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ROYAL CANADIAN AIR FORCE DEPLOYMENTS TO NATO: HOW TO MAXIMIZE DETERRENCE

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HOW TO MAXIMIZE DETERRENCE**

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AIM

1. The aim of this service paper is to provoke further thought on how the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) can capitalize on small personnel contributions to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Small contributions are deployments where only one or two members are sent, like NATO Force Integration Units (NFIU)s for example. Small personnel contributions may not be as impressive on paper, nor make national media headlines in Canada when compared with Op REASSURANCE's Air Policing, yet the impact of a small contributions can be far reaching with enduring effects. With deliberate selection of personnel and strategic guidance combined with specific media training, the reach, messaging and lasting impacts can be felt within the host nation, NATO and maximize deterrence.

INTRODUCTION

2. This paper will briefly review the response to Russia's annexation of Crimea and Canada's resulting contribution to NATO's response to Russia's actions. It will discuss Canada's current commitments to NATO's response then dive deeper into some of the effects of less costly contributions to NATO's response to Russia.

3. Russia's ambitions in Crimea in 2014 have initiated new RCAF interactions with NATO. These new interactions have strengthened Canada's contribution to the alliance by contributing skilled Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) members and equipment to NATO's efforts, however is the RCAF maximizing the potential of these contributions? The most notable and largest RCAF contribution to NATO's response to Russia, has been Air Policing. While NATO Air Policing has been the RCAF's largest show of force, or a large concentration of deployed RCAF members, there are other significantly smaller contributions which also have a considerably large impact, particularly considering the relative size of the RCAF contribution. These smaller contributions, or NFIUs, have potential to have even more of an impact with deliberate personnel selection and minimal mission specific training to include Canada's regional strategic objectives and media training.

DISCUSSION

4. In February and March of 2014 the sovereignty and territory of Ukraine was threatened when pro-Russian forces took control of Crimea and the Russian Federation annexed the peninsula.¹ NATO responded. "Since 2014, Canada has actively worked

¹ British Broadcasting Commission, "Crimea Profile", last modified 17 January 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-18287223>.

alongside NATO allies to maintain security and stability in Central and Eastern Europe. Measures include training, exercises, and other operational tasks.”²

The Wales Summit

5. The Wales Summit Declaration, released in September of 2014, is the foundation for NATO’s response to the growing threat of Russia as a result of Russia’s annexation of Crimea. The declaration starts with profound statements that have been the foundation of NATO’s deterrent actions along the eastern edge of the Alliance for the last 5 years. “Russia’s aggressive actions against Ukraine have fundamentally challenged our vision of a Europe whole, free, and at peace.”³ The Wales Summit was the forum for key decisions which led to actions that have kept our allies quite active in recent years. These key decisions were the development of NATO’s Readiness Action Plan (RAP) which is comprised of a list of assurance measures and adaptation measures. “Assurance measures are a series of land, sea and air activities in, on and around the territory of NATO’s Allies in Central and Eastern Europe. . . [and are] designed to reassure the local populations and deter potential aggression.”⁴ Where as, “Adaptation measures are longer-term changes to NATO’s forces and command structure that improve the Alliance’s ability to react swiftly and decisively to sudden crises, whether these arise from the east or the south.”⁵

Operation REASSURANCE’s Air Policing

6. Air Policing is an Assurance Measure, which was developed as part of NATO’s RAP. Each year, a Canadian Air Task Force has been deployed in support of air policing. “The CAF sends approximately 135 members and five CF-188 Hornets to participate in NATO enhanced Air Policing from September to December.”⁶ The Air Task Force has deployed 4 times to Romania, once to Iceland and once to Lithuania.⁷ This peacetime mission contributes to collective defence and is designed to “safeguard the integrity of NATO airspace.”⁸ The aim is deterrence but there are always immeasurable benefits to such encounters, as stated by the 2018 Air Task Force-Romania Commander, Lieutenant-Colonel Tim Woods “We were able to share some best practices with our Romanian

²Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, “Prime Minister Announces Increased Support for NATO”, accessed 27 October 2019, <https://pm.gc.ca/en/news/news-releases/2018/07/12/prime-minister-announces-increased-support-nato>.

³North Atlantic Treaty Organization, “Wales Summit Declaration”, Last modified 30 August 2019, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_112964.htm.

⁴ *ibid*

⁵ *ibid*

⁶Government of Canada, “Operation REASSURANCE”, Last modified 15 November 2019, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/operations/military-operations/current-operations/operation-reassurance.html>.

⁷ *ibid*

⁸North Atlantic Treaty Organization, “Air Policing: Securing NATO Airspace”, Last modified 16 May 2019, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_132685.htm.

Allies and to train for potential future operations together.”⁹ This is how the Alliance benefits and grows together.

NATO Force Integration Units

7. One key adaptation measure from the RAP from the 2014 Wales Summit that NATO implemented was “Establishing small multinational NATO headquarters - or NATO Force Integration Units . . . on the territories of eastern Allies (Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia).”¹⁰ Canada currently contributes RCAF members to NFIUs, deployed on OUTCAN postings. The RCAF currently has members filling positions in NFIUs in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and in contingents of one or two members.

8. The roles of the 8 NFIUs are all the same and they all have the same manning construct however the positions held by various nations differs within each unit. The main role of all NFIUs is to facilitate the rapid deployment of the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) and NATO Response Forces to the host nation.¹¹ This is the key component to working with the host nation’s armed forces or more specifically in this case, the host Air Force. The 6 sub-roles of all NFIUs are:

- a. Support the enhanced Forward Presence Contribute to Joint Comprehensive Situational Awareness;
- b. Develop a network and face to face relationships both within NATO and the host nation’s ministries and armed forces;
- c. Assist with the development of host nation support plans for reception, staging and onward movement for VJTF;
- d. Support training initiatives including NATO and visiting militaries; and
- e. Reinforce NATO’s strategic communication messages.¹²

9. Each NFIU is comprised of half international NATO members and half host nation armed force members for a total of around 40 personnel, all military. The units work closely with the host nation armed forces to develop plans and with all levels of government and community to enhance strategic communication. Naturally, the way that each NFIU is used is a little different, depending on how the host nation wants to work with the unit and how much access the NFIUs are permitted.

Strategic Communications

⁹Government of Canada, “Canada’s Air Task Force Completes 2018 Deployment With NATO Enhanced Air Policing in Romania”, Last modified 3 January 2019, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/news/2019/01/canadas-air-task-force-completes-2018-deployment-with-nato-enhanced-air-policing-in-romania.html>.

¹⁰Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, “Readiness Action Plan”, accessed 27 October 2019, <https://shape.nato.int/readiness-action-plan>.

¹¹Joint Force Command Brunssum, “NFIU Lithuania”, accessed 27 October 2019, <https://jfcbs.nato.int/page5725819/nato-force-integration-units/nfiu-lithuania.aspx>.

¹² *ibid*

10. NFIU Lithuania has a total of 3 Canadian Armed Forces members on OUTCAN postings within Lithuania. 2 of the 3 are RCAF members and there have been 2 RCAF members there since the start of 2016. NFIU Lithuania is an incredibly active NFIU and is dedicated to visiting all areas of the country to engage with all levels of the society. There are community visits about every month or so, always in different areas of the country.¹³ On community visits, the NFIU team visits the local municipal government, usually the mayor and elders, any local militia commander, a local business to see what the area can provide for planning purposes and a local high school where the students receive a brief on NATO and the NFIU.¹⁴ From 2016-2019 the high school brief was led by Major James Fedevich, an RCAF pilot who was the main creator and speaker delivering the brief and leading the question and answer period with the students. Questions included subjects like Canada's involvement in Ukraine and opinions on President Trump. As such, Maj Fedevich had a great deal of influence over the messaging and understandably so, there was a significant Canadian flavour to the messaging. In addition to community visits, were community displays when NFIU Lithuania would set up a stall at a community fair or celebratory day to engage with the local population and answer any of their questions. This demonstrates that there are several occasions to engage with the communities with the opportunity to incorporate any type of Canadian specific messaging as desired by the RCAF and CAF that would be regionally appropriate.

11. One key position that the RCAF holds is the Air Operations position within the NFIU Lithuania (previously filled by Maj James Fedevich, 2016-2019), this position is only one person deep thus there is a considerable amount of autonomy particularly as the rest of the unit is army centric. Maj Fedevich engaged heavily with the Lithuanian Air Force and worked closely with their Commander, Colonel Dainius Guzas. Solely because of Maj Fedevich's analysis of what could modernize the Lithuanian Air Force, the Commander was able to introduce new scheduling and air planning mechanisms that will lead to the implementation of a Lithuanian Air Tasking Order. This was a tremendous initial step forward in revolutionizing the Lithuanian Air Force as it addressed flight safety, standardization and pilot skills management. As a result of Maj Fedevich's efforts, he was awarded the Lithuanian Armed Forces Medal of Distinction for outstanding service, from the Lithuanian Air Force Commander on 20 June 2019.¹⁵

12. Another example of leveraging the skills of RCAF members to promote Canada in the diplomatic realm was when Major Joanna Martin, as a Construction Engineer converted her Canadian contracting knowledge into a NATO contracting educational program in Lithuania. She briefed several ambassadors and CEOs. The Estonian Ambassador, Ms. Jana Vanaveski was so impressed she insisted that Maj Martin travel to

¹³NATO Force Integration Unit's Facebook page, accessed 27 October 2019, https://www.facebook.com/pg/NFIU.Lithuania/posts/?ref=page_internal.

¹⁴ *ibid*

¹⁵ *ibid*

Tallin, Estonia to brief the Estonian Chamber of Commerce, which occurred in June 2019.¹⁶

Pre-Deployment Considerations

13. As there are regular interactions at the diplomatic level, and having RCAF members in these unique positions, it is of paramount importance that they are capable of tactful communications. Members must act politically correct as they are essentially Canadian ambassadors at all times, regardless of working hours. By sending the wrong type of member into these special positions, there is potential for the wrong type of Canadian messaging or even international incidents to disrupt, hurt, or even sever international relations with Canada. Acknowledging that the pool of personnel who are both willing and able to fulfill these RCAF positions, may be limited, the effort must be emphasized to select members who will help and not hinder international relations. Diplomatic skills are essential requirements for a NFIU mission, this is a consideration that must not be overlooked. By supporting NATO's Russian deterrence initiatives, Canada builds credibility within the alliance. That credibility can easily be lost if Canada were to send the wrong person into a politically sensitive position.

14. Occasionally, RCAF members are sent onto NATO missions who do not possess the ability to work in a culturally diverse work environment, this is an unfortunate reality that could easily be avoided. It is a leadership responsibility to appreciate that some missions are more culturally sensitive and are not suitable for all RCAF members. Consideration must be heeded when selecting personnel for such missions. Deliberate personnel selection, considering traits, emphasizing the criticality of having the capacity for diplomacy are essential. The consequence of sending ill-prepared personnel without the necessary diplomatic skills could be disastrous and easily either end Canada's contribution to that location or cause an international incident.

15. In addition to selecting ideal candidates for small-footprint missions, members will benefit greatly from mission specific training including Canada's regional strategic messaging objectives. Armed with this knowledge, members could easily project Canada's message, through Allies, diplomats, the host government, and the host population. To further extend Canada's messaging reach, deploying members must receive media training as part of pre-deployment training. There are opportunities to shape and create social content and interact with journalists, visit NFIU Lithuania's Facebook page as an example.¹⁷ On the Facebook page, one can find videos centered around or solely about RCAF members. RCAF members can control the narrative and ensure that the messaging is professional, accurate and in line with Canada's message. In addition to video content, social media updates and photographs containing RCAF

¹⁶Eesti Kaubandus-Tööstuskoda, "Estonian Chamber of Commerce and Industry Events", accessed 27 October 2019. <https://www.koda.ee/et/sundmused/nato-hangete-infoseminar-kuidas-osaleda-nato-hangetel>.

¹⁷NATO Force Integration Unit's Facebook page, accessed 27 October 2019, https://www.facebook.com/pg/NFIU.Lithuania/posts/?ref=page_internal.

members are regularly posted. If the participating RCAF member elects to not engage with social media or any of the social opportunities, the major advantages of the position to the RCAF are lost.

CONCLUSION

16. By sending smaller RCAF contributions, like deployments of only a couple of members to NATO missions there is great potential for high payoff. The payoff is maximized deterrence. To capitalize on this payoff, these positions must exist. RCAF must continue to support these positions and seek additional ones. Personnel with diplomatic skills must be selected for these positions and they must be provided with media training along with Canada's strategic messaging guidance applicable for the region of deployment. By making these small adjustments, these smaller contributions to NATO are areas where the RCAF, CAF and Canada have vast potential to gain advantages as this is where simple changes can easily be actualized. These are irregular opportunities for RCAF members to contribute in unique ways to showcase RCAF skills, strengthen NATO and enhance deterrence. Through enhanced deterrence, the RCAF remains engaged in the world, solidifying the CAF's robust commitment to NATO.¹⁸

RECOMMENDATION

17. The CAF must seek individual OUTCAN positions for RCAF members to extend the RCAF, CAF and Canada's reach into global air forces and diplomatic communities. It is important to prioritize NATO contributions on the small scale as the payoff to Canada can vastly outweigh the contribution, particularly in relation to larger scale contributions. It is of paramount importance to select personnel who display the capacity for diplomatic interactions and provide a sufficient amount of media training along with the strategic messaging appropriate to the region of deployment.

¹⁸ Canada. Department of National Defence. Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy. Ottawa, (2017). 61

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