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**FROM ENABLER TO ENABLED: OPERATING IN
THE INFORMATION ENVIRONMENT AND
THE REQUIREMENT FOR CULTURAL CHANGE IN THE CAF**

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Nombre de mots : 2,498

From enabler to enabled: Operating in the Information Environment and the requirement for cultural change in the Canadian Armed Forces

AIM

1. The aim of this paper is to address an issue raised by Chief Force Development (CFD) pertaining to the most appropriate organizational structure to manage Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) operations in the Information Environment (IE), Information Operations (Info Ops) and its different Information Related Capabilities (IRCs). This paper will discuss structural aspects of Joint Info Ops and reflect on what should be the structure of the different level 1s. More salient to the future of warfare, this paper will reflect on the need for CAF to undergo a culture change when it comes to how it perceives the IE in an operational context.

INTRODUCTION

2. As Canada comes to terms with the necessity to become more agile in the IE, a series of initiatives geared towards modernizing the integration of IRCs in an operational setting are currently underway¹. The reflection on the structure of Info Ops will be supported by an overview of the status of relevant policies and doctrine, by takeaways from exchanges with some of the planners involved in the modernization of the CAF Info Ops and from excerpts from relevant briefings.

¹ Lieutenant-Colonel Douglas Allison, Director General Military Strategic Command – Force Development, conversation, 6 October 2019.

3. The current CAF Info Ops doctrine has not been reviewed since 1998² and no longer adequately reflects the modern IE. In 2017, *Strong, Secure, Engaged* (SSE) called for ‘an improvement’ of how the CAF conducts information operations³. At first glance, the two words ‘an improvement’ can appear to call for a straightforward approach but in fact, the implications on CAF’s structure and culture are profound. In a constant state of competition in the IE, combined with the relative fluidity of its global relationships and outmatched by some of its emerging adversaries in terms of resources, the leadership of the future will likely have to reflect on the meaning of combat and what tomorrow’s warrior will look like.

4. In order to foster an understanding of how the CAF can improve its capacity to achieve joint effects in the IE battlespace, the discussion of Info Ops structure needs to be examined from the perspective of full spectrum of operations, but from the strategic perspective. This paper posits that, at this early stage of institutionalization of battle in the IE, the creation of a new joint L1 at the strategic level is the most effective structure to manage Info Ops. In order to support this argument, this paper will examine factors related to information capabilities which need to be taken into consideration. The discussion will be divided according to the following themes: Structural considerations, the Operationalization of Public Affairs, the integration of non-munition effects to the

² Department of National Defence. B-GG-005-004/AF-010, CFJP 03.10 – *Information Operations*. (Ottawa: DND Canada, 1998), 1.

³ Department of National Defence, *Strong, Secure, Engaged* Canada’s Defence Policy (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2017), 41.

Joint Targeting Process and finally, a review of some of the challenges facing CAF vis-à-vis achieving joint effects in the IE.

DISCUSSION

Structural considerations

5. The question raised by CFD indicates that three options are being considered by CAF for the lead organization to manage Info Ops: Strategic Joint Staff (SJS), Canadian Joint Operations Command (CJOC) or the creation of a new Level 1 (L1) organization. The proposed options will be assessed in turn in the following paragraphs:

a. Director of Staff (DOS) for SJS is currently the functional authority for Info Ops.⁴ However, the resources at the DOS' disposal to enable Info Ops are limited. The lead for the synchronization of effects at the strategic level is the Director Strategic Effects and Targeting (DSET) within SJS, currently with a colonel at the helm, supported by a small team composed of two lieutenant-colonels, three majors and one civilian contractor. DSET has the lead in ensuring CAF information effects are informed by the new Strategic Engagement Management Board. It was held for the first time in 2019 and is chaired quarterly by DOS. The focus of this board is at the strategic level in a synchronization role for supported commanders to generate strategic effects. While the resulting Initiating Directive is shared with ADM(PA) for the development of a strategic narrative, there is no corresponding Info Ops capability at the strategic level to

⁴ Department of National Defence, *Department of National Defence and Canadian Armed Forces Policy on Joint Information Operations (Info Ops)* (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2017), 8.

support the engagement of a target. Second, if there were an attributable target, Public Affairs would have to manage.⁵ Intuitively, as the strategic level, SJS should be the lead but there is simply not enough resources available to analyze, identify strategic objectives, plan, coordinate and synchronize to finally execute (or support execution). The consequence is a gap in Info Ops capability at the strategic level. The issue of strategic communications will be discussed in the *challenges* section of this paper.

b. CJOC Commander's letter 'How we Fight' demonstrated that operational agility and effectiveness in the IE is top of mind from his perspective.⁶ CJOC has the advantage of having access to significant resources in comparison to SJS. The network of relationships within other departments and nations is significant. CJOC is also the home of the Joint Operational Effects team (JOE), a testament to the importance of synchronization of effects and the increasing attention paid to a broader approach to operational planning. CJOC has all the ingredients to provide a robust capacity, alas, it is at the wrong level which can cause 'operational tunnel vision'. Without integration of strategic advice, which as discussed previously SJS is currently unable to provide adequately, approaching the conduct of Info Ops through a strictly regional perspective is very risky. The alignment of strategic objectives and operational effects in the IE is essential. Seeking to achieve joint effects without proper coordination at the strategic level will be done at the CAF's peril, with the potential for unintended consequences for our whole-

⁵ Lieutenant-Colonel Douglas Allison, Director General Military Strategic Command – Force Development, conversation, 6 October 2019.

⁶ Lieutenant-General Mike Rouleau, How We Fight (Canadian Joint Operations Command Ottawa), 19 February 19.

of-government (WoG) partners, in domains such as diplomacy and international trade, to name a few.

c. Admiral (ret.) Madison and Margaret Purdy, a former national security advisor, were commissioned by the Department of National Defence (DND) to do a study on the feasibility of a Joint Force HQ which would be responsible for managing Cyber, Info Ops, Strat Com and operational support. They have now delivered the study to the CDS and it is currently under review. This study would contribute to the decision making process regarding standing up a Joint Force HQ. Should CAF proceed, this is where all the Joint Forces Capabilities would reside.⁷ On the one hand it would clarify the administration of the IRCs and create a single accountability to the CDS and to the generation of specialized capabilities for operations. On the other hand, creating yet another L1 would not only lead to more competition for limited resources but also create another ‘silo of excellence’. The issues of silos and competition of resources will be discussed in the *challenges* section of this paper.

Joint targeting as a gateway to cultural change

6. In 2017, an Info Ops sub-committee was stood up as part of the Targeting Capability Implementation Team (TCIT), which now resides under CFD with the intention of developing the non-munition side of targeting.⁸ As the targeting cycle is a

⁷ Lieutenant-Colonel Douglas Allison, Director General Military Strategic Command – Force Development, conversation, 6 October 2019.

⁸ Ibid.

standard, repeatable process that allows the organization to do outcome-based decision making, it is the most accessible mechanism for the concretization of the concept of non-munitions effects for operational planners. For operational planners and information practitioners, the targeting process contributes to the shift in perception of the IE becoming a legitimate battlespace, and that information can be considered a weapon rather than a part of a linear process, limited to ‘informing’ our audiences. Gaining experience in non-munition targeting will contribute to our collective ability to conduct ‘weaponeering’ for information activities. In this sense, training information practitioners to become proficient in targeting will strengthen their capacity to achieve desirable effect in the IE battlespace from munitions-based activities as well. This intellectual transition or cultural change for operators and information practitioners alike will contribute to increasing CAF effectiveness in the IE.

Operationalization of Public Affairs and Strategic Communications

7. The draft of the Force Development plan for the operationalization of the Public Affairs Branch defines the intent behind this initiative:

“The CAF must synchronize the application of military power with our words and images to ensure agility and manoeuvrability in the information environment, while denying the same to potential adversaries. CAF commanders are responsible to ensure that all actions in the information environment are appropriately and judiciously controlled according to applicable policies and authorities, which must be updated regularly to account for the rapid pace of change. CAF regulations must be underpinned by clear ethical principles that will guide our conduct in the information environment, along with comprehensive training and exercises to ensure our actions remain aligned with the high expectations of Canadians and allies.”⁹

⁹ Department of National Defence. *Canadian Armed Forces Military Strategic Communication and Public Affairs Force Development (Draft)* (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2019), 2.

8. On order of the CDS, the Public Affairs Branch, under Assistant Deputy Minister (Public Affairs), has been developing a concept to create Military Strategic Communications (Mil Strat Com) capabilities to support operations. The Force Development plan is with CDSO for approval at this time. Although some questions remain as to how the newly stood up capabilities will be integrated, the primary benefit of Mil Strat Com will be to provide a much needed strategic communications bridge between the operational level Info Ops efforts and overall Government of Canada strategic objectives. The operationalization of the branch has been a topic of discussion since 2017 and its socialization within the military public affairs community is progressing steadily. The Defence Public Affairs Learning Center (DPALC), the CAF Public Affairs school and center of excellence, has begun altering its curriculum to initiate the cultural shift towards operationalization for the new generation of CAF Public Affairs Officers and Imagery Technicians.¹⁰

Challenge 1: The critical importance of Strategic Communications

9. Strategic Communications (Strat Com) is a term widely used within NATO countries, in spite of a lack of consensus at the national level. NATO has been updating a ‘workable draft’ of the NATO Strategic Communications handbook since 2015, as it awaits North Atlantic Council approval. Alas, Canada has no such equivalent, which this paper posits makes the institutionalization of Info Ops within the CAF problematic. As a reference, NATO defines Strat Com as:

“The coordinated and appropriate use of NATO communications activities and capabilities – Public Diplomacy, Public Affairs (PA), Military Public Affairs,

¹⁰ Colonel Richard Perreault, Public Affairs Branch Advisor, conversation, 17 October 2019.

Information Operations (Info Ops) and Psychological Operations (PSYOPS), as appropriate – in support of Alliance policies, operations and activities, and in order to advance NATO’s aims.”¹¹

Although cyber and space domains are missing in this older version of the definition, the sheer fact that it exists implies consensus when operating within a NATO construct. It also clarifies ‘doctrinal hierarchy’: as the capstone document for IRCs, the NATO Strat Com doctrine reigns supreme above Info Ops, Civil-military cooperation (CIMIC) and Psychological Operations (PSYOPS), etc.

10. Salient to this paper is that Info Ops, or a military operating within the IE battlespace, requires a deep understanding of Strat Com. A strictly operational view when considering the conduct of operations in the IE can have catastrophic consequences. Planning to achieve joint effects in the IE at the operational level requires oversight by an close coordination with the strategic level, including with partners, allies and other WoG partners such as Global Affairs Canada, Public Safety, Transport Canada, provincial and municipal governments, etc. Currently, the only strategic guidance provided in terms of Strat Com is what practitioners call a ‘Strategic Communications framework’ which is drafted by ADM(PA) and added to other strategic level documents by SJS. The lack of resources allocated to Strat Com planning at the strategic level prevents adequate support to the operational level for Strat Com. At this time, October 2019, two senior Public Affairs officers are dedicated to the task: one lieutenant-colonel and one major.

11. Without a consensus of what constitutes Strat Com, this paper asserts that it is necessary for the CAF to produce its own Strat Com doctrine to foster a common

¹¹ NATO. *NATO Strategic Communications Handbook (Draft for use) Ver 9.1.21*. (Norfolk, VA: United States, 2015), 6.

understanding within the institution. Putting forward an updated Info Ops doctrine in absence of a Strat Com doctrine is akin to “putting the cart before the horse”. A debate that subsists on Strat Com within the CAF gravitates on the nature of Strat Com itself: is it a function, like at NATO, or is it a mindset? At this time, no such function exists within CAF although it is a key component of the draft Public Affairs Operationalization Force Development plan.¹² For the purposes of this paper, Strat Com refers to the coordination and synchronization of effects with Government of Canada’s strategic objectives, as outlined in SSE.

Challenge 2: The dangers of institutionalized ‘silos of excellence’

12. Currently, the bulk of the IRCs, namely Info Ops, CIMIC and PSYOPS are nestled under the Canadian Army. Cyber Command is under ADM(IM) while ADM(PA) is often seen as the primary Force Generator of Military Strat Com capabilities. For the next five years, these institutions will have to ‘build the plane as they fly it’ since Force Development efforts will occur concurrently with Force Employment.¹³ Other than having to report to the Vice-Chief of Defence Staff via CFD, the existence of formalized mechanisms for coordination of the Force Generators/Developers is unknown at this time. Without unity of effort and clear lines of communication, it is unclear how the IRCs will be made available for operations under a coherent Force structure in the near term.

¹² Brigadier General Jay Janzen, Director Military Strategic Communications (speech, Public Affairs Symposium, Ottawa, Canada, 4 October 2019).

¹³ *Ibid.*

The involvement of many chains of command imply a multiplication of competing priorities and agendas. First and foremost, a competition for limited resources.

Challenge 3: Ambitions vs. Resource allocation

13. Senior CAF leaders are coming to terms with the importance of the IE as a battlespace. Both the CDS through multiple addresses and Lieutenant-General Mike Rouleau's 'How we Fight' have underlined the need for our institution to adapt to the future of warfare by recognizing that war will be won in the IE, not in the physical realm. In spite of senior leadership advocacy, it appears that it is a zero sum game. Without any additional funds to deliver on SSE #65, we would need to re-allocate resources and positions from existing organizations. In turn, properly funding and providing resources to deliver effects in the IE is not universally supported by those who control allocation of financial resources and positions within the CAF. As outlined above, the Public Affairs Branch has been tasked by the CDS to 'Operationalize' itself and support operations, yet fierce negotiations were required to finally be allocated only 50 new positions to do so.¹⁴

CONCLUSION

14. In various forums the CDS has publically stated his vision that, in the future, IRCs *will* become the enabled rather than the enablers. It will require profound cultural changes within our institution, focused on the creation of new structures to manage Info Ops. Nevertheless, it is a critical discussion the institution needs to start to deliver on the CDS's vision. In this era of constant state of competition, the nature of war and the planes

¹⁴ Brigadier General Jay Janzen, Director Military Strategic Communications (speech, Public Affairs Symposium, Ottawa, Canada, 4 October 2019).

of operations of contemporary conflicts are changing. This has been repeated *ad nauseam* both within the CAF, media, academia, etc. As such the concept of what is a warrior needs to follow suit. Attributing the responsibility to understand, manage and generate joint effects in the IE within existing or new silos will render our success in the IE elusive. To be prepared for the war of the future, the institution must strive to adequately prepare its members to be as proficient in operations within the IE than in the physical realm.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on considerations presented in this paper and in spite of the existing challenges, it is assessed that the best option at this early stage would be to consolidate IRCs under a three-star command at the strategic level, with an Info Ops coordinating capability. While considering the risks associated with the creation of a new silo, creating multiple chains of command for IRCs would impede Force Development efforts and fail to develop a joint capability in the mid to long term. A separation of these capabilities would cause them to develop in a disparate manner and dilute the capacity to synchronize effects. It will be critical to integrate Mil Strat Com within this organization. When planning joint effects in the IE, guidance must be provided at the operational level to avoid ‘tunnel vision’. A mentality limited to a regional perspective must be broadened to include strategic considerations.

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