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## SUPPORTING CANSOFCOM'S SUPPORTERS

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**JCSP 48**

**Service Paper**

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**PCEMI 48**

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CANADIAN FORCES COLLEGE – COLLÈGE DES FORCES CANADIENNES

JCSP 48 – PCEMI 48

2021 – 2022

Service Paper – Étude militaire

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**Major Jean-François Moreau**

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## SUPPORTING CANSOFCOM'S SUPPORTERS

### AIM

1. This service paper aims to recommend potential enhancements to the training and preparation of Canadian Special Operations Command's (CANSOFCOM) Combat Service Support (CSS) supporters. The recommendations are addressed to the CANSOFCOM Director for Force Sustainment and the J4 in order to face challenges awaiting Canada and the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF), as defined in the Command's assessment of its future and the way it will operate. The author is sensitive to the classification of certain information on capabilities, locations, training events, etc. and therefore will abstain from mentioning any that are specific to CANSOFCOM not in the public domain.

### INTRODUCTION

2. Through Canada's 2017 defense policy Strong, Secure, Engaged (SSE), CANSOFCOM is to increase its personnel establishment by 605 to reach a total of 2,772 regular force positions.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, during the past few years the CAF have been suffering from significant retention and recruitment challenges. Vacancies currently fluctuate around 7,500 vacancies out of its approved 71,500 established regular forces positions under SSE.<sup>2</sup> Despite benefiting from a high priority in the staffing of its positions, this affects the CANSOFCOM's ability to fill its positions and limits the talent pool that it can select its members from. Therefore, expanding its current members' capacity may be a viable solution.

3. Via its recent Strategic Plan, CANSOFCOM is well positioned in terms of its vision backed by its astute awareness of its future operating environment. In *Beyond the Horizon*, CANSOFCOM recognizes that future conflicts will be contested in a space known as the hybrid grey space (see figure 1).<sup>3</sup> This awareness shapes future requirements for personnel preparation, particularly for its operators.<sup>4</sup> Where it remains slightly unclear, is with the training of its CSS supporters who may not be perfectly

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<sup>1</sup> Canada, Department of National Defence, "Strong, Secure, Engaged, Canada's Defence Policy", Ottawa: DND, 2017, 40, <http://dgpaapp.forces.gc.ca/en/canada-defence-policy/docs/canada-defence-policy-report.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> Canadian Broadcasting Channel. "Eyre Blames Sexual Misconduct Crisis, Pandemic For Shrinking Military", last updated 26 October 2021. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/wayne-eyre-armed-forces-sexual-misconduct-pandemic-1.6224791>.

<sup>3</sup> Canada, CANSOFCOM, "Future Operating Concept Handbook." Ottawa: National Defence, August 2019, 13.

<sup>4</sup> Canada, CANSOFCOM, "Beyond the Horizon: A Strategy for Canada's Special Operations Forces in an Evolving Security Environment", Ottawa: Minister of National Defence, 2020. <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/reports-publications/cansofcom-beyond-horizon.html>, 23.

suited for these new realities. This paper will provide recommendations to CANSOFCOM on potential avenues that would enhance the operational and institutional support. It is the author's initial assessment that there are some untapped possibilities within CANSOFCOM, the CAF or from the private sector, that would not only create efficiencies, but may also improve the whole Command's Force Sustainment performance. To scope the requirements, a brief explanation of the current CANSOFCOM CSS Supporter training will be explained. CANSOFCOM's prerequisites for CSS supporter training will then be defined from deductions made from *Beyond the Horizon*, CANSOFCOM's Future Operating Concept (FOC) and Future Operating Environment (FOE) Handbooks. These deductions will inform the development of recommendations inspired by the findings of a study conducted on private firms with specific human capital.

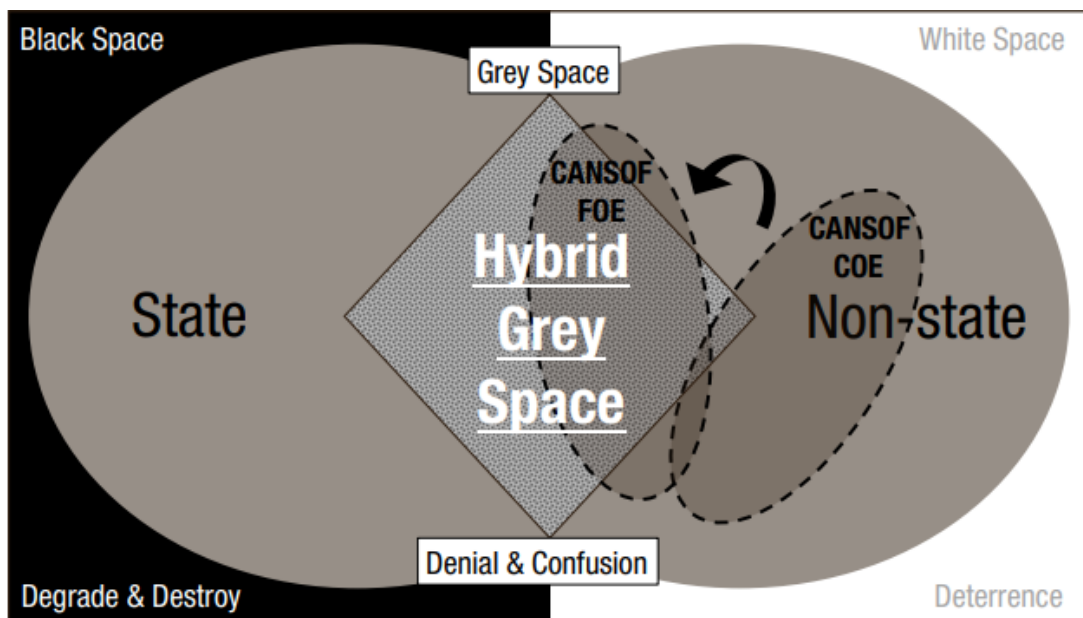


Figure 1 – The Hybrid Grey Zone

Canada, CANSOFCOM, "CANSOFCOM Future Operating Concept . . .", 13.

## DISCUSSION

### Current CANSOFCOM CSS Supporter Training

4. CANSOFCOM consists of six units [Joint Task Force 2 (JTF 2), Canadian Joint Incident Response Unit (CJIRU), Canadian Special Operation Regiment (CSOR), 427 Special Operations Aviation Squadron (427 SOAS), Canadian Special Operations Training Centre (CSOTC) and CANSOFCOM Headquarters] with very distinct mandates.<sup>5</sup> Although it has clear chain of command, CANSOFCOM operates on the concept of “bottom-up planning” and strives to remain a flat organization in its command structure. This method has been a key the Command’s success and since the headquarters is purposely built with limited but targeted capabilities, it has forced units to generate their own specific training regimen for their CSS supporters.

5. The units’ mandates are very favorable to mold their supporters to their needs. However, this also creates gaps in the coordination of deployed operations where all units come together and therefore need to cooperate. This situation also creates inefficiencies in equipment, financial and time resources. There are limited training iterations occurring within JTF 2 and CSOR for logistics and maintenance skills for which there are some opportunities for other unit members to participate. These are unfortunately too few and far in between to create a command-wide baseline. Building upon training events for targeted skills required pan-Command and opening them even further to all units would elevate the baseline. There is some Command-specific CSS training occurring at CSOTC, but the unit’s capacity is limited as represented by some recent cuts in the common integration package delivered to new supporters. The Command’s bottom-up planning needs to be preserved due to the distinct nature of each units, but well targeted collaborative training, along with pooled financial and institutional resources, could provide beneficial opportunities.

### Deductions from *Beyond the Horizon*

6. In *Beyond the Horizon*, CANSOFCOM recognizes that new threats beyond what was experienced in counter-insurgency in the last 20 years have emerged and are shaking the international rules-based order to its core. This introduces new complexities to future conflicts for which CANSOFCOM is posturing.<sup>6</sup> Such conditions will require CSS supporters that are adaptable to the locations they operate out of and the scale of operations. “The Command will also build and leverage strong internal, external, *institutional*, and interpersonal relationships to remain connected and relevant within the

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<sup>5</sup> Canadian Special Operations Forces Command, “Special Operations Forces organizational structure”. Last updated 28 July 2021. <https://www.canada.ca/en/special-operations-forces-command/corporate/organizational-structure.html>.

<sup>6</sup> Canada, CANSOFCOM. “Beyond the Horizon.” . . . , 10.

National Defence / National Security space”<sup>7</sup>. These requirements will demand strong technical skills that are adapted to the specificities that accompany employment within CANSOFCOM, in terms of distinct equipment and overall readiness posture. As CANSOFCOM strives to fill the “gaps and seams” in the global Canadian security architecture, it reminds its members that:

“People remain central to CANSOFCOM’s success; they define the organization’s depth, resilience, and potential. Their dedication, talent, and realized efforts must be supported, recognized, and leveraged through the *exchange of value and loyalty* between the individual and the Command”<sup>8</sup>.

7. Such exchange of value and loyalty implies investment from both individuals and the Command in their relationship. Investments from the organization’s standpoint manifest themselves in the appealing opportunities given to its members in terms of employment, equipment, education, etc. Finally, “CANSOFCOM will also continue to place a premium on creating an inclusive environment in which creativity, initiative, and innovation thrive”<sup>9</sup>. This demonstrates CANSOFCOM’s entrepreneurial orientation towards its mandate and the use of its resources.

### **Deductions from CANSOFCOM’s Future Operating Concept Handbook**

8. In its FOC Handbook, CANSOFCOM looks in depth at the concept of “grey zone” and draws conclusions as to its impact on how it will conduct its business in those conditions.<sup>10</sup> Consequently, it reinforces and expands on already known logistical factors within its CSS community, such as minimal visibility and footprint, high mobility and self-sufficiency.<sup>11</sup> Future operational situations may not even permit logistical support to deploy; forcing the development of remote support concepts. All of these combined highlight the need for technically savvy supporters who are robust enough to operate independently and trained to use non-conventional sources of support to enable their supported elements.

9. As CANSOFCOM focuses on the effects it will need to provide on the ground, it remains cognisant that “the centre of gravity in the FOE will remain the operator, but one who is empowered by cognitive assist tools and immediate access to greater *supporter*, specialist, and technical assistance”.<sup>12</sup> CANSOFCOM strives to remain ever relevant by continually challenging its competitive advantage through experimentation. This will necessitate novel and cutting edge “commercial off the shelf” or allied forces solutions to

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>9</sup> Canada, CANSOFCOM. "Beyond the Horizon." . . . , 27.

<sup>10</sup> Canada, CANSOFCOM, "Future Operating Concept Handbook." . . . , 1.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>12</sup> Ibidem.

both equipment gaps and training opportunities. The CAF already gives basic trade-specific training to CSS support staff at its training centres. In order to further members' knowledge, advanced training could be sought from the originator of the capabilities. Examples include training on resource management software such as the Defense Resource Management Information System (DRMIS), supply chain management education from civilian post-secondary institutions, and vehicle specific operation and maintenance training could be sourced from the private sector or allied partners.

10. While staying abreast to new technologies being developed around the globe, CANSOFCOM is investigating in capabilities like "additive manufacturing and total asset visibility, and renewable energy and energy storage solutions might offer opportunities for CANSOF to enable independent operations (even in technology denied areas) through its sustainment function".<sup>13</sup> This will once again require investments in advanced training of its personnel, as some of these skills are not currently resident within the CAF or cannot be built upon from what is taught in core CSS trade education.

11. The CAF are looking to improve their procurement practices and procedures.<sup>14</sup> CANSOFCOM is striving to be a leader in the implementation of these new methods in order to reduce the wait periods between identification of relevant equipment and its arrival on unit shelves.<sup>15</sup> Achieving rapid integration of new procurement methods will require the expansion of the pool of potential procurement personnel within the Command. This can be attained by further leveraging existing training opportunities within the CAF, such as the Deployed Operations Procurement Course given at the Canadian Forces Logistics Training Centre (CFLTC) and ensuring that many more senior non-commissioned officers obtain the qualification in addition to officers.

### **Deductions from CANSOFCOM's Future Operating Environment Handbook**

12. CANSOFCOM's FOE Handbook serves as a guide for planners and force developers within the Command to anticipate future requirements and opportunities for investments that are aligned with the CAF's Chief of Force Development (CFD) Future Security Environment (FSE).<sup>16</sup> FOE approached many subjects related to the future however, the most relevant for this service paper are along the lines of the impacts of technology advancement, future defence and security implications.<sup>17</sup> Technological progress is likely to enable deployed forces to reduce their footprint, increase precision in

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<sup>13</sup> Canada, CANSOFCOM, "Future Operating Concept Handbook." . . . , 9.

<sup>14</sup> Canada, Department of National Defence, Strong, Secure, Engaged . . . , 16.

<sup>15</sup> Canada, CANSOFCOM, "Future Operating Concept Handbook." . . . , 23.

<sup>16</sup> Canada, CANSOFCOM, "Future Operating Environment Handbook." Ottawa: National Defence, August 2017, 3,  
[https://mars.cfc.forces.gc.ca/CFCLearn/pluginfile.php/35928/mod\\_resource/content/1/cansofcom-foe-handbook\\_eng.pdf](https://mars.cfc.forces.gc.ca/CFCLearn/pluginfile.php/35928/mod_resource/content/1/cansofcom-foe-handbook_eng.pdf).

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 9.

resource management and extend covert deployments. These technological advancements will require specific and advanced training that may or may not be available within the CAF. If not, searching for solutions from allies or the industry will be key.

13. In defence and security, given the global trend of multiplying hybrid grey zone conflicts, CANSOFCOM anticipates that it will be called upon to provide more often military assistance (MA) to partner forces.<sup>18</sup> These types of missions have historically lasted for extended periods, requiring personnel rotations and the deployment of significant amounts of equipment in semi-permissive to fully permissive areas of the world. This further supports the need for a greater number of adaptable, technically savvy and polyvalent CSS Supporters in order to sustain such deployments in the mid-to-long term timeframe. “To improve training and [Force Generation] FG, CANSOFCOM can improve organizational capacities and emphasize professional military education (PME) to engender an innovative culture”.<sup>19</sup> This mindset once again supports CANSOFCOM’s entrepreneurial orientation and also demonstrates the investments the Command is willing to take to enhance its workforce’s capacity. With its officers’ and operators’ PME being significantly ahead of its supporters’, there are significant gains to be made with the latter. As the Command strives to remain a “flat organization”, introducing the Canadian Forces Operational Planning Process (CFOPP) to its supporters at an earlier stage in their career should be investigated. Entry level courses such as the Joint Staff Operational Programme (JSOP) given at the Canadian Forces College provide tools and skills that serve members throughout their careers<sup>20</sup>. Securing more seats on such courses could address some PME gaps.

### **Measuring CANSOFCOM’s Human Capital Management**

14. A recent (2021) peer-reviewed study conducted by M. Jim Andersén in Sweden published in the International Journal of Human Resource Management pursued to prove that firms with very specific human capital’s (HC) performance were improved when they combined entrepreneurial orientation (EO) and collaborative human resource management (CHRM).<sup>21</sup> Before investigating any further, it is important to mention that the lessons taken from this study apply to the private sector and may not be perfectly aligned with governmental organizations.

15. In this study, firm-specific HC was defined as: “in contrast to general HC, firm-specific HC concerns the skills of employees that are specialized and applicable to a

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>19</sup> Canada, CANSOFCOM, "Future Operating Environment Handbook." . . ., 15.

<sup>20</sup> Canadian Forces College, “Joint Staff Operations Programme”, last updated 8 November 2021, <https://www.cfc.forces.gc.ca/230-eng.html>.

<sup>21</sup> Jim Andersén, "Resource Orchestration of Firm-Specific Human Capital and Firm Performance—the Role of Collaborative Human Resource Management and Entrepreneurial Orientation." *Null* 32, no. 10 (2021), <https://doi-org.cfc.idm.oclc.org/10.1080/09585192.2019.1579250.2091>.



particular firm”.<sup>22</sup> From an operator stand point, this is very applicable to CANSOFCOM and even to each unit within. Nonetheless, due to the previously described FOE the Command will likely operate in, the specialized equipment requiring handling and maintenance and the distinctive operational and institutional demands put upon them, one could argue that CSS supporters would fit the definition of firm-specific HC compared to the rest of the CAF.

16. EO in this study was defined as: “a strategic posture characterized by being proactive, innovative and risk-taking which is used to identify (the mobilization dimension) and act (the deployment dimension) upon market opportunities”.<sup>23</sup> EO also incorporates the vision the firm has in usage of knowledge resources to further the level of orchestration of its resources. CANSOFCOM clearly demonstrates high EO. On the other hand, CHRM is a strategy that focuses on coordination, collaboration, sharing of information and open communication in order to maximize them<sup>24</sup>. Based on its current construct, CANSOFCOM’s CHRM can be improved upon in terms of CSS supporters training. Interestingly, what this study found was that EO and CHRM do not influence firms’ performance individually, but when combined. The degree to which they are used has significant impact on performance.<sup>25</sup> As depicted in a three-way interaction effects in Figure 2, and most importantly for CANSOFCOM, when high EO is combined with lesser CHRM, the firm’s performance is reduced; whereas combined high EO and CHRM greatly improve performance. This suggests that investing in the coordination and collaboration between units could be beneficial in the training of CSS Supporters.

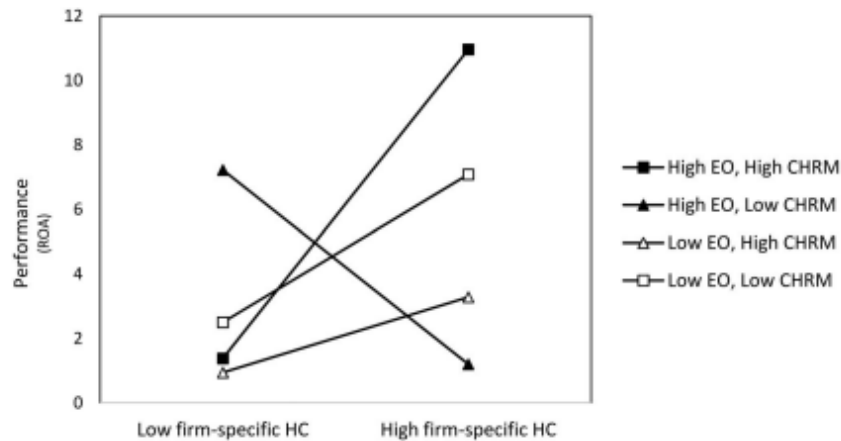


Figure 2 – Three-way interaction effects

Jim Andersén, "Resource Orchestration of Firm-Specific Human Capital . . .", 2110.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 2092.

<sup>23</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 2096.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 2109.

## CONCLUSION

17. Through a comprehensive analysis of the direction that CANSOFCOM is taking to shape its future and derive possible requirements for CSS Supporters to fulfill, this service paper has identified opportunities for personnel development from within CANSOFCOM, the CAF and even from the private sector. When matched with lessons from the private sector, CANSOFCOM should consider investment in pan-Command collaborative efforts to create efficiencies and improve the overall performance of its supporters and therefore the Command as a whole. This confirmed the author's initial assessment of the situation and possible solutions.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

18. This section summarizes recommendations drawn from the analysis as a menu for the CANSOFCOM Director of Force Sustainment and J4 to draw from:

- a. How CANSOFCOM decides to approach the integration of all these solutions is best to be left up for debate between the units and the HQ. Pooling financial resources whether at the HQ or within a specific unit for the explicit purpose of improving CSS supporter training seems obvious. Respecting each unit's specificity and autonomy will be key getting their buy-in and investment.
- b. Build upon already existing training events at JTF 2 and CSOR in terms of targeted skills required pan-Command for trade, platforms, resource management programs, etc. and opening them even further to all units. Adding resources from other units could help this expansion.
- c. Look to CSOTC to re-expand the supporters' integration training to prior standards, which would add to CANSOFCOM's CHRM. Continue to leverage CSOTC as a venue for training events, but be conscious of its limitations in other areas.
- d. Source from the private sector advanced training for specific skills that are not currently resident within the CAF or are limited in terms of depth.
- e. Seek to maximize early training opportunities on the new procurement model that is still being developed.
- f. Secure more seats on course such as the yearly serials of JSOP for junior supporters.

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