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REVISITING MILITARY POLICE FUNDAMENTALS

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AIM

1. The purpose of this service paper is to provide a review of scientific literature on the health and performance impact of shift work with a view to suggest avenues for an employment model that favors the long term health of shift workers and overall stability of the Canadian Forces Military Police Group (CF MP Gp). In accordance with the current scientific literature on this issue, a fixed or rotational schedule based on a 10hour (h) shift length¹ is deemed best.

INTRODUCTION

2. Most if not all military police (MP) detachments ensure a 24h year-round coverage to the military community they serve; thus requiring the obvious use of scheduling to meet this requirement. In general, detachments have adopted a rotational model structured around 12h shifts transitioning between days and nights to meet this task. This is called rotational vice a fixed model where one section continuously works the same portion of the 24h day. The issue lies with the often practical inability of local detachments to maintain predictability in the shift schedule due to small numbers of effective personnel either able to conduct police duties or actually available in place. At this point, section structures get re-arranged in order to fill coverage gaps, creating irregular shifts or sometimes extra workload.

3. In order to address these issues that start from the onset of the MP's career and will be part of MP operations' fundamental equilibrium throughout, we will discuss three avenues of approach that merit investigation to find solutions. The first two options

¹ K L Amendola et al., *The Shift Length Experiment*, Police Foundation, 2011, www.policefoundation.org/shiftexperiment/; Scott A. Peterson et al., "Associations between Shift Work Characteristics, Shift Work Schedules, Sleep and Burnout in North American Police Officers: A Cross-Sectional Study," *BMJ Open* 9, no. 11 (2019): 1–16, doi:10.1136/bmjopen-2019-030302.

require a more radical approach, challenging assumptions and certain order of things. The third option presented simply requires trying new models of employment that may yield more flexibility and stability.

DISCUSSION

Application of scientific literature and methodology issues

4. Most studies on shift work's different impacts target a civilian work force that will have different ranges of occupation from the general laborer² to the more specialist and technical skilled workforce. For instance, recent studies will focus on the healthcare providers, i.e. doctors and nurses³, air traffic control⁴, or emergency services such as police officers.⁵ Although the range of negative health impacts attributable to shiftwork varies widely, from possible higher probabilities of cancer to chronic diseases to sleep disorders.⁶ Impacts remain real as well in psychological⁷ and psycho-social⁸ aspects of

² Margot Shields, "Shift Work and Health.," *Health Reports / Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Health Information = Rapports Sur La Santé / Statistique Canada, Centre Canadien d'information Sur La Santé* 13, no. 4 (2002): 11–33, doi:10.1136/oem.22.3.246.

³ Hogne Vikanes Buchvold et al., "Shift Work and Lifestyle Factors: A 6-Year Follow-Up Study Among Nurses," *Frontiers in Public Health* 7, no. October (2019), doi:10.3389/fpubh.2019.00281; Hanna Admi et al., "Shift Work in Nursing: Is It Really a Risk Factor for Nurses' Health and Patients' Safety?," *Nursing Economics* 26, no. 4 (2008): 250–57.

⁴ Ângela M. Freitas et al., "Effects of an Alternating Work Shift on Air Traffic Controllers and the Relationship with Excessive Daytime Sleepiness and Stress," *Arquivos de Neuro-Psiquiatria* 75, no. 10 (2017): 711–17, doi:10.1590/0004-282x20170123.

⁵ Leonard B. Bell et al., "Effects of 13-Hour 20-Minute Work Shifts on Law Enforcement Officers' Sleep, Cognitive Abilities, Health, Quality of Life, and Work Performance: The Phoenix Study," *Police Quarterly* 18, no. 3 (2015): 293–337, doi:10.1177/1098611115584910; David A. Alexander and Leslie G. Walker, "Is My Stress Greater Than Yours? A Comparison of Policemen and Firemen," *International Journal of Police Science & Management* 2, no. 4 (2000): 303–12, doi:10.1177/146135570000200403; Peterson et al., "Associations between Shift Work Characteristics, Shift Work Schedules, Sleep and Burnout in North American Police Officers: A Cross-Sectional Study."

⁶ Richard Tewksbury and Allen Copenhaver, "State Police Officer Sleep Patterns and Fast Food Consumption," *International Journal of Police Science & Management* 17, no. 4 (2015): 230–36, doi:10.1177/1461355715617343.

⁷ Peterson et al., "Associations between Shift Work Characteristics, Shift Work Schedules, Sleep and Burnout in North American Police Officers: A Cross-Sectional Study."

⁸ Alexander and Walker, "Is My Stress Greater Than Yours? A Comparison of Policemen and Firemen."

the worker or within the organization as work-related safety, performance⁹ and retention¹⁰ issues may arise.

5. There are several methodological issues with equating MP as a statistical population to that of classic studies on shift work consequences. For one, from a sociological perspective, most of the scientific literature needs to account for a certain bias within the population studied whereas people that really can not sustain shift work simply move on to the next job: “Because such people tend to stop working shift in a relatively short time, their physical and psychological problems may not be apparent in a cross-sectional analysis.”¹¹ It ensues that most studies recognize the current sample as representing the people that are probably able to tolerate shift work to certain extent; therefore adding a caveat to correlations of shift work impact on this select population since it can already tolerate it to a certain degree:

Given the problems experienced by shift workers, it is not surprising that most do not maintain non-standard hours for prolonged periods. Within two years, most shift workers either changed their hours or left the workforce. This supports earlier studies suggesting a “healthy survivor effect,” meaning that the people who continue are a more robust group who are willing and able to tolerate the stress of working shift.¹²

6. Members of the military do not necessarily have such an option, although the variety of employment within the MP may enable for some transitioning away from shift work, most MP do not have a choice or if they do, the immediacy of quitting shift is dependent on contractual obligations and trade requirements which remains bureaucratic and lengthy. Further, MP members have typically made the choice to be in this line of work, something that would render comparison with civilian law enforcement agents more suitable than with a population construction representative of society at large.

⁹ Bell et al., “Effects of 13-Hour 20-Minute Work Shifts on Law Enforcement Officers’ Sleep, Cognitive Abilities, Health, Quality of Life, and Work Performance: The Phoenix Study.”

¹⁰ Susan Hilal and Bryan Litsey, “Reducing Police Turnover: Recommendations for the Law Enforcement Agency,” *International Journal of Police Science & Management* 22, no. 1 (2020): 73–83, doi:10.1177/1461355719882443.

¹¹ Shields, “Shift Work and Health,” 24.

¹² *Ibid.*, 29.

7. Therefore, it could be assumed that MP consist a population with different percentages of correlation due to a probable distinct make-up from civilian work force but one that isn't too far off from akin civilian law enforcement agencies. Second, the ecosystem of the MP guardhouse has different inputs than a civilian health ward of police station. Military factors such as long deployments (planned and unplanned) without backfill of the vacated position, miscellaneous tasks and career training introduces an element of unpredictability in the available composition of the detachment workforce and individual schedule predictability that is difficult to account for in the civilian world. Compounded with the sometimes very small personnel numbers within a detachment serving a community, the ability to maintain requirements can be severally hampered at times: thus incurring an additional tax on shift workers. These factors appear at first glance to be additional stressors or aggravating factors in the correlation between shift work and possible biological, psycho-social or psycho-somatic correlations. Indeed, this particularity seems to increase irregularities in scheduling which has been shown to be the most impactful event around scheduling stressors: "Among the different schedules, officers working irregular shifts had a twofold higher risk of overall burnout, demonstrating the risk of burnout associated with this schedule for the first time in police."¹³ Therefore, the shift model is at the crux of structural resiliency issues for shift workers along with the length of the shift. Indeed, most studies agree that a fixed and 10h shift is ideal where 12h shifts rotational or worst, irregular, are the most disruptive.¹⁴

Option 1: Current 24h requirements analysis.

8. The center of the issue revolves around the requirement of the MP detachments to provide 24h coverage throughout the year to both base operations and the community and how to reach this threshold through a minimum of personnel. Coverage requirements

¹³ Peterson et al., "Associations between Shift Work Characteristics, Shift Work Schedules, Sleep and Burnout in North American Police Officers: A Cross-Sectional Study," 10.

¹⁴ Bell et al., "Effects of 13-Hour 20-Minute Work Shifts on Law Enforcement Officers' Sleep, Cognitive Abilities, Health, Quality of Life, and Work Performance: The Phoenix Study"; Amendola et al., *The Shift Length Experiment*.

have essentially dictated the majority of the work model possibilities even though it may never have been truly questioned. Analysis of missions supported by MP may reveal that some do not conduct continuous operations and therefore may not require extensive MP coverage during base installation quiet hours. This would essentially change the need from 24h to 20h or maybe 18h a day, providing more flexibility to implement a different shift structures with less established strength. These “reduced coverage” models have been implemented by different forces in smaller rural communities or where there is an extended geographical coverage, certain hours of the night may not require a presence at the station with emergency calls being covered by on-call personnel from home (for instance, from shortly after bars close to just before the start of the workday). In order for MP to reach such conditions, the DND operational requirement must be established first but we know that not all bases conduct night operations. Security prevention task requirements would need to be maintained but these checks do not necessarily require to be conducted by an armed individual. Certain installations require an armed response within a certain given time, something that again could be maintained with on-call MP. This depends on the proximity of the MP’s dwelling to the workplace and policy adjustments to allow an emergency response from a private dwelling. These elements can be achieved by either imposing a smaller radius of acceptable distance for the personal residence or providing sleeping quarters within the guardhouse: resulting in the implementation of a split shift or 24-48¹⁵ type scheduling.

9. In a way, this off-hours stand-by model is currently implemented throughout MP guardhouses with the duty officer shift concept: a supervisory function carried out during off-hours in the event MP patrols encounter a call necessitating either chain of command action or direction and guidance on how to proceed. This essentially boils down to a decapitated shift, dislocated where patrols are maintained at night with the senior advisor being on call from home, usually someone from the day staff. Some units already expect their duty officers to come in when called in order to provide face-to-face leadership.

¹⁵ 24 hours on followed by 48 hours off worked by 3 sections or other variants such as 48-96. Often favoured by firefighters.

Option 2: re-allocation of personnel.

10. MP guardhouses have already been classified as small, medium or large and been assigned a corresponding established strength. A rationalization process may be undertaken to redistribute positions against this model across the detachments therefore reducing or increasing the amount local positions based on the size classification, arguably favoring smaller units. This should enable more flexibility in small detachments to provide more predictability to shift workers due to the increased amount of personnel. Indeed, a large part of the issue lies in the small numbers within the sections. Even considering this, the military factor of deployments, tasks and courses will make meeting the requirement difficult in these cases where structures revolve around 4 sections.

11. Other areas where possible re-assignment could occur include positions from other units and headquarters to re-center allocation on the tactical concentration of force where shift work is required. Re-distribution of positions between different units such as the Canadian Forces National Investigative Service, the Close Protection Services Unit or the MP Security Services unit is unlikely as the areas are already high priority services to supported commanders and agencies. We argue here the internal look needs to address the command and control structure of the guardhouses and eliminate possible redundancies in favor of concentrating personnel within the guardhouses. For instance, some provinces are dissected between the three elemental MP chains of command. Ontario and British Columbia both comprise MP detachment of the Air Force Military Police Group (AF MP Gp), Army Military Group (A MP Gp) and the Naval Military Police Group (NMP Gp). The MP chain of command flow is based on supported elemental commanders as opposed to geographical logics (in other words jurisdictional). This presumably favors expert advice to elements: the army is served by an A MP Gp unit but the MP career path doesn't necessarily stream within the elements. Policing sub-units have elemental affiliations by name only. This model confuses police command and staff advice functions to commanders wherein it is assumed both roles should be double-hatted by the same position at all operational levels. Decoupling this assumption may enable realignment along a natural command flow while favoring separate focus on

command and advice. Efficiencies could be found in a different understanding of MP command and control versus provost marshal or staff advice responsibilities to formation commanders, thus pushing the MP formation headquarters personnel downward to the tactical level within the units: leaving senior elemental provost marshals to advise on Naval, Army or Air Force on L1 issues. Clear delimitation of tactical roles and responsibilities of local guardhouse versus operational A MP Gp and AF MP Gp unit level headquarters can eliminate guardhouse day staff positions that should be conducted by unit level headquarters, thus pushing sub-unit level day staff positions back in the shift rotation. Current day staff roles within the AF MP Gp and A MP Gp sub-units need to be re-assessed against these delimitations of formation, unit and sub-unit responsibilities in order to eliminate redundancies of the operational level within the tactical levels. A re-alignment on a geographical basis may permit the folding of formation and unit headquarters into the tactical or strategic levels depending on establishment strength requirements as well as serving as a forcing function to assess where these roles and responsibilities should lay.

Option 3: test implementations

12. Conduct test implementations to determine the best model for 24h coverage depending on the ability of guardhouse to field personnel. Most guardhouses utilize a 4 section model to cover the 24h period whereas other models can afford the same coverage with 3 sections based on different shift length. Advantages of a 3 section model are in the size growth that can be achieved by redistributing personnel of the fourth section within the remaining three which could decrease the amount of irregularities in scheduling felt by personnel due to a constant need to backfill changes in the other sections. Ranges from the 24-48 to 4-10h shifts could be tested over a certain amount of time to find the most efficient model for an MP detachment. Further, more unorthodox models such as the 24-48 may in actuality be necessary for small detachments and at the same time provide some important advantages. Although personnel are effectively at work for the 24h or 48h period, esprit de corps within the crew probably rises along with internal managed scheduling to ensure the 24h coverage. Overall bigger sections can

absorb the military factor better as it compounds onto leave and sick days that need to be accounted in a section's ability to sustain its integrity.

13. Implementing models constructed in the civilian policing organizations may have unforeseen secondary and tertiary effects because of military specific inputs into the guardhouse ecosystem. For instance, the military population differs from the civilian population; however, it is unclear in the absence of data if this difference the qualitative aspects of the two populations is maintained throughout the respective careers. That considered, the implementation of test shift models is an attempt at mitigating issues stemming from shift work. Although several studies present scientific rigor issues, limited often times by their reliance on officer self reporting or surveys, the fact remains that revisiting one of the major shaping structures of the CF MP Gp should occur if efficiencies and stability can be found.

CONCLUSION

14. Work organization has been shown to have several impacts on shift workers. We know that a part of job dissatisfaction of MP is due to comparatively lesser pay than civilian law enforcement organization in part because of the lack of overtime pay. As such, we've looked at three options or areas of enquiry to achieve both optimal productivity (thus less overtime required which can't be compensated monetarily) and quality of life. Challenging assumptions of required 24h coverage on bases without night operations, ensuring an ideal concentration of force of MP assets and actually trying new models are all options to be looked into and eventually implemented.

RECOMMENDATION

15. We recommend further study be conducted to include the shift worker perspective in model construct to implement a scheduling along recommended 10h shift length with as few sections as possible but with larger numbers in order to maximize stability of scheduling. In the absence of data for MP personnel, we can at least assume a 3 section

construct will provide more sub-unit level agility to react to strategic demands. Finally, the MP organization being a unique law enforcement model with specific organizational inputs should be the subject of longitudinal studies with the view of providing long-term comparative data with findings on other law enforcement organizations. These studies should be included in a force development organization of the CF MP Gp.

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