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CANADIAN ARMY RESERVE: AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE ARMY'S FUTURE CAPABILITIES

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AIM

1. This service paper aims to demonstrate the author's understanding of component theory, principles, and functions as part of the Joint Command Staff Program course DS545 – component capabilities. To achieve this aim, the author will analyze the newly structured Canadian Army (CA), specifically the Army Reserve (ARes). This analysis will compare the new structure to the 'total force concept' (TFC) and the Canadian defence white paper *Strong Secure Engaged* (SSE) to identify possible capability gaps as the CA reorients its organization towards future battlefields and problems.

INTRODUCTION

2. Historically, the reserves have played a significant role in Canadian Defence, either at home or abroad. However, since the cold war and unification, the CAF has reduced reservists employed on operations. For example, the 4642 reserve soldiers deployed during the more than ten years of Canada's commitment¹ to the Afghanistan conflict is minute compared to the near-total recruited force of five thousand volunteers hired for combat in Korea.² This reduction in reserve force employment generates a capability gap as the CA cannot fulfil all tasks assigned to it in SSE between its roughly 24k RegF and 20k ARes personnel.³

3. A Canadian white paper on defence from the 1980s may hold the solution in what it defines as the TFC. How can the reserve force be leveraged to augment the CAF through this TFC? Recent decisions by the CCA indicate that the CA seeks to reinforce the TFC, but is this enough? In the current CAF environment where retention is suffering, and the institution already finds itself well below its authorized effective strength,⁴ the reserve force can be integrated into the total force not as a temporary fix but as an organized fighting force with its own assigned tasks and organization. Firstly, in order to demonstrate this, the TFC will be defined, and its prevalence in directives will be demonstrated. Second, the CA proposes a new structure to realign itself with SSE and the demands placed upon it by the Government of Canada (GOC). The author will demonstrate how this new structure compares to a TFC. Finally, using themes used to critique the employment and efficiency of the reserve force by MGen Tremblay and Dr. Coombs in an article from 2016, this paper will determine if the new structure of the ARes provides for better use of the Army Reserve.

¹ Matthew Sherlock-Hubbard, "After Afghanistan: The Canadian Army Reserve And The Challenges Ahead," NATO Association of Canada, 27 July 2016. <https://natoassociation.ca/moving-forward-the-canadian-army-reserve-and-the-challenges-ahead/>

² John Melady, *Korea, Canada's Forgotten War* (Toronto, Canada: Macmillan of Canada, 1983), 66.

³ International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 121*, no. 1 (2021): 45-46

⁴ The Canadian Press, Military dealing with more than 10,000 unfilled positions amid growing pressures, 18 Jan 2022. <https://nationalpost.com/pmn/news-pmn/canada-news-pmn/military-dealing-with-more-than-10000-unfilled-positions-amid-growing-pressures>

CONTEXT

4. To provide the context of this study, this section will present key findings from two defence white papers. First *Challenge and Commitment (CAC)*, published in 1987, provides the basis for the CAF's TFC. Secondly, *SSE*, published in 2017, provides strategic direction and funding to modernize the CAF. This section will then provide a framework based on the themes challenging ARes employment and generation written by Tremblay and Coombs in 2016. It will then summarize the current CA response to SSE and its restructuration as part of its *Force 2025*, known officially as COA3.

5. Firstly, the TFC began in the post-cold-war era when militaries began to reorient their militaries and defence spending away from the Soviet threat.⁵ In Canada, this came to pass through *CAC*. *CAC* identified the importance of the reserve force in this environment; "It is now clear that it is both impractical and undesirable to meet all of our personnel requirements through the RegF. The costs attached to an all-volunteer, full-time military force have become too high."⁶ This statement from 1987 suggests that the current over-tasking problems experienced by the CAF, though perhaps evolved to modern battlefields, are not entirely new. The *CAC* goes further and proposes a possible solution through the Reserve Force (ResF); "(...) we will be able to address the serious multiple-tasking problems facing the regular force if appropriate numbers of trained Reservists are available."⁷ *CAC* continues and develops three aspects of ResF employment required to achieve its integration, known as the TFC; 1) Regular and Reservists would deploy in the same units, with ratios determined by unit type, reaction time, and skills required, 2) the distinction between RegF and ResF personnel must be significantly reduced, and 3) adopt specific tasks such as defence operations in North America such as the protection of vital military infrastructure.⁸

6. In recent history, the TFC could be observed through CAF deployments through OP LASER and OP LENTUS to assist provinces with ResF and RegF deployments.⁹ The structure used for these deployments employed both ARes and RegF units within the divisions as force generators for deployments, then leveraged the division HQ to become the staff for a Joint Task Force (JTF) deployed under these named operations.¹⁰ Though ARes and RegF members did not deploy as joint sub-units, they did deploy with individual reinforcements from each other.

7. In 2016, prior to the publishing of a subsequent white paper on defence, Tremblay and Coombs expanded on the challenges and their proposed solutions to both ResF employment and generation. The three themes are clear strategic clarity, the perceived requirement of ResF across the

⁵ Department of National Defence, *Challenge and Commitment: A Defence Policy for Canada* (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 1987), 65.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*, 66

⁹ Lee Berthiaume, Feds to offer full-time work to all military reservists as part of COVID-19 response. 3 Apr 2020 <https://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/feds-to-offer-full-time-work-to-all-military-reservists-as-part-of-covid-19-response-1.4881452>

¹⁰ Department of National Defence, Exercises and Operations, Accessed 14 Jan 2021, <https://www.army.gc.ca/en/exercises-operations/index.page>

country linked to the communities where they are based, and the time requirements of the ResF to force generate individual or collective augmentation to react to immediate problems.¹¹

8. In more recent history, the Government of Canada (GOC) has published another white paper on defence, *SSE*. It aims to present “a new vision and approach to defence by the Government of Canada.”¹² This paper provides strategic guidance to the various CAF services on the tasks and objectives at the highest levels and provides specific intentions for the ResF. This new vision includes the directive to “Enable ResF units and formations to provide full-time capability through part-time service; ensure ResF are a well-integrated component of the TFC; and appropriately train, prepare and equip ResF in sufficient numbers to be able to contribute to ops at home and abroad.”¹³

9. *SSE* provides new initiatives to guide the CAF and its services to achieve these aims. These initiatives include additional capabilities for the ResF not found in the RegF, such as Light Urban Search and Rescue and Cyber Operators. *SSE* also demands that the ResF reinforce other existing RegF capabilities such as mortar platoons and Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear Defence. Through the investments and direction provided in *SSE*, the CAF can enhance existing ResF roles such as information operations and Combat Support and Combat Service Support. Finally, this white paper calls on the CAF to change policies that encourage recruitment, retention, and facilitate transfer to the ResF from the RegF.¹⁴

10. For the CA, *SSE* has equally provided the foundation for what the Army calls Force 2025; the restructuration of the CA to become a more agile and relevant force on future battlefields.¹⁵ Key guidance includes a focus on the brigade group, flexibility to support small missions while remaining ready to conduct large-scale operations, adapting to the changing security environment, and integrating new or modernized capabilities to support the CA and CAF operations.¹⁶ The crucial capabilities sought for the CA in *SSE* include ground-based air defence systems, modernized weapons effects simulations, a modernized fleet of improvised explosive device detection and defeat capabilities, improved ability to operate in remote regions, and modernized land-based C2, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance systems.¹⁷ CAF-wide, *SSE* provides strategic guidance to develop the cyber and space domains, the former an inherently technical environment that could profit from private sector competencies.

11. In response to *SSE* and Force 2025, the acting CCA decided on a restructuration effort that seeks to improve the ability of the CAF to respond to the demands placed upon it by the GOC; officially known as COA 3.¹⁸ Significant changes to the structure of the CAF are the division of its forces into ready force levels (RFL) 1, 2 and 3, and the allocation of tasks to the ResF.¹⁹ The

¹¹ Éric Tremblay, and Howard Coombs, "Canadian Armed Forces Reserves - Quo Vadis?" *Canadian Military Journal (Ottawa)* 16, no. 3 (2016): 16. <http://www.journal.forces.gc.ca/vol16/no3/PDF/CMJ163Ep16.pdf>

¹² Department of National Defence, *Strong Secure Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy* (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 2017), 11.

¹³ *ibid.*, 67-68.

¹⁴ *ibid.*, 69.

¹⁵ Department of National Defence, Briefing note for army Council; Force 2025 COA 3 – High Readiness Level 2 HQ, (19 Nov 2021), 1.

¹⁶ *ibid.*, 1-2.

¹⁷ Department of National Defence, *Strong...*, 36-37.

¹⁸ Department of National Defence, Briefing note..., 1.

¹⁹ *ibid.*, 6.

objective is twofold; first, to provide space for the RegF to take on new tasks and, secondly, to allow a more streamlined reinforcement of the RegF within more traditional tasks. RFL1 sub-units reside within the RegF and partake in full-time warfighting. RFL2 sub-units will be generated from a mix of full-time and part-time personnel; a proposed 24-76% split, respectively. Finally, the RFL3 units will maintain a similar organization to what ARes units currently have, consisting almost entirely of ARes pers supported by a small RegF cadre. These RFL3 units will be expected to train at the sub-subunit level, such as platoon, and will not be expected to force generate capabilities such as mortars. The goal of RFL3 units would be to provide a base for mobilization and augmentation to both RFL1 and two sub-units.

DISCUSSION

12. The concept of RFL2 units is perhaps the closest to the TFC that the CA has operated since 1987. This breakdown could greatly facilitate the transfer of existing capabilities to the ARes, through qualified and competent personnel employed directly in training reservists; however, this greatly depends on personalities, like many of the other risks associated with this COA. In this section, the author will evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of the adopted COA.

13. A significant advantage of this plan lies with the approach to a TFC; a seemingly complete force with little difference between ARes and RegF to facilitate more capabilities along the direction provided by SSE and pave the way to adopt many of the key tenants of the pan-domain model. In theory, having RegF infanters with both experience and technical know-how on current CA capabilities such as mechanized warfare would significantly improve the capabilities of any infantry unit into which they would integrate. Many CA leaders have experienced training missions in Ukraine or Afghanistan;²⁰ however, instead of professionalizing the militaries of other countries, they would be training peers and section-mates – building relations for future deployments.

14. Regarding the Pan-domain concept and SSE, an obvious solution would be for the reserve force to adopt RegF capabilities that would allow it to concentrate on more complex problems. However, the CA may want to transfer some non-standard tasks towards the ARes. Allowing soldiers such as network specialists the flexibility to work full-time for the private sector and part-time for the ResF could reduce the allure or drain of qualified personnel towards the private sector.²¹ Human resource specialists need to be consulted since current policies do not allow the CAF to negotiate salaries or work conditions.

15. Another challenge based on personalities is the motivation of soldiers within these RFL2 and three units. The current plan asks RFL2 sub-units to take on a higher ready state than those in the RFL3 sub-units; however, the primer or COA3 does not mention any incentive other than additional tasks and responsibilities though changes to incentives are directed in SSE.²² This lack of direction on incentives is probably because these policies are outside of CA control; however, this could prove crucial to the buy-in from personnel in these units. This challenge, compounded by the growing

²⁰ Department of National Defence, Operation Unifier, accessed 14 jan 2021, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/operations/military-operations/current-operations/operation-unifier.html>

²¹ Andrew Agopsowicz, Emerging labour shortages in Canada, 16 july 2021. https://www.rbccm.com/en/insights/story.page?dcr=templatedata/article/insights/data/2021/07/will_a_return_to_pre-pandemic_retirement_and_job_quitting_levels_worsen_emerging_labour_shortages_in

²² Department of National Defence, Briefing note..., and Department of National Defence, *Strong...*, 110-111

problem of labour shortages, could prove fatal to the COA. In general terms, the reserve force could lose its allure to young workers; a 16-year-old without any prior experience in Quebec on May 1st, 2022, will need only to work eight hours at minimum wage to receive higher pay than a day's worth of Private level one pay.²³ A corporal's basic pay is slightly better; it translates to 11 hours at minimum wage.²⁴ However, enterprises are beginning to offer higher than minimum wage and flexible working conditions to entice new hires and keep employees,²⁵ leaving the ARes and CA with a smaller pool of recruits to build its future force.

16. A final challenge will be training – depending on the training force's capability and competency, new schools and training cadre will have to be built around reserve forces. This instructor cadre will require a firm reliance on the ARes and programs such as the summer individual training trimester²⁶ (*TEII*) within 2(CA)Div. However, this may become a significant challenge; this particular camp asks reservists to choose to live on camp-cots in un-air-conditioned tents at Camp Vimy in Valcartier for summer to hone their skills through military courses.²⁷

17. Finally, regarding Tremblay and Coombs' criteria for reserve force employment, the acting CCA, inspired by SSE has provided the strategic direction required for reserve employment. The second criteria may be addressed in choosing which units become RFL2 and RFL3, evenly distributing the ResF capabilities across major Canadian city centres. In so doing, ARes units can take advantage of the knowledge of the civilian population, provide the link between Canadians and their armed forces, and profit from training areas or RFL1 units that they support. The last challenge will depend on leadership, motivating troops, and reducing the time required to generate the RFL2 units and RFL3 individual reinforcements.

CONCLUSION

18. The COA adopted by the CA can unlock many possibilities for the A Res. It can offer new capabilities to invigorate or renew motivation for reservists. Though this COA depends much on commanders and soldiers; the RegF must place the right soldiers at the right time to the right units to set the conditions for ARes capabilities to flourish. This paper has demonstrated that the COA chosen by the acting CCA is conducive to the themes of force generation for reservists as studied by Tremblay and Coombs, however much work is still required, such as selection of RFL2 and 3 units and the separation of authorities, responsibilities, and accountability for the chosen capabilities between the RegF and ARes. Unfortunately, policies and terms of service to further encourage the integration of the ARes into the restructuration plan are governed at the CAF level.

²³ The Canadian Press, Quebec minimum wage to rise from \$13.50 to \$14.25 on May 1, 14 Jan 2022. <https://montreal.ctvnews.ca/quebec-minimum-wage-to-rise-from-13-50-to-14-25-on-may-1-1.5740273> , and Department of National Defence, Pay rates for non-commissioned members, accessed 16 Jan 2022. <https://www.canada.ca/en/departement-national-defence/services/benefits-military/pay-pension-benefits/pay/non-commissioned.html>

²⁴ *Ibid.*,

²⁵ Andrew Agopsowicz, *Emerging ...*,

²⁶ Authors translation of *Trimestre Estivale d'Instruction Individuelle*

²⁷ From 2016-2018 the author occupied the positions of Regimental Operations officer and Regimental training officer and from 2018-2021 the position of Battery Commander in 5e Regiment d'Artillerie Legere du Canada. Over these years he worked with the ARes artillery regiments within 2(CA) div organizing support for numerous TEIIs through individual reinforcements when the ARes was unable to staff their instructor positions for summer training.

19. CA headquarters has set the conditions to build the reserve into a competent force. However, some work remains, and much is now in the hands of leaders. CA officers and senior NCOs need to make the plan work and encourage peers and subordinates to leave behind preconceived notions of what used to work. The future of the CA does not reside in what the CA looked like 10, 20, or even 40 years ago; it is what will work in 10-15 years.

RECOMMENDATIONS

19. To ensure the proper employment of the ARes during and after restructuration, the author seeks to make three recommendations. Firstly, setting conditions for training institution success. Career managers must be convinced to provide the best people to ensure success where capabilities already exist. Also, regarding training, if the ARes is asked to restructure its units, then the traditional summer training camps such as the *TEII* in 2(CA)Div must also adapt to encourage summer employment of reservists. Secondly, the selection of capabilities and RFL2/3 units must consider the communities these units serve. If an RFL2 unit is tasked with network security or cyber tasks, it would perhaps be beneficial to give said task to a unit in a community with significant contributions to these areas in the private sector. Finally, though outside CA control, leadership needs to encourage further study into changes in CAF policies regarding incentives. ARes and RegF members of RFL2 units may require enticement to forego land duty allowance or standard ResF pay if their readiness level is higher than RFL3 units. Equally, specialist pay for specific sought-after capabilities, similar to plans in place for cyber, where the private sector will begin to compete for the same workforce as the CAF must be evaluated. These policies could fall under the changes ordered by *SSE*.

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