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WIN EVERY BATTLE BUT LOSE THE WAR: THE JOINT APPROACH OF THE RHODESIAN SECURITY FORCES

By Major Colin Mayes

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Solo Flight

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WIN EVERY BATTLE BUT LOSE THE WAR: THE JOINT APPROACH OF THE RHODESIAN SECURITY FORCES

The armed forces of Rhodesia won virtually every battle and skirmish they ever fought against the guerrilla armies, yet they lost the war.

- Paul L. Moorcraft, *The Rhodesian War: A Military History*

INTRODUCTION

Over the past two decades, Canada and other Western allies have been involved in various operations across the spectrum of conflict,¹ in countries like Haiti, Afghanistan and Iraq. Whether these military forces were providing humanitarian relief or involved in combat operations, a deliberate joint approach was required in order to achieve successes. This need to conduct highly integrated joint operations is not a new phenomenon to the 21st century, as examples of joint integration are prevalent throughout history, ranging from the American Civil War in the 1860s to the Pacific Island campaign during the Second World War.² However, one of the more relevant examples of adopting a wholly joint approach to operations can be seen from a case study of the Rhodesian Security Forces (RSF) during the Rhodesian Bush War of 1965-1980. This conflict saw the successful use of joint integration by the RSF in order to achieve tactical and operational dominance over the communist backed nationalist forces, but ultimately still resulted in a catastrophic strategic failure and defeat for the Rhodesian Government.³ Although this conflict ended over 40 years ago, there remain remarkable lessons of joint integration for the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) today and in the future.

¹ Department of National Defence, *Land Operations: B-GL-300-01/FP-001* (Fort Frontenac, Kingston, Ont: Army Publishing Office, 2008), 3-9.

² Murray Williamson, "The Evolution of Joint Warfare." *Joint Force Quarterly*, Issue 31 (Summer 2002), 32-34.

³ Paul L. Moorcraft and Peter McLaughlin, *The Rhodesian War: A Military History* (Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania: Stackpole Books, 2008), 200.

This paper will confirm areas for refinement within joint operations as the CAF advances joint preparedness in order to succeed in the current and future operating environment. These areas will be demonstrated through the lens of the RSF during the conduct of the Rhodesian Bush War. To achieve this, an understanding will be built for the current importance of joint operations to the CAF and the need for the CAF to be more prepared to operate as a joint force. A brief overview of the Rhodesian Bush War will then be provided along with a comparison of the CAF and the RSF to establish the usefulness of this conflict as a case study. With this framework set, areas in which key joint lessons can be leveraged by the CAF will be analysed through the CAF's three levels of conflict.⁴ These include; the integration of joint enablers at the tactical level, command and control of joint operations through operational and national level headquarters (HQs), joint operations in a combined environment and the impact of tactical joint effects on the strategic level. This will best demonstrate the key lessons drawn from the 15 year counter-insurgency (COIN) campaign fought and lost by the RSF.

JOINT OPERATIONS AND THE CAF

To identify areas of improvement for the CAF in joint operations, it is useful to understand how the CAF defines these types of operations. In the doctrinal cornerstone *Canadian Forces Joint Publication 3.0: Operations (CFJP 3.0)*, joint operations are explained to be:

...those operations executed by a temporary grouping of elements from two or more environments, in which the application of capabilities is coordinated to achieve a common objective. They are planned and

⁴ Department of National Defence, *Canadian Forces Joint Publication 3.0: Operations* (Ottawa: Joint Doctrine Branch, 2010), 1-2. The CAF levels of conflict are defined as the tactical, operational and strategic.

initiated at the operational level, but are often conducted and realized at the tactical level.⁵

There are two important aspects to highlight from this definition in order to better frame further analysis. First, the RSF integrated the Rhodesian Army (RA), Rhodesian Air Force (RhAF) and Special Forces (SF) into operations continuously throughout the conflict,⁶ thus meeting the CAF definition of joint operations requiring two or more service elements. Second, it is to acknowledge that the CAF sees joint operations being primarily planned and coordinated at the operational level and executed at the tactical level. However, there is a link between the strategic level aim and direction, and the tactical level effects that can influence the eventual success or failure of joint operations or the campaign as a whole. This relationship will be looked at later within the RSF context.

Importantly, *CFJP 3.0* also adds that the CAF “...will often be working alongside either Canadian, foreign, or host-nation governmental and non-governmental agencies” during the conduct of joint operations.⁷ This is a key point, as one facet of the RSF joint approach was the heavy involvement of other Rhodesian Government departments and agencies, like the British South African Police (BSAP) and the Rhodesian intelligence services Special Branch (SB), as well as, foreign militaries within operations.⁸

The importance of future joint operations to the CAF is highlighted in *Strong, Secured, Engaged: Canada’s Defence Policy (SSE)* with the inclusion of investments in

⁵ Department of National Defence, *Canadian Forces Joint Publication 3.0...*, 1-1.

⁶ Kerrin Cocks, *Rhodesian Fire Force: 1966-1980*, (Solihull, England: Helion & Company Limited, 2015), 13.

⁷ *Department of National Defence, Canadian Forces Joint Publication 3.0...*, 1-1.

⁸ Moorcraft and McLaughlin, *The Rhodesian War...*, 50.

joint capabilities to best protect Canada.⁹ *SSE* also emphasizes key joint formations for each service element, like the Brigade Group for the Canadian Army, as the minimum level to execute joint campaigns.¹⁰

With this current emphasis on joint operations in both doctrine and policy, it is clear that the CAF is attempting to improve upon joint preparedness. This focused joint approach would be a change from the past trend of the CAF's individual service elements being more comfortable working in a combined environment with other allies. Royal Navy Lieutenant-Commander (Lt Cdr) J.R. Stocker, who designed and executed the first CAF Joint Warfare Course, witnessed this lack of Canadian joint partnership in 1995.¹¹ In his article *Canadian Joint Operations*, he summarized past operations of the CAF and stated, "Canada, therefore, has a good deal more experience in Combined [*sic*] than in Joint [*sic*] operations."¹²

Throughout the 2000s, the CAF has continued to evolve into a more joint force, seen with the amalgamation of three operational HQs into the Canadian Joint Operations Command (CJOC) in 2012.¹³ At the time, then Minister of Defence Peter McKay stated that CJOC will "...support the Government in steering the Canadian Forces to a more agile and efficient first-class modern military."¹⁴ Thus, CJOC was meant to make the CAF more prepared as a joint force by centralizing joint planning and execution in one HQ. However, as recently as 2019, the Commander of CJOC, Lieutenant-General (LGen) Rouleau remarked in his thought piece *How We Fight* that "a key idea is that the joint

⁹ Department of National Defence. *Strong, Secure, Engaged - Canada's Defence Policy* (2017), 41.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 36.

¹¹ J.R. Stocker, "Canadian Joint Operations." *The RUSI Journal*, Vol. 141, Issue 3 (June 1996): 36-38, 36.

¹² *Ibid.*, 37.

¹³ Jennifer Stadnyk, "Canadian Joint Operations Command Stood-Up in Ottawa." *Targeted News Service*, 5 October 2012.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

force can no longer be considered as an adjunct to core service capabilities because they are, in themselves, becoming central to CAF's interoperability and success..."¹⁵ This highlights that there is still work to be done for the CAF as it advances joint preparedness. Further to this, despite the references to joint cohesion within some areas of the SSE Policy, there still remains to be more focus on combined operations. This can be seen in the requirement to have a "robust commitment to NATO, UN and Coalitions" and "integrated capacity building with partners", which are key tenants from the Engaged Abroad Line of Effort.¹⁶ Therefore, although the CAF has made some inroads towards better joint preparedness both senior leaders within the CAF and our own policy highlights that there remains work to be done and further refinement to the Canadian joint approach. A brief summary of the Rhodesian Bush War and similarities between the CAF and the RSF will continue to frame the case study.

RHODESIAN BUSH WAR

The Rhodesian Bush War began in 1965 and was initially viewed by the Rhodesian Government as a police action, with the RSF placed in a supporting role.¹⁷ By 1977, as the conflict had expanded, it had become apparent that it was in fact a COIN campaign requiring the RSF to take the lead role in operations.¹⁸

Throughout the conflict, the RSF consisted of a small, professional fighting force that was able to employ superior fire power over their adversaries, mostly through joint integration with air and aviation assets.¹⁹ The two nationalist armed groups countering

¹⁵ Lieutenant-General Michael Rouleau, *How We Fight: Commander CJOC's Thoughts* (Canadian Joint Operations Command, 2 February 2019), 2.

¹⁶ Department of National Defence. *Strong, Secure, Engaged...*, 61.

¹⁷ Moorcraft and McLaughlin, *The Rhodesian War...*, 149.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 149.

¹⁹ Thomas Arbuckle, "Rhodesian Bush War Strategies and Tactics: an Assessment." *Royal United Services Institute* (London Vol. 124, Issue 4 (Dec 1979): 27-33), 29.

the RSF were the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) and the Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA).²⁰ Both of these organizations were numerically superior and had greater mobility within the rural regions of Rhodesia, but lacked the tactical and technical skills of the RSF to enable the use of a joint approach to operations.²¹ ZANLA primarily operated in the north and east of Rhodesia, and had forward staging bases in neighbouring Mozambique, while ZIPRA operated in the west of Rhodesia, and was based mostly in Zambia and Botswana.²²

As a result of the vast operating area and a lack of manpower, the RSF was forced to leverage a joint approach in order to counter the advantages of size and mobility of ZANLA and ZIPRA forces. This manifested itself with the RA, RhAF, SF and other government department and agencies, integrating at both the tactical and operational levels, allowing the RSF to effectively counter the enemy forces operations within Rhodesia.²³ The RSF used this joint approach for expeditionary operations as well, with pre-emptive joint force raids being undertaken in neighbouring countries to disrupt the enemy infiltrations.²⁴

However, this highly integrated joint approach still resulted in a strategic failure for the RSF, as in 1980, the political party of ZANLA, named the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU), gained control of the government through a general election, thus ending the white minority rule in Rhodesia.²⁵ To gain further context from this

²⁰ Charles D. Melson, "Top Secret War: Rhodesian Special Operations." *Small Wars and Insurgencies* Vol. 16, Issue 1 (March 2005): 57-82, 62.

²¹ Arbuckle, "Rhodesian Bush War Strategies and Tactics: an Assessment." *Royal United Services Institute* ..., 29.

²² Melson, "Top Secret War: Rhodesian Special Operations." *Small Wars and Insurgencies* ..., 62.

²³ Moorcraft and McLaughlin, *The Rhodesian War* ..., 200.

²⁴ Peter Baxter, *Selous Scouts: Rhodesian Counter-Insurgency Specialists* (Solihull, England: Helion & Company Limited, 2011), 29.

²⁵ Moorcraft and McLaughlin, *The Rhodesian War* ..., 176.

conflict, a comparison between the CAF and the RSF is valuable towards drawing key joint lessons for the CAF.

SIMILARITIES BETWEEN FORCES

Before any comparison between the CAF and the RSF is carried out, it must be first stated that there are vast differences with the values and military ethos between these two militaries. Where the CAF is a leading institution amongst world militaries in inclusiveness, respect and professionalism,²⁶ the RSF was a segregated military which was fighting to keep white minority governance within Rhodesia.²⁷ The RSF also used questionable techniques against enemy forces, which could have needlessly endangered innocent civilian lives. Charles D. Melson explains this in his article *Top Secret War: The Rhodesian Special Forces* with, “techniques included booby-trapping ammunition and weapons and poisoning tinned goods or clothing”.²⁸

With this key difference clarified, a more detailed comparison can take place, focusing on force structure/generation and force employment of the two militaries.

Force Structure/Generation

One similarity between the CAF and the RSF which provides value in using this conflict as a case study is the RSF force structure for their service elements. Like the CAF, the RSF gained much of its organizational structure from a British military style of regiments, being a former colony of the United Kingdom (UK).²⁹ For example, the RhAF grew out of an air wing initially formed under the Rhodesian Regiment within the RA.³⁰

²⁶ Canadian Forces, *Duty with Honour: The Profession of Arms in Canada* (Ottawa: Canadian Defence Academy, 2003), 11.

²⁷ Moorcraft and McLaughlin, *The Rhodesian War...*, 25-27.

²⁸ Melson, “Top Secret War: Rhodesian Special Operations.” *Small Wars and Insurgencies...*, 70.

²⁹ Peter J.H. Petter-Bowyer, *Winds of Destruction: The Autobiography of a Rhodesian Combat Pilot* (Johannesburg: Trafford Publishing, 2003), 15.

³⁰ Baxter, *Selous Scouts: ...*, 7.

This is much like the lineage of the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF), with their predecessor the Royal Flying Corps Canada (RFCC) serving under the British Army during the First World War.³¹ Therefore, when analyzing the RSF joint approach to operations, it is helpful to appreciate that the CAF is coming from a very similar background and has many of the same relationships between service elements.

In addition to the RhAF, the Rhodesian SF units, namely the Rhodesian Special Air Service (RhSAS) and the Selous Scouts were also originally formed under the RA,³² but evolved into their own command structure.³³ This is remarkably similar to the evolution of Special Operation Forces (SOF) units in the CAF and the introduction of the Canadian Special Operations Command (CANSOFCOM) in 2006.³⁴

Building on these similarities in structure, the RSF also generated forces for operations much the same as the CAF does currently. For example, the RhAF was the force generator for all the fixed and rotary wing assets required to enable operations for the RSF.³⁵ This is similar for the RCAF within the CAF force generation construct, but differs from other militaries, like the US Army, which has a sizeable amount of integral air and aviation assets.³⁶ Again, this similarity helps with the analysis of the RSF joint approach, as the service elements were wholly reliant on each other to conduct operations involving multiple domains,³⁷ as individually they did not have the required capabilities.

³¹ Government of Canada, "Royal Canadian Air Force: History and Heritage," last modified 09 March 2020. <http://www.rcaf-arc.forces.gc.ca/en/history-heritage/index.page>.

³² Baxter, *Selous Scouts: ...*, 8.

³³ Melson, "Top Secret War: Rhodesian Special Operations." *Small Wars and Insurgencies...*, 68.

³⁴ Government of Canada, "Canadian Special Operations Forces Command Headquarters," last modified 22 March 2018. <https://www.canada.ca/en/special-operations-forces-command/corporate/organizational-structure/headquarters.html>.

³⁵ Moorcraft and McLaughlin, *The Rhodesian War...*, 54.

³⁶ James S. Corum and Wray R. Johnson, *Airpower in Small Wars: Fighting Insurgents and Terrorists*, (Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2003), 244.

³⁷ Department of National Defence, *Canadian Forces Joint Publication 3.0...*, v.

The parallels seen between how the RSF and CAF structured and generated forces can also be seen in how these two militaries employed their forces.

Force Employment

Currently in the CAF there are two Canadian specific force employing operational level HQs; ³⁸ CJOC and CANSOFCOM.³⁹ These HQs are given command over forces generated by the service elements to conduct operations, both at home and abroad. The RSF used a much similar method of force employment by having all internal and external operations commanded and controlled by the Ministry of Command Operations (ComOps), beginning in 1977.⁴⁰ Thus, much like the CAF, the service elements of the RSF continued to force generate and look after the administrative requirements of the tactical units in operations, but ComOps coordinated and executed the operations. It is interesting to note, however, that one key difference between the CAF and RSF with force employment is that ComOps also oversaw the execution of SF operations which differs from the CAF approach.⁴¹

With these similarities identified and some common themes shown between the two militaries, an analysis of the RSF joint approach can now be achieved. By looking at the RSF's joint integration through the lens of the CAFs levels of conflict, areas for refinement will be best leveraged.

³⁸ North American Aerospace Defence Command, "About NORAD", last viewed 28 April 2020, <https://www.norad.mil/About-NORAD/> The North American Aerospace Defence Command (NORAD) is a bi-national organization between Canada and the US.

³⁹ Department of National Defence, *Joint Doctrine Note 02-2014: Command and Control of Joint Operations*, (Ottawa: Joint Doctrine Branch, 2014), 1.

⁴⁰ Moorcraft and McLaughlin, *The Rhodesian War...*, 61.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 61.

TACTICAL LEVEL

CFJP 3.0 defines the tactical level as “where military actions are planned and executed to achieve the military objectives assigned to tactical formations and units.”⁴² Therefore, this is the level of conflict within the Rhodesian Bush War, where the operations were executed and where the RSF saw close integration of joint partners to achieve successes. As previously outlined, one major challenge for the RSF during the conflict was attempting to control a large amount of terrain against a numerically superior threat.⁴³ This led to a “search and destroy” mentality being adopted, in an attempt to limit the amount of ZANLA and ZIPRA forces infiltrating into Rhodesia.⁴⁴ From this standpoint, the RSF developed one of the most effective COIN tactics, which required a fully joint approach at the tactical level to be employed effectively — Fire Force.⁴⁵ However, these operations required enormous amounts of joint training and integration at the tactical level to be successful.

Search

Beginning in 1965, the RSF was facing a threat of ZANLA and ZIPRA forces infiltrating into Rhodesia along three borders — north, east and west. The Fire Force units, primarily the Rhodesian Light Infantry (RLI),⁴⁶ were based in centralized locations around the country and placed on a notice to move schedule, then deployed to areas of enemy concentration for short periods of time.⁴⁷ This method of force distribution relied on service elements other than the RA, to conduct the search function and locate the

⁴² Department of National Defence, *Canadian Forces Joint Publication 3.0...*, 1-2.

⁴³ Arbuckle, “Rhodesian Bush War Strategies and Tactics: an Assessment.” *Royal United Services Institute...*, 29.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁴⁵ Chris Cocks, *Fire Force: One Man’s War in the Rhodesian Light Infantry* (Johannesburg: 30 Degree South Publishers Limited, 2006), i.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, i.

⁴⁷ Moorcraft and McLaughlin, *The Rhodesian War...*, 48-49.

enemy units. From a RSF standpoint, the Selous Scouts performed this duty for the most part during the conflict.⁴⁸ The Selous Scouts would be given specific boundaries to conduct reconnaissance in, and all other military and para-military units would be restricted from entering this area.⁴⁹ However, once a contact was initiated with a ZANLA or ZIPRA infiltrating group, the SF would work directly at the tactical level with the other joint partners to pass off the contact and begin the second part of the operation, destroy.⁵⁰ Of note, this search function was not solely an RSF duty as many contacts were called in through other government agencies, either information from the BSAP or SB.⁵¹ This ability to coordinate amongst joint partners at the tactical level was crucial for the RSF to be able to react quickly and effectively. This is one aspect where the CAF could learn from the RSF and work towards more coordination at the lowest joint levels to become an even more agile organization in joint warfare. However, the search aspect was only the first part of the successful Fire Force tactic, with the second part requiring even greater tactical level joint integration.

Destroy

Once the contact was made and a Fire Force unit was called to destroy the infiltrating enemy force, another large amount of joint integration was set in motion. The key portion to this part of the Fire Force action was to rapidly deploy a ground assault element into the contact area. To achieve the speed of action required, air assets were used to deliver the ground forces, via either airmobile or airborne insertion methods.⁵² Once the deployment was completed, the RhAF would then provide close air support

⁴⁸ Baxter, *Selous Scouts: ...*, 40.

⁴⁹ Cocks, *Rhodesian Fire Force: 1966-1980...*, 9.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁵¹ Moorcraft and McLaughlin, *The Rhodesian War...*, 50.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 55.

(CAS) to assist the ground forces.⁵³ This required significant coordination of joint partners at the tactical level to achieve. Chris Cocks writes in his book *Fire Force: One Mans War in the Rhodesian Light Infantry* about the integration of joint enablers by saying:

The fire force principle required a high level of coordination between the Air Force and the Army and this was maintained at all times. The Army provided the combat troops while the Air Force supplied the helicopters, the fixed-wing aircraft and the pilots.⁵⁴

This ability to bring all the joint partners together and synchronize their efforts at the tactical level provided the RSF a highly flexible and agile COIN tactic that inflicted high casualties on ZANLA and ZIPRA infiltrating units.⁵⁵ This lesson shows how effectively integrating tactical forces together in a joint approach can allow for an overwhelming advantage in fire power, manoeuvre and flexibility over adversaries. For the RSF, this manifested itself into complete dominance over ZANLA and ZIPRA forces, with Lieutenant Colonel Peter J. Benson commenting that the “...joint combined arms approach to the insurgent battle was to prove devastatingly effective —during the Bush War the Rhodesian Army remained undefeated in combat.”⁵⁶ However, this integration of joint partners at the tactical level did not come without its own learning curve.

Joint Training

Despite the success of the Fire Force tactic, the RSF learned through hard lessons that joint integration does not come easily. Dennis Croukamp, an ex-RSF soldier during

⁵³ Cocks, *Rhodesian Fire Force: 1966-1980...*, 16.

⁵⁴ Cocks, *Fire Force: One Man's War...*, 32.

⁵⁵ Arbuckle, “Rhodesian Bush War Strategies and Tactics: an Assessment.” *Royal United Services Institute...*, 30.

⁵⁶ Peter J. Benson, review of *The Saints: The Rhodesian Light Infantry* by Alexander Binda and Chris Cocks. *Special Warfare*, Vol. 21, Issue 5 (September/October 2008): 30.

the Bush War, provided one such example when he wrote about the first CAS mission conducted by the RhAF Canberra bombers in 1968 during Operation *Cauldron*.

The bombs from the two Canberras sounded all too close and I suddenly realised [*sic*] that I was no longer lying in my original position and that I was covered in dirt. It dawned on me that the bombs had hit us, with the blast hurtling me a few metres away from my original position. Calling out my Section's numbers, they each replied that they had been hit. With some relief I realised that everyone had responded and that no one had been killed.⁵⁷

This incident of blue on blue fratricide highlights that integrating joint partners does not come without risk. Time and training must be spent together to allow all the different service elements, as well as other government departments and agencies, to integrate properly. The RSF had the benefit of a 15 year conflict to gradually improve upon their tactical joint integration and training. This saw RSF units being trained in joint operations,⁵⁸ and a close bond being formed between the service elements of the RSF.⁵⁹ This focus on joint integration led the RSF to become one of the most highly trained COIN fighting formations in the world. In his book *On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society*, Dave Grossman highlighted this fact when he spoke to the advantage that training gave the RSF over ZANLA and ZIPRA forces:

The Rhodesian security force was a highly trained modern army fighting against an ill-trained band of guerrillas. Through superior tactics *and training* [*sic*] the security force maintained an overall kill ratio of about eight-to-one throughout the war. Their commando units actually improved their kill ratio from 35-to-one to 50-to-one.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Dennis Croukamp, *The Bush War in Rhodesia: The Extraordinary Combat Memoir of a Rhodesian Reconnaissance Specialist* (Boulder, Colorado: Paladin Press, 2006), 91.

⁵⁸ Cocks, *Fire Force: One Man's War...*, 107.

⁵⁹ Petter-Bowyer, *Winds of Destruction:...*, 206.

⁶⁰ Dave Grossman, *On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society* (New York: Back Bay Books, 1995), 178.

This same model of rigorous joint training and operations over a long period will likely not hold true for the CAF in its next campaign. The CAF must, therefore, be setting the conditions now to ensure the joint partners are ready to work together at the tactical level with an increase in joint training. The RSF joint integration and use of Fire Force was immensely successful in the Rhodesian Bush War at the tactical level, but it was the joint approach at the operational level that made it so effective in countering threats.

OPERATIONAL LEVEL

CJFP 3.0 defines the operational level as the level of conflict “...at which campaigns are planned, conducted, and sustained to achieve military strategic objectives within an area of responsibility (AOR)”.⁶¹ For the RSF, this was the level in which they coordinated and tasked the service elements to execute domestic operations within Rhodesia and expeditionary raids in neighbouring countries harbouring ZANLA and ZIPRA forces. To best synchronize and integrate the joint partners, including other government departments and agencies, the operational level evolved over the course of the conflict to eventually have two command and control HQs — the Joint Operation Commands (JOCs) and ComOps.⁶²

JOCs

As the conflict increased during the 1970s and the RSF came to the conclusion that they did not have enough forces to permanently control ground, there was a transition to try and achieve a permanence of command in a region instead, while centralizing ground forces.⁶³ The RSF split the country into operational areas (OAs), like

⁶¹ Department of National Defence, *Canadian Forces Joint Publication 3.0...*, 1-2.

⁶² Petter-Bowyer, *Winds of Destruction: ...*, 297.

⁶³ Moorcraft and McLaughlin, *The Rhodesian War...*, 103.

OA Hurricane and OA Thrasher, and assigned JOCs to each one.⁶⁴ Thomas Arbuckle visited Rhodesia in 1978 and explained the JOC system of command and control as he saw it then, “Each fireforce [*sic*] is located close to a JOC which is the combined army, police and regional administration headquarters for a designated operational area”.⁶⁵ The following passage from Paul L. Moorcraft further expands on how the Rhodesian system of JOCs worked during the conflict:

In the field, cooperation between the services were provided by JOCs, on which representatives of each of the armed services sat with liaison officials of Internal Affairs (and other civilian ministries where required). In this way the total resources of the operational area could be most effectively deployed. The informal atmosphere at JOC meetings usually made them a smooth conduit for the issue of orders to combat units and supporting infrastructure, though sometimes inter-service rivalry (mainly between the police and the army) bedevilled individual JOCs.⁶⁶

These two accounts of the JOC system illustrate that the RSF saw the need to ensure all joint partners were located in one joint HQ, in order to provide the best command and control of the assigned OA. The truly important aspect was that the RSF understood that tactical forces did not need to be assigned permanently to an OA, but if the operational level joint partners could remain constant, it would increase the effectiveness of their HQs. On top of this, the RSF ensured that not just service elements were represented but other government agencies had either a permanent or semi-permanent presence in the JOCs. Former RhAF pilot P.J.H. Petter-Bowyer stated that:

At each JOC the Provincial Head of Internal Affairs was a permanent member. Other government departments, such as road and telecommunications, could be co-opted on an ad hoc basis...At no level

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 48-49.

⁶⁵ Arbuckle, “Rhodesian Bush War Strategies and Tactics: an Assessment.” *Royal United Services Institute ...*, 29.

⁶⁶ Moorcraft and McLaughlin, *The Rhodesian War...*, 60.

was there a recognised supremo. Chairing of the JOC meetings was done in rotation between the Army, Air Force and Police.⁶⁷

This is an area of the RSF joint approach where the CAF could benefit from, especially in domestic operations. Allowing for increased permanence at the operational level amongst service elements and other government departments and agencies, would create a more agile response to domestic crisis's once tactical force are provided. However, by the latter parts of the conflict in 1977, the RSF found that it required an additional operational HQ to synchronize the JOCs domestically, while also planning and executing all expeditionary operations — known as ComOps.⁶⁸

ComOps

The intent for creating ComOps was to have a joint HQ which “was responsible for translating the government’s political decisions into a military strategy.”⁶⁹ This definition is relatively straight forward and would lead one to think that ComOps was a strategic level HQ, not operational. However, what the RSF’s intention was for ComOps when formed, and how it worked in reality were two different things. Under the command and personalities of LGen G.P Walls and deputy commander Air Marshal M.J. McLaren, ComOps actually acted as a “super JOC”.⁷⁰ Melson highlights that LGen Walls believed that the ComOps role was to “...fight the war through the various joint operation commanders, control of Fire Forces, the cordon sanitaire and the special forces.”⁷¹ Domestically, ComOps looked across all OAs and at times forced the reallocation of Fire

⁶⁷ Petter-Bowyer, *Winds of Destruction: ...*, 297.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 297.

⁶⁹ Moorcraft and McLaughlin, *The Rhodesian War...*, 61.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 61.

⁷¹ Melson, “Top Secret War: Rhodesian Special Operations.” *Small Wars...*, 66.

Force units to other JOCs when required.⁷² This operational level oversight of the individual JOCs served the joint partners very well, ensuring that proper coordination and planning happened between the JOCs. This was noted particularly by SF members, as under ComOps direction, the RhSAS found it easier to acquire air support and intelligence.⁷³

This highlights one area which the CAF could improve the overall joint approach, which is having operational control of both SF and conventional forces under one operational HQ. The RSF found that it was easier to ensure priority of resources were adhered to, and that service elements remained operable with each other. This did not come without drawbacks, as early in the conflict the RA had meet the administrative and force generation demands for the SF but were being left out how they were being employed.⁷⁴ Also, the integration of the BSAP within ComOps and the successes that came from this could also be leveraged domestically with the CAF by having the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) have a more permanent presence with CJOC to collaborate in the national security community.

Combined Operations

On top of controlling and coordinating domestic operations inside of Rhodesia with the JOCs and ComOps, the RSFs ability to plan and execute expeditionary operations in a combined and joint environment has areas that could be leveraged for refinement by the CAF. *CFJP 3.0* defines combined operations as operations that are “conducted by forces of two or more nations acting together”.⁷⁵ Although Rhodesia’s

⁷² Moorcraft and McLaughlin, *The Rhodesian War...*, 61.

⁷³ Melson, “Top Secret War: Rhodesian Special Operations.” *Small Wars...*, 66.

⁷⁴ Moorcraft and McLaughlin, *The Rhodesian War...*, 61.

⁷⁵ Department of National Defence, *Canadian Forces Joint Publication 3.0...*, 7-13.

overall strategic aim to the conflict, which will be discussed later in detail, isolated the country internationally, South Africa remained an ally up until 1980.⁷⁶ South Africa provided assistance to Rhodesia with economic support and worked around the imposed UN sanctions.⁷⁷ Most importantly to the RSF, South Africa also provided combat forces, notably additional aircraft with aircrew⁷⁸ and SF units.⁷⁹ It was at the operational level that the RSF had to integrate the South African Defence Forces (SADF) units within their own joint approach, again to enable tactical success. One such example of the tactical integration enabled by the operational level was during Operation *Hammer* in 1978, which then SADF Recce Commando operator Henry McCallion describes:

We would provide a stopping group for an assault force from the crack 2 RLI. We went in using Alouette Helicopters, behind two Hawker Hunter jets carrying 1000lbs bombs. In front of these was a Canberra bomber carrying 500lbs bombs. The Canberra dropped its load, the six explosions throwing a wave of destruction in front of us, then the two Hawker Hunters loosed theirs. Our small helicopters bucked and reared. As the dust began to settle, we landed and a Dakota flew overhead dropping 2 Commando.⁸⁰

This perfectly highlights the effectiveness of the RSF operational level HQs in planning and coordinating the efforts for Operation *Hammer*, including synchronizing the RA, RhAF and SADF SF elements. Not mentioned in this passage is the search aspect of the operation which required great joint partnership to ensure all this combat power was being used against a viable objective. The SADF preferred to have their tactical units

⁷⁶ Moorcraft and McLaughlin, *The Rhodesian War...*, 179.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 120.

⁷⁸ Croukamp, *The Bush War in Rhodesia...*, 449.

⁷⁹ Harry McCallion, *Killing Zone* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Place, 1995), 114.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 127.

assigned specific areas of operations but had no issues allowing the RSF operational level HQs to coordinate joint assets and task operations to them.⁸¹

This ability to integrate units from other nations militaries so effectively into a joint environment, yet again illustrates the success of the RSFs joint approach to operations. Since the RSF joint partners were already working together in permanent operational level HQs, it was easy for another combined partner to join. The CAF could leverage this area by understanding that when looking at combined and joint operations, it may be easier to build the framework to work effectively in joint vice the other way around. Having looked at the tactical and operational levels, it has been shown that the RSF joint approach was highly effective in countering both ZANLA and ZIPRA forces on the battlefield, but ultimately the war was still lost by the Rhodesian Government. This was as a result of a poor strategic aim and joint tactical effects.

STRATEGIC LEVEL

In addition to the tactical and operational levels, *CJFP 3.0* defines the strategic level as the “level of conflict at which a nation, or group of nations, determines national or alliance security aims and objectives and develops and uses national resources to attain them.”⁸² Further to this definition, the strategic level also “...establishes corresponding military strategic objectives, defines limits and assesses risk pertaining to the concerted use of all instruments of national power.”⁸³ These definitions further underline that although joint operations are not part of the strategic level, the strategic aim of a country can affect the eventual outcome of joint operations or campaigns.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 114.

⁸² Department of National Defence, *Canadian Forces Joint Publication 3.0...*, 1-2.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

Additionally, many of the effects from the tactical level during joint operations can impact the strategic level, which in turn can have negative results on the conflict. How these two themes interact and the resulting strategic defeat that can be caused is very prevalent within the case study. These themes will be analyzed and can serve as another reminder to the CAF highlighting the importance of nesting aims and effects throughout all levels of conflict.

Strategic Aim

The Rhodesian Government declared unilateral independence (UDI) from the UK in 1965, in order to maintain a white minority rule government.⁸⁴ The Rhodesian Government and RSF unwillingness to change the system of government manifested itself into the strategic aim for the entirety of the war. By not looking towards evolving into a more egalitarian system of governance during the 1970s, it led to an isolating effect on Rhodesia and harsh sanctions imposed by the international community.⁸⁵ These sanctions ranged from restrictions on replacement parts for RhAF aircraft and other military arms for the RSF,⁸⁶ to embargoes on the importation and exportation of materials.⁸⁷

Initially the Rhodesian Government was able to function fairly unencumbered by the imposed sanctions.⁸⁸ This was achieved through the RSF using the military equipment they had in service at the time of UDI until the end of the conflict, including Dakota transport aircraft which were flown during the Second World War.⁸⁹ However,

⁸⁴ Moorcraft and McLaughlin, *The Rhodesian War...*, 27.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 119.

⁸⁶ Petter-Bowyer, *Winds of Destruction:...*, 94.

⁸⁷ Moorcraft and McLaughlin, *The Rhodesian War...*, 119.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ Croukamp, *The Bush War in Rhodesia...*, 325.

over time these sanctions and the overall lack of international support provided to Rhodesia, as a direct result of their strategic aim, took its toll on the RSF. They were not able to recoup losses of equipment and personnel, while the forces of ZANLA and ZIPRA, which were supported by communist regimes, were able to continually reconstitute losses.⁹⁰ Therefore, the RSF, enabled by their joint approach was unbeatable in the field, but the strategic aim of the country proved to be its undoing. This lesson is a good reminder to the CAF that if the strategic aim of the country is not supportable, the best joint forces in the world still may not achieve victory. Therefore, leaders in the CAF must continue to seek and challenge for strategic aims that are fully supported by Canadian society and ideally the international community. This lack of international approval was mixed with a continued growing divide between the Rhodesian Government and black population, specifically, the rural people living in the Tribal Trust Lands (TTLs) due to poor joint tactical effects.

Joint Tactical Effects

Another area the CAF can gain knowledge from is the impact of joint tactical effects on the strategic level. Although this is not a new concept to the CAF,⁹¹ the outcomes of this for the RSF were devastating, and can act as a reinforcing function. Many of the effects from joint tactical action resulted in negative strategic impacts and continued the alienation of the Rhodesian Government from the majority of the population and the larger international community. One such example is the previously mentioned use of “dirty tricks” by SF elements enabled through joint partnerships with

⁹⁰ Benson, review of *The Saints: ...*, 30.

⁹¹ Department of National Defence, *Canadian Forces Joint Publication 3.0...*, 1-2.

SB.⁹² Another example was the forced movement by RA and BSAP of tribes found within the TTLs to “protected villages”,⁹³ much like the US Army attempted to do during the Vietnam War.⁹⁴ These tactics proved relatively ineffective as a counter to ZANLA and ZIPRA freedom of movement within the TTLs and also turned large segments of the population further against the Rhodesian Government.⁹⁵ These tactical effects further eroded the RSF and Rhodesian Government support both nationally and internationally, leading to the eventual defeat in 1980. Although the CAF is no stranger to negative tactical effects on the strategic level, as shown by the Shidane Arone murder in 1993,⁹⁶ this lesson just reinforces the point that if joint operations at the tactical level are resulting in poor strategic effects, it can lead to defeat in the conflict.

CONCLUSION

The Rhodesian Bush War came to a close in 1980 with the RSF defeated strategically and the country of Rhodesia ceasing to exist, replaced by the new country of Zimbabwe under the leadership of Premier Robert Mugabe.⁹⁷ During the conflict the RSF evolved into a highly effective military, fully embracing a joint approach. This approach saw RA, RhAF and SF units being integrated at the lowest echelons of the tactical level to continuously defeat ZANLA and ZIPRA forces in battle. On top of this, multiple layers of operational level HQs, which planned and coordinated both domestic and expeditionary joint operations were created and refined. Out of this emerged many areas in which the CAF could look to refine its own joint approach. One such area is leveraging

⁹² Melson, “Top Secret War: Rhodesian Special Operations.” *Small Wars and Insurgencies*..., 70.

⁹³ Moorcraft and McLaughlin, *The Rhodesian War*..., 38.

⁹⁴ *The Vietnam War*, directed by Ken Burns (United States: PBS, 2017), Netflix.

⁹⁵ Moorcraft and McLaughlin, *The Rhodesian War*..., 38.

⁹⁶ Donna Winslow, *Canadian Airborne Regiment in Somalia: Socio-Cultural Inquiry* (Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 1997), 5.

⁹⁷ Moorcraft and McLaughlin, *The Rhodesian War*..., 179.

more joint training at the tactical level in order to ensure joint partners at this echelon can integrate effectively in combat. Another area was ensuring all service elements, including SF, are force employed under one operational level HQ, which allowed for better prioritization and resourcing for joint operations. Finally, having a greater permanence within operational level HQs for all joint partners, including other government departments and agencies, allowed for a more streamlined approach to planning and coordination of joint operations.

However, potentially one of the most poignant areas for the CAF to learn from the RSF, was not a joint warfare specific lesson. It was to reinforce the knowledge that no matter how successful and dominant a joint force is on the battlefield, if the methods used towards victory and the strategic aim for fighting are not aligned with the values and beliefs of Canadian citizens and the international community, then all of it is for not. As the RSF found, joint enabled victories within the tactical and operational level will still result in failure, if the strategic level is wrong.

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