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Bridging the Gap: Can Contractors Help the Canadian Armed Forces During a Personnel Shortage?

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Exercise Solo Flight

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**Bridging the Gap: Can Contractors Help the Canadian Armed Forces
During a Personnel Shortage?**

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BRIDGING THE GAP: CAN CONTRACTS HELP THE CANADIAN ARMED FORCES DURING A PERSONNEL SHORTAGE

Introduction

It is certainly no secret that today's Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) are progressing through a difficult period in their history. One need look no further than Canadian media headlines to find reports that the CAF is currently severely understaffed, with estimates of the CAF currently operating approximately ten thousand personnel below ideal numbers.¹ Complicating this issue is the mixed bag of contributing factors to the personnel shortage. Retention surveys point to issues ranging from poor leadership to limited opportunities for deployment as critical factors in the battle to retain talent in the CAF.² The new Minister of National Defence (MND) has presented findings that the CAF has ignored advice on how to become more inclusive and diverse over the past twenty years.³ All of this, and one must still take into consideration what must be noted as the largest issue the CAF has faced over the past few years; the unacceptable indiscretions of a large quantity of senior leaders within the organization.⁴ Put all of this together, and it is not surprising that recent polling shows the majority of Canadians

¹ National Post, "Military dealing with more than 10,000 unfilled positions amid growing pressures," last accessed 26 April 2022, <https://nationalpost.com/pmnl/news-pmn/canada-news-pmn/military-dealing-with-more-than-10000-unfilled-positions-amid-growing-pressures>.

² CAF Retention Survey 2019.

³ Lee Berthiaume, "Canadian military not doing enough to detect, prevent extremism in the ranks: report," *CTV News*, last accessed 26 April 2022, <https://www.ctvnews.ca/politics/canadian-military-not-doing-enough-to-detect-prevent-extremism-in-the-ranks-report-1.5874626>.

⁴ Ashley Burke and Murray Brewster, "A military in crisis: Here are the senior leaders embroiled in sexual misconduct cases," *CBC*, last accessed 26 April 2022, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/sexual-misconduct-military-senior-leaders-dnd-caf-1.6218683>.

would be unwilling, or unlikely to join the CAF.⁵ Now, this must of course be taken with a grain of salt when thinking about the numbers, as arguing that almost a quarter of Canadians would consider joining the CAF could be spun as a success story when considering the quantity of soldiers against the population of Canada, but the message that this article sends is that the media is not willing or not able to help spin a positive narrative for the CAF at this time, so the CAF needs to heavily invest in repairing that image from within. What is it that would attract young Canadians to serve in an organization that either cannot or will not protect its members? Why would a young soldier choose to continue to serve in an organization where they are constantly asked to do more to make up for empty positions?

Despite the difficult situation the CAF currently finds itself in, there is a silver lining that can be found. This is not the first time that the CAF has found itself with waning public opinion and issues related to recruiting and retention. In the 1990s, labelled by many as the “Decade of Darkness”, the then Canadian Forces worked through many of the same types of problems. In order to relieve some of the pressure that the serving members of the Forces felt at that time, the CAF turned to Alternative Service Delivery (ASD) as a strategy. This paper will explore whether or not contracted support could be a method with which the CAF can relieve some of the pressure felt by short handed professions in the upcoming years, until such time as the CAF can bridge the current gap it is experiencing in personnel requirements. It will do so first by looking at the use of ASD to determine where there are potential lessons learned from the CAF of

⁵ David Pugliese, “Majority of Canadians have no interest in joining the military, DND poll shows,” *Ottawa Citizen*, last accessed 28 April 2022, <https://ottawacitizen.com/news/national/defence-watch/majority-of-canadians-have-no-interest-in-joining-the-military-dnd-poll-shows>.

the 1990s, and establish strategies which the CAF of today could utilize to bridge the gap between today's personnel shortages and a healthy CAF of the future. It will also focus on some of the successes and struggles our American allies have had with contracting out defence services, as there is much that can be learned from the actions of our neighbours to the south. This paper will also look to some of the successes that the CAF have experienced already in the world of contracted services, as well as some of the risks and downfalls which could be expected when employing civilians to perform traditional military functions. Of course, contracting is not a panacea, but it could certainly relieve some of the pressure on overworked military members and it is a worthwhile endeavor to explore the ways in which the CAF can strengthen support for its soldiers, particularly in the technical service type professions and the training system, which could help to fix some of the endemic problems the CAF currently faces.

Personnel Shortages in the 1990s

Following the release of the 1994 Defence White Paper, there is no other way to describe the situation other than that the CAF was in a period of reduction. Firstly, the CAF was required to work its way through a twenty-three percent reduction in its funding, which is certainly a massive undertaking for any organization.⁶ At the same time, the White Paper directed the CAF to decrease levels of personnel from 89,000 to 60,000, basically decreasing the CAF maximum operational capacity by fully one third of their organizational strength.⁷ Even in a vacuum, this would have been a massively difficult problem for the CAF leadership to solve, but of course the CAF could not forget

⁶ Christopher Spearin, "Not a 'real state'? Defence privatization in Canada," *International Journal* (Autumn 2005): 1097.

⁷ Ibid, 1101.

about any of its national or international commitments, of which the “number, intensity and location of missions increased.”⁸ The world was proving itself to be more complicated following the end of the Cold War and the CAF found itself in a catch-22 situation. The concept of increasing the teeth of the CAF while reducing all of the supporting staff would of course not work, as the CSS units and soldiers are essential to the operational soldiers being combat effective. At the same time, reducing the military’s holdings of aircraft or naval ships would not work as the demands placed upon the CAF by the White Paper were to maintain an agile and multi-faceted armed forces.⁹ Add the fact that the Canadian Army (CA) would be reduced from four Brigades to three,¹⁰ and it is clear that the CAF of the time were dealing with a significant challenge, one which would require a solution that the CAF could not implement without outside help of some sort.

Of course, the idea of a contracted military solution was not a new one at the time. There exists evidence that contractors supported military forces as far back as the sixteenth century, so there certainly existed precedent to turn to civilian companies to help solve military woes.¹¹ In fact, the earliest examples of Canadians working as military contractors can likely be traced to the 1800s, when Canadians traveled up the Nile working for the British Empire.¹² So, perhaps it is not surprising that this was to become a potential solution to allow the CAF to work through these difficult years, and it

⁸ Lieutenant Colonel (ret’d) Al Morrow, CD, “CANCAP: The changing face of logistic support to the Canadian Forces,” *Canadian Army Journal* 8, no. 2 (Summer 2005): 74.

⁹ Colonel Robert Maynard, “Army Logistics Beyond Repair: Can Contracting Out Save the Day?” (National Security Studies Paper, Canadian Forces College, 1999), 2.

¹⁰ Morrow, 74.

¹¹ Major James E. Althouse, “Contractors on the Battlefield: What Doctrine Says, and Doesn’t Say,” *Army Logistician* 30, no. 6 (Nov/Dec 1998): 14.

¹² Morrow, 74.

certainly seems that the CAF wholeheartedly embraced ASD as a method of operations for as Col Hines stated, ASD became “...synonymous with contracting for services or outsourcing.”¹³ However, Col Hines also made the argument at the time that the structure of the CAF at the time did not lend itself to the effective day to day management of in service contracts due to the intense level of management that is required, and a more hands off method was normally adopted,¹⁴ a great lesson learned for today’s CAF. A thorough plan for the management of contracted personnel needs to be established before any contract is signed to bring in employees.

One point of particular interest in Col Hines’ assessment of the challenges facing the CAF with regards to contracting was the relationship between the Assistant Deputy Minister (Materiel) (ADM(Mat)) and the force employers.¹⁵ ADM(Mat) remains responsible for the acquisition of materiel within the Department of National Defence (DND) to this day, but contracting can present an open door for the force employers to bring equipment into the organization with lower level oversight over quality of equipment. This is a friction that has not been solved, but requires constant attention and education throughout organizations which possess contracting services.

US Military Use of Contractors

In searching for examples of both the good and the bad that can come from the armed forces contracting out jobs to decrease the quantity of soldiers required to conduct operations, the CAF need look no further than the United States of America. Though not

¹³ Colonel Glynne Hines, “Alternate Service Delivery: ‘Managing to get it done right’,” (National Security Studies Course Paper, Canadian Forces College, 2002).

¹⁴ Ibid, 34.

¹⁵ Ibid, 2.

the first foray into the use of civilians in the battlespace for the US military, a decision made by then President Johnson to rely on civilian contracting rather than the Reserve Component (RC) of the US military was the impetus for Army Logisticians to create a preplanned method for the use of contractors. From this idea sprung the formalization of the process in the form of the Logistics Civil Augmentation Program (LOGCAP).¹⁶ During operations, the US Army must be self-sufficient sixty days after the commencement of the operation. In order to achieve this, the US Army must normally rely on the RC as this is where the majority of their CSS elements reside. Vietnam became a great springboard for the creation of LOGCAP because of the fact that President Johnson did not permit the deployment of the RC.¹⁷ The fact that LOGCAP gave the US military the ability to plan ahead for civilian support on operations became an excellent tool for support to operations. In fact, it has even been said that LOGCAP has become absolutely essential to the US military's ability to conduct successful operations in the international domain.¹⁸

As the Cold War ended and American soldiers became involved in increasingly complex operations, particularly in the Middle East, the use of LOGCAP did not slow down. In fact, it turned out to be quite the opposite. The ratio of civilian contractors to American soldiers increased from the early 1990s during the first Gulf War, where there was one civilian for every 100 uniformed member, to one for every ten working in the Persian Gulf just ten short years later, and the increase continued.¹⁹ In fact, at the height

¹⁶ Major Camille M. Nichols, "The Logistics Civil Augmentation Program," *Military Review* 76, no. 2 (Mar/Apr 1996): 65.

¹⁷ Nichols, 66.

¹⁸ Nichols, 65.

¹⁹ Spierin, 1102.

of the Iraq War, between 2003 and 2010, the US military employed over 210,000 civilians compared to only 160,000 uniformed members in the region. In large part, these contracts performed all of the base support type functions that logisticians would normally be responsible for, whether it be running refueling stations or cooking and serving meals, but a not insignificant quantity of approximately 12 thousand of these civilians were indeed working as security contractors.²⁰ Replacing this vast quantity of civilian contractors with uniformed soldiers would have been unsustainable for the US military, demonstrating a clear success for the LOGCAP system as a whole.

Though American use of contracted support to military operations has experienced its fair share of successes, it must be noted that undesirable activity has also occurred through these contracts. Firstly, one must consider how difficult it would be to keep the process of contracting completely fair and equitable when working with such an enormous quantity of personnel and services required, across such a huge region. Consider as well that the average soldier does not have any special training regarding contracting, or even working with contractors, and there appears a large potential for activities such as fraud, malfeasance, and other types of illegal conduct.²¹ In fact, oversight and deficiencies linked to contract management were linked to billions of dollars of wasted resources in Iraq, a problem that led the US Department of Defense to create separate contracting commands, dedicating resources to ensure tight management and performance tracking of contracts and contracted members in operational theatres.²²

²⁰ Lucas, G.R., “The Ethics of Defense and Private Security Contracting”, in *Military ethics: what everyone needs to know* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 8.

²¹ Lucas, 7.

²² David Perry, “The privatization of the Canadian military,” *International Journal* (Summer 2009): 699.

As difficult as it is for a military to explain this type of activity to its taxpayers, ever more difficult to explain are the types of incidents that private security company Blackwater found itself in while employed by the US military. The invasion of the city of Fallujah and consequential Sunni insurgency in Iraq was at least partially fuelled by the public mutilation of four Blackwater employees in 2004, and on a separate occasion 17 Iraqi civilians were shot by a Blackwater security detail in 2007, significantly delaying the negotiation of a new status of forces agreement.²³ These types of activities have very real impacts on the war effort at a strategic level, which is clearly not the desired outcome for any military in contracting civilians to conduct operational or support tasks.

Successful Contracting by the CAF

During the time Canada spent involved in the war in Afghanistan, there certainly existed sufficient evidence to suggest that Canada's use of contractors was following in the footsteps of what the US military continued to establish as a new, modern military force which demonstrated advanced cooperation between soldier and civilian.²⁴ This example of following the lead of the US military is why it is surprising to note that, in reviewing Canada's latest defence policy, Strong Secure Engaged (SSE), there is very little focus on moving toward civilian contractors to improve or augment the logistics support within the CAF. True, SSE was released in 2017 and therefore its ability to predict the struggles the CAF currently face was not perfect. Also true, SSE speaks to improving the CAF capacity to manage and exploit service contracts, particularly at the local level, and utilize contracts to implement energy efficiencies and construction

²³ Perry, 698.

²⁴ Spearin, 1103.

projects.²⁵ However, the potential use of civilians to aid logistics organizations within the CAF is notably absent, especially when compared to the 1994 White Paper which specifically stated the transfer of support functions to Canadian industry as a method of adapting better business practices within the CAF.²⁶

The post Cold War era created a real opportunity for contracted services to demonstrate their potential value to CAF operations internationally. As discussed, the CAF was faced with significant personnel shortages which hit the support trades hardest, establishing a gap between what the CAF could provide as far as CSS personnel and what was required to continue to support the pace of operations. This left the CAF in a situation where it could not hope to continue to provide relevant forces to its international commitments, particularly to the North American Treaty Organization (NATO) stabilization force in Bosnia-Herzegovina.²⁷ It was thanks to this situation that the CAF dove into its first modern day use of contractors to support deployed operations in 2000. Though it may have been difficult to predict the level of success this idea would have at the time, it proved effective in allowing the CAF to continue to meet its international mandates while working through significant shortages in CSS personnel. In fact, the success of outsourcing support activities in Bosnia proved to be the impetus to create the Canadian Contractor Augmentation Program (CANCAP), which was inspired in no small way by the US military's LOGCAP program.²⁸

²⁵ Department of National Defence, *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy* (Ottawa, 2017), 112.

²⁶ Department of National Defence, *1994 Defence White Paper* (Ottawa, 1994).

²⁷ Perry, 690.

²⁸ Morrow, 76.

As the CAF prepared to enter Afghanistan in 2003, the CANCAP contract was awarded to SNC-LAVALIN PAE Inc., who proved themselves capable of meeting the CAF operational demands during a brigade training scenario in Wainwright early in that year.²⁹ CANCAP and the CAF worked through some early growing pains to establish how best they could work together and exploit each other's capacities, but these growing pains would pass and led to a great deal of success in the early days of the Afghanistan mission. CANCAP was able to prepare not one, but three camps for the CAF prior to the CAF arrival in Afghanistan in August of 2003, and the main Canadian camp in Afghanistan at that time, Camp Julien in Kabul, was regarded by many as one of the best equipped camps in the war torn country.³⁰ CANCAP became a good example of what contractors could do to provide CSS to a camp as they employed approximately 200 individuals at KAF at a cost of around \$25 million. Though that number may not seem insignificant, the cost becomes much more palatable when considering what it would cost to fill the same positions with soldiers. Due to the limited timelines of deployment rotations for CAF members, the cost in personnel would more than double to over four hundred individuals, while the operational cost of employing that quantity of soldiers would jump to approximately \$70 million,³¹ not an insignificant change. It quickly becomes painfully obvious why contracted solutions were so popular during the war in Afghanistan from purely a financial point of view.

²⁹ Morrow, 82.

³⁰ Morrow, 83.

³¹ David Perry, "Contractors in Kandahar, eh? Canada's 'Real' Commitment to Afghanistan," *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* 9, no. 4 (Summer 2007): 22.

There are some fantastic examples of where the CAF already has taken advantage of private corporations to enable operational success. The training system within the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) is certainly one of these examples, as private companies such as Bombardier provide support to CAF training exercises at Air Force bases such as Cold Lake or Moose Jaw.³² The advantages of this are two fold. Firstly, these individuals become anchored into the training system, developing and perfecting effective techniques to ensure CAF pilots receive outstanding training and develop improved procedures for operating aircraft in challenging situations. Secondly, it also frees up RCAF pilots who would otherwise have been required to work in these training posts, decreasing the quantity of pilots the RCAF has on hand for day to day operations, a perpetual challenge for the RCAF. A second example of CAF use of industry to great success is the employment of Med-Emerg International Incorporated across Canada to assist in the provision of health care to CAF members.³³ Just like in Canadian society,³⁴ the CAF struggles with maintaining healthy quantities of health care professionals in uniform. In order to ensure the health care of CAF members meets acceptable standards, the organization must turn to industry to find a balance between every day health care within Canada and the essential care that must be provided to CAF members on operations.

³² Spearin, 1095.

³³ Ibid, 1095-1096.

³⁴ Samantha Beattie, "Ontario health-care workers warn of 'brutal' nurse shortage as hospitals brace for 4th wave," *CBC*, last accessed 2 May 2022, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/ontario-health-care-workers-warn-of-brutal-nurse-shortage-as-hospitals-brace-for-4th-wave-1.6150255>.

The CAF also have a history of successfully utilizing contracted services to provide strategic lift during periods of intense operational tempo.³⁵ Recent Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) deployments are a great example of the CAF leaning on a civilian strategic lift capability to ensure rapid and effective deployment to any location in the world, at a pace which allows uniformed assets to begin delivering effects on the ground almost immediately.³⁶ Strategic lift was also provided by private military firms during the CAF mission in Afghanistan, where the CAF dedicated \$11 million per month to civilian airlift before acquiring its own C-177 Globemasters (C-17).³⁷ That said, in procuring such a small quantity of C-17s, only five, the CAF effectively ensured that it would continue to require a combination of contracted and integral strategic airlift, as the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) would continue to be unable to meet all operational demands with such a small fleet.

Though a relatively small sample size, one good example of where the CAF has enjoyed some success employing contractors has been at 2 Service Battalion (2 Svc Bn) and, now, 4 Canadian Defence Support Group (4 CDSG) at Canadian Forces Base (CFB) Petawawa. Traditionally a unit which is inherently pulled in two separate directions due to its operational and technical support relationship to its brigade and its base, 2 Svc Bn initially began employing contractors in both Clothing Stores and MSA Stores in 2018. Though a small quantity of contractors were hired, ranging between six and eight employees over an approximate two year span, these employees were able to focus

³⁵ Perry, 690.

³⁶ Claire Bamma. "A Response to Climate Change: Evolving the Business of the Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART)." *Canadian Military Journal* (Ottawa) 16, no. 4 (2016): 5.

³⁷ Perry, 691.

exclusively on the technical service side of both Clothing and MSA Stores. This freed soldiers up to primarily fill the operational side of their jobs such as work in the training area and preparation for deployments or other high readiness tasks. It also contributed to 2 Svc Bn's ability to successfully support the 2 Canadian Mechanized Brigade Group (2 CMBG) deployment on Operation LENTUS 19, where soldiers from CFB Petawawa worked to support Canadians during massive flooding, primarily on the Ottawa River.³⁸ Supply Technician is a skilled trade, but it is also a great example of a profession which has technical service aspects which can be completed by non-skilled labourers. Two examples of this are helping customers find the correct equipment at a Clothing Stores or conducting data entry. Freeing up soldiers from these responsibilities allows them to better support their comrades in their Brigade.

Opportunities for the CAF

As this paper has discussed to this point, even while working through many of the challenges that contractors can present to an armed force, both the US military and the CAF have used contracts to great success over the past few decades. As Fortner and Jaeckle state in *Army Logistician*, “contracted capability can increase or decrease available support resources quickly in response to changing requirements.”³⁹ So what does that mean to the CAF of today, in a situation where the CAF is facing issues of recruiting and retention across all types of capabilities, while continuing to work at an operational tempo which rivals that of the peak of the war in Afghanistan?

³⁸ David Fortin, telephone conversation with Officer Commanding Supply Company, 2 Service Battalion, 25 April 2022.

³⁹ Joe A. Fortner and Ron Jaeckle, “Institutionalizing Contractors on the Battlefield,” *Army Logistician* 30, no. 6 (Nov/Dec 1998): 11.

Perhaps the biggest challenge associated with expanding how and when we utilize contractors is more closely related to the lack of education about what they bring to the table than anything else.⁴⁰ The CAF does possess trained and experienced Contracting Officers as, led by the Logistics community, the CAF has developed training programs and qualifications to improve these skills and has continued to deploy officers and soldiers in contract management roles on missions such as Op IMPACT. This still equates to a small quantity of the overall force as a limited quantity of individuals can be selected for the training and even fewer of these individuals gain real world contracting experience to reinforce their training opportunities. As Ortini and Bublitz wisely state, contracting is both an art and a science, and when conducted improperly can severely limit, rather than enhance, the flexibility that a commander enjoys when employing their forces either at home or abroad.⁴¹ As flexibility is a key principle of sustainment,⁴² it must be a critical consideration in the contracting process to ensure sustainment can continue uninterrupted in the event of a changing situation. To add to this consideration, another challenge that any organization faces when contracting out work is measurements of performance for the contract. In this case, the CAF would be wise to consider utilizing some sort of Outcome Based Contract (OBC), as an OBC allows the customer, in this case the CAF, to determine whether desired outcomes have been met prior to the contractor requiring payment.⁴³ It should be considered that this could potentially shrink

⁴⁰ Morrow, 75.

⁴¹ Eric A. Orsini and Lieutenant Colonel Gary T. Bublitz, "Contractors on the Battlefield: Risks on the Road Ahead?" *Army Logistician* 31, no. 1 (Jan/Feb 1999): 131.

⁴² Department of National Defence, *Canadian Forces Joint Publication 4-0 Support* (Ottawa, 2016).

⁴³ Irene C.L. Ng and Sai S. Nudurupati, "Outcome-based service contracts in the defence industry – mitigating the challenges," *Journal of Service Management* 21, no. 5 (2010): 659.

the pool of companies who are willing to work with the CAF in the future, but it would ensure that the CAF gets what it pays for, so to speak, and can confidently demonstrate a responsible use for taxpayer dollars with regards to military contracting.

The RAND Corporation defines a revolution in military affairs as “a paradigm shift in the nature and conduct of military operations which either renders obsolete or irrelevant one of more competencies in a dominant player or creates one or more new competencies in some dimension of warfare.”⁴⁴ It is not too far of a leap to consider the base services provided primarily by CSS or Combat Support (CS) soldiers to be a dimension of warfare, without these services the CAF becomes operationally ineffective. As discussed, the CAF used contractors to provide many of these base services in Kandahar, during a mission which was inherently more dangerous than any current named CAF operations. At that time, these contractors were essential to ensure the CA in particular could maintain the frantic pace of force generation of all types of soldiers, including CSS warriors. However, we have seen a shift. Though the pace remains high at formations across Canada, the quantity of deployments, in particular for junior ranks, has decreased, which is a contributing factor to the retention issue that the CAF faces.⁴⁵ The CAF needs to continue deploying its members as that is a key reason why many join. The use of contractors in Canada could help to relieve the pressure on both technical services and training jobs to allow more soldiers to deploy.

⁴⁴ Richard O. Hundley, *Past Revolutions, Future Transformations: What Can the History of Revolutions in Military Affairs Tell Us About Transforming the U.S. Military?* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 1999), xiii.

⁴⁵ CAF Retention Survey, 2019.

Risks and Downsides

There are two clear areas of risk where the contracting out of technical services tasks could prove detrimental rather than helpful, further complicating the personnel issues currently faced by the CAF. The first is the idea that skilled CAF members could consider leaving the military in order to perform an identical task under a contracted position. This would be more likely for older military members, those who have served a long enough time to collect a pension and who have potentially established themselves at one base or another. The appeal of remaining in one position, creating a stable environment for one's family, can be a powerful motivator, especially in a CAF currently struggling to establish adequate family support services for a changing world.⁴⁶ Secondly, it is difficult to determine exactly what a soldier will think when seeing a task they once filled contracted out to a civilian company. That soldier likely has some deep, personal reasons for which they chose to join the CAF, serving Canadians. What this could result in is a clash of cultures, or a clash between the intrinsic and extrinsic motivations to serve. The removal of the uniform from services which soldiers have proudly provided to their brothers and sisters in arms for generations could certainly negatively impact the appeal of the CAF as an employer of choice for the Canadians who have traditionally shown interest in the field.⁴⁷ This would be a difficult problem to solve at a time when the CAF is already struggling with a crisis of image with the Canadian public.

A challenge which the CAF could face regarding the employment of contractors is determining exactly what support needs to be provided to these individuals by the

⁴⁶ Ross Fetterly, *The Importance of People in Defence*, (Calgary, Canadian Global Affairs Institute, May 2018), 3.

⁴⁷ Speirin, 1108.

CAF. Of course, this does not really present itself as an issue in a location such as CFB Edmonton, where a contractor could potentially fill a nine to five type position on base, working in some sort of CSS role on a daily basis. However, if you begin to explore options such as employing contractors on deployed missions, or perhaps in a location such as Canadian Forces Station Alert, the CAF would take on a certain level of responsibility for supporting these individuals with real life support services.⁴⁸ Of course, this would not dissolve the responsibility of the contracting company to ensure that the individual hired is physically and medically fit enough to complete the required job, but that would not excuse the CAF for the continued well being of the contractors, whether it be simple requirements such as food and water, security, or something more complicated such as emergency medical care. Without clear direction in doctrine, this could be a potential problem area for the CAF in extreme circumstances.

Another important consider for the CAF when entering into any type of significant contract is the emotion that can so often be tied to large financial decisions, particularly in relation to the idea of whether or not the government, or in this case their representative the CAF, is making fair decisions when it comes to selecting which company will be awarded the project. Of course, in Canada the CAF will always need to consider that there is not a significant quantity of companies competing for their business. This certainly does present some risks with regard to the quality of service that may be offered by contract with relation to how much money is being paid. The military will of course be on the hook to manage and award these contracts, so there exists a risk of bias

⁴⁸ Fortner, 13.

as well toward companies who have worked well in the past.⁴⁹ This relates back to the idea that the CAF needs to effectively train and manage contracts in a way which they are not currently doing. A problem that has been noted as well in the USA is the willingness of politicians to put the needs of their constituents ahead of the needs of the US military, leading to a situation where the military is continuing to receive equipment it no longer needs because that is what is good for the job market in a certain area.⁵⁰ This exact scenario is highly unlikely in Canada, the CAF simply does not require or acquire the same quantities of equipment. However, what is possible is creating an expectation of jobs in small economies, such as locations like Shilo or Petawawa, establishing a situation where discontinuing a support contract could leave a very poor flavour in the mouths of local civilians once the CAF decides that it has reached a point where the service is no longer required.

Conclusion

Perhaps more so than ever before, the challenges which the CAF currently finds itself up against are indeed wicked problems. It would be irresponsible to believe that the CAF could simply throw money at these problems and make them go away. As has been discussed and presented both in the media and within the CAF over the past two years, deep change needs to happen in the CAF to remain competitive, both as an attractive organization within which to work, and on the international stage in an increasingly unstable world. What this paper has demonstrated is one potential area where looking outside of the military for a solution could relieve some of the pressure on the CAF's

⁴⁹ Lucas, 7.

⁵⁰ Lucas, 3.

more challenged professions. Every military professional understands that the organization cannot function without the efforts of CSS and CS professionals. Perhaps fortunately, many of these types of technical professions are those that translate neatly into civilian employment. The potential here to hire outside of the CAF, freeing soldiers up for operational tasks, is enormous. Of course, no military can function without its training institutions either. Skilled civilian contractors could certainly take an educational role within the CAF training system, again freeing up soldiers to perform the operational roles and primary functions of their professions.

As this paper has discussed, there has certainly been a measure of precedence set with regards to the successful employment of contractors, both within the CAF and with our allies on operations. The construction of Camp Julien in Kabul is an outstanding example of how effective contracted services can be when employed on operations, and Canadian soldiers continued to rely on CANCAP employees throughout the CAF mission in Kandahar. In fact, it is highly probable that the mission would not have been successfully sustained without contracted services. The US military have also demonstrated how beneficial a relationship between uniformed members and civilian contractors can be on operations, leaning on these types of relationship throughout their deployments in the Middle East. In fact, they have produced doctrine which is designed to direct these relationships to maximize their potential.⁵¹ Closer to home, the CAF has also successfully employed contractors on bases and in training institutions at various levels. From individual units to large scale training opportunities, it has certainly been

⁵¹ Department of Defense. *Joint Publication 4-10: Operational Contract Support*, (Ottawa, 2019).

established that contactors can be a factor in the successful employment or training of soldiers and the organization. The CAF also has the not too distant memories of the implementation of ASD from which to draw lessons learned and best practices for how best to implement contracted help to a military problem. Though there is always a certain measure of concern about pulling talent away from the CAF to work as contactors in support of the CAF, the benefits of exploring an expansion in contracted work for the CAF to better employ their soldiers on operational tasks outweigh the risk to retention within the CAF. Now is the time to explore every opportunity for improved retention within the CAF to ensure the health of the organization as the next generation of Canadians begin their military careers.

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