. This paper argues that the CA is consistently training to levels much higher than what is required to meet the demands of the missions that are mandated by the Government of Canada (GoC). This disparity is costly, and creates vast inefficiencies with respect to the overall training budget, the use of personnel, and the training calendar. Further, it is argued that given the extensive current operational demands on the CA, the conduct of superfluous CT is not only inefficient, but is conducted to the detriment of both the units and members.

INTRODUCTION

2. The CA's vital ground is the Army's ability to live, train, and fight as part of a combined-arms team.¹ The combined-arms team, what the Canadian Army Doctrine and Training Centre (CADTC) refers to as the "hallmark" of a professional army, is considered to be a Level 5 dry training proficiency standard, is a Collective Training (CT) foundational baseline across the CA Regular Force, and is what CADTC specifies is that which separates professional armies from all others.² High-readiness forces are mandated to conduct Level 5 combined-arms team live fire, with training designed and delivered by the Canadian Manoeuvre Training Centre (CMTC), the Army Collective Training Authority (ACTA) during Exercise MAPLE RESOLVE (Ex MR). However, this annual field training exercise (FTX), conducted in accordance with the CA's Managed Readiness Plan (MRP), confirms elements up to the Battle Group and Formation HQ level (Level 6 and Level 7, respectively) prior to a potential deployment.

3. Amongst many Staff Officers deployed within multi-national Headquarters or as part of small task force deployments, the CA currently has substantial ongoing commitments in support of Operations IMPACT, REASSURANCE, and UNIFIER. These three operations form the largest personnel commitments from the CA, with each requiring formed task forces of up to a Coy(+) or Bn(-) sized element. Specifically, the GoC's response to the conflict with Daesh in Iraq and Syria is realized in part by the 78 CA members deployed on Op IMPACT, where the majority of those deployed operate at the Sect or Pl(-) level; the CA's approximate 560 deployed soldiers in support of Op REASSURANCE in Central and Eastern Europe, lead a multi-national NATO enhanced Forward Presence Battle Group in Latvia, comprised of a Canadian headquarters staff, infantry company, military police, logistical, and communications support; and, the CA commits approximately 200 members every six months on Op UNIFIER, a train and assist mission, focused on tactical soldier training (collective and small team).³ In total, the CA

¹ Department of National Defence. *Fiscal Year 2016/2017 Operating Plan v2.0 (Final)*. Kingston: Canadian Army Doctrine and Training Centre, 2016, 1-2/2.

² Ibid, 1-2/2.

³ 4th Canadian Division HQ. "Commander's Update Brief – 21 September 2018." 4th Canadian Division HQ. 21 September 2018; National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces. Operation REASSURANCE (n.d.). Accessed 12 Oct 18. <http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/operations-abroad/nato-ee.page>; and National Defence and the Canadian

deploys approximately 900 members every six months, with a significant number conducting tasks below Level 5 skills.

4. Despite the consistency of the personnel commitment for deployed task forces, and the consistency of the mandated operational tasks since 2016, there is no consistency in the validation level from year to year for the primary training audience (PTA) at Ex MR. For example, one Level 7 HQ was validated at Ex MR 16 (including four Level 6 BGs). At Ex MR 17, four Level 6 HQs were validated, and three Level 6 HQs were validated at Ex MR 18. During the upcoming Ex MR 19, it is expected that one Level 7 HQ (to include three Level 6 HQs) will be validated. However, prior to arrival to Ex MR, all Level 7 HQs were validated during Ex UNIFIED RESOLVE (UR) by means of Computer Aided Exercises (CAX).

5. The Force Employment and the redundancy of validation highlight two main arguments: the resources to which the CA commits to validation is self-imposed; and, the level of validation is not congruent with the operational output of the mandated mission.

DISCUSSION

Inconsistent collective training validation standards

6. The first argument extracts the deduction that there is no *mandated* requirement to train to a higher level than Level 5 live (for high-readiness forces): the GoC commits the CAF to missions, but does not assign training standards; the CJOC delegates validation to the respective LIs. Therefore, it is self-imposed that high-readiness forces are asked to meet higher level training standards than what actually deploys. For example, with the current training mandate, many personnel who participate in Ex MR do not deploy, but are simply enablers to allow Level 6 and 7 HQs to be validated. The army is “validating” HQs that will never deploy with their exercise contingents, so are therefore not “validated” as a deployed entity. Consistently conducting higher level confirmation training pays little regard to any of the myriad of pressures which hinder overall performance and focus during the Road to High Readiness (R2HR). When Op Tempo imposes limits in time, personnel, equipment, and ammunition during gateway training, advancing to a higher level when not operationally required to do so, is irresponsible.

7. High-readiness training is not congruent with the current operational output. During Op ATHENA, training to operational output was accurately focussed on Level 6 and 7, given that Battle Groups (BG) and Bde HQs were both deploying into combat operations. Current operations, with differing operational tasks and responsibilities, are divergent to the CT focus of the CA, which remains focused on combat operations at the BG and Bde level. The CA states that the managed readiness cycle is designed to meet the requirements for ready forces, which are generated by the CA to be “tailorable, scalable, and supportable.”⁴ If high-readiness forces focus on Level 6 and 7 training, regardless of their mandated operational tasks, the CA is diverting significant resources to an unnecessary operational output at a time when it is

Armed Forces. Operation UNIFIER. (n.d.). Accessed 12 Oct 18 from <http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/operations-abroad/op-unifier.page?cid=1439925020834&page=2#1439925020834>.

⁴ Department of National Defence, *Waypoint 2018: The Canadian Army Advancing Toward Land Operations 2021* (Kingston: Canadian Army Land Warfare Center, 2015), 32.

struggling to meet pressures derived from Individual Training (IT), incremental tasks and Force Generational (FG) pressures associated with Strong Secure and Engaged (SSE).⁵

Consequences of superfluous training

8. There are many benefits of training to a level beyond that of foundation training (Level 5), and, ideally, this would occur when time and resources permit, and when the training meets operational output. Enabling Level 6 and 7 HQs with live troops, equipment, and realistic planning factors in a field training exercise environment will create a more integrated, resilient, and tactically proficient headquarters, capable of employing a comprehensive approach to meet the challenges of the future operating environment. Further, it is through these HQs that full integration of supporting elements within the joint, interagency, multinational, and public (JIMP) environment can be fully realized. Although the integration of a civil-military transition team (CIMITT), electronic warfare (EW), all source intelligence (ASI), or a security force assistance unit (SFAU) can and should be integrated at lower levels, full integration and analysis will be optimized within the framework of a Level 6 or 7 HQ. Generating a multi-purpose army, capable of conducting full spectrum operations (FSO) is highly complex, and seeking to achieve formation level confirmation training has clear merit. However, the consequences of consistently conducting high level training are detrimental to the integrity of the training system if resources are scarce: excessive financial costs for validation training create cost inefficiencies; and, the extensive scheduling burden can erode the annual training calendar:

- a. Financial costs. When consistently training to levels above and beyond foundation training, the scale and costs of support for the training increase exponentially. For example, at its largest, Ex MR 17 included 1726 support tasks, in addition to the four PTA BGs, and 520 member OPFOR.⁶ Further, considering the approximate 1130 vehicles that were either shipped or driven to Wainwright, the financial cost for the Level 7 validation exercise (to include one Level 5 live exercise, and one Level 7 dry exercise), exceeded \$37.5M.⁷ Of this, approximately \$15M was allocated to movement costs.⁸ Ex MR 19 is expected to exceed \$21M, with the cost difference due to a reduced, and primarily co-located PTA to the CMTC training area, and a 42% reduction in support tasks.⁹
- b. A contributing factor for the continued use of the CMTC training area for Level 6 and 7 validation exercises is that alternate training areas are geographically limiting for such scale of training. With such a high percentage of Ex MR's financial costs being allocated to movement to Wainwright, reduced level, task-tailored and mission-focussed training can be conducted in home geographical locations, versus the CMTC training area in Wainwright, AB. CMTC is a

⁵ Department of National Defence. Strong Secure Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy (Ottawa: Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada, 2017), 13.

⁶ Canadian Manoeuvre Training Centre. "Army Training Council – 10 October 2018." Canadian Manoeuvre Training Center, 2018, slide 12.

⁷ 4th Canadian Division HQ. "Comd RFI Slides: Ex MR." 4th Canadian Division HQ, 2018, slide 1.

⁸ Ibid, slide 4.

⁹ Ibid, slide 4.

capability, not a place. Training cadres are the key benefit to CMTC; portability would generate significant cost savings.

- c. A constrained annual training calendar. The CA's managed readiness plan (MRP) is carefully integrated and coordinated with the annual *Army Operating Plan*, the *Army Strategic Transition Roadmap* and the *Canadian Army Funding Model*. Although designed to be sustainable, while ensuring designated forces are trained to the appropriate level of readiness, the MRP is currently strained under the pressures of the current operational deployment tempo, and the number of concurrent tasks required of the CA. Despite this, the CA's commitment to conducting Level 6 and 7 validation training at CMTC continues, having an enormous and costly impact to the annual training calendar. During Ex MR 17, whose validation phase was fourteen days, the shipping schedule required vehicles to be dedicated to the exercise from December 2016 to July 2017.¹⁰ Additionally, personnel commitment was similarly long, with the average deployment being 70 calendar days, and with the longest continuous deployment being approximately 115 calendar days.¹¹ For personnel, only approximately 50% of the average deployment timeframe was utilized as active training days.¹² Consequently, the remaining time within the annual training calendar is restrained to include all IT (and compulsory qualification training), and CT up to Level 5.

9. When resources and time are constrained, mandatory validation levels must be reduced to match operational requirements. Focusing foundation level training and conducting validation within local training areas will increase scheduling efficiencies. Exporting CMTC's training capabilities to alternate locations would generate a more flexible and scalable training schedule.

Training relevancy

10. Superfluous training does not provide focused, relevant training to the large majority of deploying members. Since 2016, the majority of deployed task forces have conducted validation training to Level 6 or 7, despite their mandated tasks not exceeding Level 5. Although lower level training still continues concurrently with higher level training, training time is used less efficiently for the majority of members. When the formation and BG HQ are conducting detailed planning cycles during a Level 7 training serial, this time is rarely used efficiently for concurrent activity at Level 5 and below. Where these forces *could* be enhancing operational output competencies, there are often vast tempo inefficiencies, to the detriment of effective time management.

11. In order to maximize training, experience must be based on multiple iterations of the same or similar tasks in varying circumstances.¹³ The task-tailored and repetitive approach,

¹⁰ Ibid, slide 1.

¹¹ Ibid, slide 1.

¹² Active training days have been calculated as those days utilized for Level 5-7 training, excluding travel, administration, and remediation. In total, 35 days of the average deployment of 70 days during Ex MR 17 was used for active training. Data was unavailable for Ex MR 16, and Ex MR 18.

¹³ Department of National Defence, *Designing Canada's Army of Tomorrow: a Land Operations 2021 Publication* (Kingston: Directorate of Land Concepts and Designs, 2011), 53.

which can be achieved more easily at the foundation level, is a benefit to deployed forces. The time that a combined-arms team utilizes to focus and hone specialist skills is better used without the inefficiencies of a higher headquarters focused on developing command and control.

12. With a focus on operational output, training to foundation level will provide more efficient, more focussed readiness training to deploying forces, where interoperability in the joint environment can be better addressed. High-readiness forces can better address specific operational factors, and, with scaled training opportunities, combined-arms teams can efficiently build upon core competencies by training in task-tailored, challenging environments. Further, seeking alternate training locations that provide operation-specific benefits is more achievable with the scaled force size of a combined-arms team. Finally, with the possibility of a reduced financial burden, training funds can enhance the training experience, or be reallocated to other areas.

Risks of long-term foundation-level training.

13. With unlimited time and resources, forces would consistently train to levels that far exceed the tasks with which they are mandated to perform. This would create flexibility and agility in CA soldiers. Foundation level training focused on operational output should be conducted *in the absence of adequate time and resources*, and not on a continuous basis. In this way, risk can be managed appropriately.

14. However, should the exclusive conduct of foundation training be sustained for long periods, the risks are varied:

- a. Skill-fade. If not routinely practiced, the knowledge, skills and aptitude developed through training tend to diminish over time.¹⁴ For a headquarters, although simulation and virtual systems provide the flexibility to focus on planning cycles without creating training inefficiencies for tactical troops, or increasing real life support costs, many argue that simulation cannot replace the planning, command and control factors that are inherent within a FTX environment. Without routinely training a Level 6 or 7 HQ, skill fade within a headquarters is a risk. Similarly, if Level 6 and 7 training exercises are not conducted, organizations who conduct large-scale administrative, or Service and Support operations risk skill-fade. Large-scale service and support operations require extensive planning cycles that frequently exhaust support, supply, and administrative management chains, requiring leaders to adapt under the challenging circumstances.
- b. Capability Alignment in ADO. With the CA moving towards the concept of Adaptive Dispersed Operations (ADO), the Army is looking to build formations that can align capabilities essential for future success.¹⁵ Formations are the lead integrator and enabler in the JIMP environment. If the CA consistently failed to

¹⁴ Department of National Defence, *Designing Canada's Army of Tomorrow: a Land Operations 2021 Publication* (Kingston: Directorate of Land Concepts and Designs, 2011), 52.

¹⁵ Department of National Defence, *Waypoint 2018: The Canadian Army Advancing Toward Land Operations 2021* (Kingston: Canadian Army Land Warfare Center, 2015), 4.

train past the foundation level, full integration of these capabilities would likely not be wholly realized.

CONCLUSION

15. Although the CA mandates that high-readiness forces conduct confirmation training to foundation Level 5 live only, BG and formation level confirmation training is typically achieved during Ex MR, the annual validation FTX for high-readiness forces. This paper argued that, when time and resources are constrained, foundation level training is not only sufficient to prepare high-readiness forces for deployment, but creates efficient, operationally-focused training. This paper discussed how inconsistent training validation standards indicate that the level to which the CA validates its forces is self-imposed (as opposed to achieving mandated requirements), and the level of validation is not congruent with the operational output of the mandated mission. Discrepancies between training focused on operational output and superfluous training creates substantial financial costs, and constrains the annual training calendar for many organizations. Lastly, this paper argued that although higher level training may more adequately integrate enabling elements of the JIMP environment, in view of the FSO of the future operating environment, foundation training focused on operational output can create highly relevant, cost effective and efficient training for high-readiness forces.

16. The risks associated with consistently training *only* to foundation level were discussed, arguing that skill-fade for both HQ and Service Support forces was a very substantial and realistic consequence. Further, where enablers within the JIMP environment may operate uniquely at the BG and formation level, integration at the combined-arms team level would not be optimized.

17. This paper argues that in order to realize substantial CT cost savings, and to ensure that validation training adequately reflects operational output, the CA should be willing to accept some risk with validating *some* high-readiness forces to the foundation level only.

RECOMMENDATIONS

18. It is recommended that when the constraints on the high-readiness, or validating forces are such that achievement of operational output tasks are overshadowed by the magnitude of the level of the training exercise, that foundation training only, is achieved for high-readiness forces.

19. Further, it is recommended that if CT costs for a validation exercise compromise the integrity of the overall training capacity for the remainder of the annual training calendar, that foundation training only is achieved for high-readiness forces.

20. It must be noted that early and continuous review and planning must be conducted to properly and adequately assess the level to which a high-readiness force will train, while equally weighing the risks of *not* conducting the higher-level training. This effort, however, will not only realize substantial cost savings for the CA, but ensure that operationally-focused core capabilities are optimized for deployed forces, as mandated by the GoC.

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