



Preserving the Pillar: Ramifications of Removing the Human Resource Officer

Lieutenant-Commander Carla Higgins

JCSP 49 DL

Exercise Solo Flight

Disclaimer

Opinions expressed remain those of the author and do not represent Department of National Defence or Canadian Forces policy. This paper may not be used without written permission.

© His Majesty the King in Right of Canada, as represented by the Minister of National Defence, 2024.

PCEMI n° 49 AD

Exercice Solo Flight

Avertissement

Les opinions exprimées n'engagent que leurs auteurs et ne reflètent aucunement des politiques du Ministère de la Défense nationale ou des Forces canadiennes. Ce papier ne peut être reproduit sans autorisation écrite.

© Sa Majesté le Roi du chef du Canada, représenté par le ministre de la Défense nationale, 2024.

CANADIAN FORCES COLLEGE - COLLÈGE DES FORCES CANADIENNES

JCSP 49 DL - PCEMI n° 49 AD
2022 - 2024

Exercise Solo Flight – Exercice Solo Flight

Preserving the Pillar: Ramifications of Removing the Human Resource Officer

Lieutenant-Commander Carla Higgins

“This paper was written by a candidate attending the Canadian Forces College in fulfilment of one of the requirements of the Course of Studies. The paper is a scholastic document, and thus contains facts and opinions which the author alone considered appropriate and correct for the subject. It does not necessarily reflect the policy or the opinion of any agency, including the Government of Canada and the Canadian Department of National Defence. This paper may not be released, quoted or copied, except with the express permission of the Canadian Department of National Defence.”

« La présente étude a été rédigée par un stagiaire du Collège des Forces canadiennes pour satisfaire à l'une des exigences du cours. L'étude est un document qui se rapporte au cours et contient donc des faits et des opinions que seul l'auteur considère appropriés et convenables au sujet. Elle ne reflète pas nécessairement la politique ou l'opinion d'un organisme quelconque, y compris le gouvernement du Canada et le ministère de la Défense nationale du Canada. Il est défendu de diffuser, de citer ou de reproduire cette étude sans la permission expresse du ministère de la Défense nationale. »

PRESERVING THE PILLAR: RAMIFICATIONS OF REMOVING THE HRO

The Royal Canadian Logistics Service (RCLS), formerly known as the Logistics Branch, encompasses a variety of trades and specialties and has been active since 1968.¹ In 1997, the Canadian Armed Forces Council decided to incorporate the Personnel Services Branch into the Logistics Branch to combine the human resources aspect with the physical resources used by the forces.² Fast forward to 2024 and the RCLS has decided it is time to modernize the service which will see the retention of only two of the several specialties presently offered to Logistics officers. These two specialties will be broken down into streams of Supply Chain Management and Finance with the necessary professional accreditations. While this concept may seem like a smart move to draw in professionals with those credentials, it creates a situation where other important specialties will no longer exist. One of these specialties is the Human Resources Officer (HRO).

The Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) has been in the midst of a public cultural crisis for nearly three decades, it has been in a dismissed cultural crisis for much longer.³ Low recruitment and high attrition, increased public scrutiny over the poor handling of workplace harassment and sexual misconduct, outdated policies that no longer support those who serve, and the list continues. These are areas whereby other industries rely on HRO's to support and address these issues. With the impending removal of the HRO specialty and the delay in actioning the Personnel Services Branch reinstatement, members of the CAF are vulnerable.⁴ This specialty is the foundation of professional work cultures across the world. Removing this specialty seems like a high-risk move that has not been given the consideration that it deserves. There isn't a professional industry in the world that would eliminate their HR leadership, as HR functions are what guide essential services for employees such as recruitment, administering payroll, managing compensation benefits, managing employee relations, and handling disciplinary needs just to name a few.⁵ These areas hold significant importance for the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) as the institution navigates the essential cultural changes.

This essay will explore the significance of preserving the Human Resources Officer specialty as a cornerstone that supports organizational culture and facilitates the implementation of policies that are essential to successful cultural improvements. It will consider what tasks and roles have been outsourced to positions that receive little training versus having HR professionals complete those tasks and fulfill those roles. Finally, it will look at other militaries are doing with their HR specialty and if they are involved in supporting their respective cultural crisis.

In civilian industry, HROs play a crucial role in organizational management by strategically managing the acquisition, development, and retention of talented employees, enabling a positive work environment, and

¹ Wikipedia. "Royal Canadian Logistics Service," March 11, 2024. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Canadian_Logistics_Service.

² *Ibid*

³ Eichler, Maya. "Canada's problematic military culture warrants an oversight agency." Policy Options, March 16, 2021. <https://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/march-2021/canadas-problematic-military-culture-warrants-an-oversight-agency/#:~:text=This%20crisis%20has%20been%20going,given%20to%20what%20that%20means>.

⁴ Canada. "Strong, Secure, and Engaged," 2017. Accessed May 5, 2024. <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/dnd-mdn/documents/reports/2018/strong-secure-engaged/canada-defence-policy-report.pdf>.

⁵ Human Resource Officer Course Syllabus, Canadian Forces Logistics Training Center,

ensuring compliance with employment policies, thereby contributing to the overall success and sustainable growth of an organization.⁶ This is also true in some areas within the CAF.

At present, the CAF does not have a single Military Occupational Structure Identification Code (MOSID) that completes all of these tasks as one function, but several MOSID's that, if integrated and effectively combined, could support a positive workplace culture. Recruiting centers are run by various trades who are given specific training to work with the public. Training establishments which are led by technical experts within their respective fields, onboard new employees. Retention is a hot topic and yet the think tanks looking for solutions rarely have a HRO among them.

Military HROs fulfill specific duties and responsibilities within the CAF. They lead teams that manage payroll, benefits, and administrative tasks for all employees. They also provide guidance to Commanding Officers and senior leadership on policies and benefits. While they are not the lead in recruitment and training, they still play an important role in supporting those establishments with human resource (HR) functions. Though they do not normally get involved with conflict management, but they do track the process and provide guidance regarding policy application to the Commanding Officer of a unit as necessary. The Royal Canadian Air Force has administrative officer positions that fulfill this exact role.

In civilian industry, HROs significantly impact employee morale and organizational effectiveness by cultivating a supportive work environment. Through initiatives like recognition programs and wellness initiatives, they boost morale, enhancing job satisfaction and retention.⁷ Their focus on fair and transparent policies can foster an environment of trust and commitment among employees. HR Officers also play a crucial role in resolving conflicts and addressing grievances promptly, maintaining a positive workplace culture. By aligning HR strategies with organizational goals and promoting professional development opportunities, they enhance employee engagement and productivity. Ultimately, the efforts of HR Officers contribute to a motivated workforce, driving organizational effectiveness and success.

The RCLS is refocusing its efforts by phasing out the Human Resources Officer specialty to concentrate on two core streams: supply chain management and finance. This strategic shift aligns with the evolving needs of the CAF, ensuring streamlined operations and specialized expertise. Supply chain management will handle logistics and procurement, ensuring efficient resource distribution, while the finance stream will manage budgeting, accounting, and financial planning.⁸ It is intended that by honing these two specialties, the RCLS aims to enhance operational efficiency and effectiveness, supported by civilian designations that bring additional professional credibility and expertise to these critical areas. It's notable that during the assessment of these changes concerning streams, the evaluation team lacked representation from the RCAF and HRO.

Canada's Defence Policy, "Strong, Secure, Engaged," emphasizes the re-establishment of the Personnel Administration Branch as a key initiative to enhance military effectiveness and well-being.⁹ This recommendation addresses the need for a dedicated, specialized branch to manage the complex and evolving demands of personnel administration within the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF). The Personnel Administration Branch aims to streamline administrative processes, ensuring efficient handling of personnel matters such as recruitment, training, career progression, and welfare services. By re-establishing this branch, the policy seeks to improve support systems for military personnel, fostering a more responsive and adaptive administrative framework.¹⁰ This initiative highlights the commitment to maintaining a strong, capable, and well-supported

⁶ HRPA. "About Us - HRPA," May 18, 2023. <https://www.hrpa.ca/about-hrpa/>.

⁷ Indeed. "What Do Human Resources Do? (With 12 Key Functions)," July 20, 2023. <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/finding-a-job/what-does-human-resources-do>.

⁸ DGPR. Logistics Officer Occupational Analysis Brief, November 4, 2021.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 4

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 4

force, enhancing both operational readiness and the overall quality of life for service members. It is believed that through targeted administrative reforms, the CAF can better manage its human resources, ensuring the resiliency and effectiveness of the Defence Team. This is amazing news for CAF members however, there has been little to no follow-up. The reinstatement of the Personnel Administration Branch is entirely omitted from the Defence policy update, Our North Strong and Free.¹¹ This which leads current HRO's to believe that their role, though extremely important, will soon become obsolete.

Currently, several cultural roles traditionally managed by HROs in civilian industries have transitioned to the purview of the Chief Professional Conduct and Culture (CPCC). It is worth noting that the CPCC is not led by an HRO. The CPCC was established with the aim to create a respectful, inclusive, and professional environment across the military.¹² This initiative focuses on eradicating misconduct, promoting ethical behavior, and promoting a culture of dignity and respect. Key goals include implementing comprehensive policies and training programs, enhancing support systems for victims, and ensuring accountability at all levels. By prioritizing these areas, the CPCC seeks to strengthen trust within the ranks and with the public, ultimately contributing to a more effective and cohesive military organization.

The CAF HR Strategy for 2020 focuses on modernizing and enhancing the management of military personnel to meet contemporary challenges. Key objectives include improving recruitment and retention, growing a diverse and inclusive workforce, and enhancing professional development and training programs.¹³ The strategy emphasizes mental health and well-being support, recognizing the importance of a resilient force. It also aims to streamline administrative processes and leverage technology for better personnel management.¹⁴ By aligning these efforts with operational requirements, the CAF seeks to build a more agile, capable, and sustainable force ready to address future defense needs.

The CPCC and the CAF HR Strategy 2020 are distinct initiatives with complementary goals. The CPCC's focus is on promoting an ethical, respectful, and inclusive culture within the CAF. Its primary aim is to eliminate misconduct, promote ethical behavior, and ensure a supportive environment for all members.¹⁵ This involves developing policies, conducting training, and enhancing accountability to build trust and improve the organizational climate.

In contrast, the CAF HR Strategy centers on the overall management and development of military personnel. It addresses recruitment, retention, training, and professional development, emphasizing the need to modernize HR processes, support mental health and well-being, and ensure a diverse and sustainable workforce.¹⁶ While both initiatives aim to enhance the effectiveness and well-being of the CAF, the CPCC specifically targets cultural and behavioral improvements, whereas the HR Strategy deals with broader personnel management and development both of which are extremely important to the future of the CAF.

What does all of this mean to the current landscape? With the CPCC and an HR strategy relying on the support of a yet-to-be-established Personnel Services Branch, questions arise about the insight of depending solely on Non-Commissioned Members (NCMs) serving as Human Resource Administrators (HRAs) to bridge this gap alone. Traditionally, the military designates an officer to ensure NCMs in specific roles have adequate

¹¹ Canada. "Our North, Strong and Free: A Renewed Vision for Canada's Defence," April 25, 2024.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/reports-publications/north-strong-free-2024.html>.

¹² Canada.ca. "Chief Professional Conduct and Culture," October 19, 2023. <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/organizational-structure/chief-professional-conduct-culture.html>.

¹³ Canada.ca. "2.0 Where we are: Investing in Valuable Military Personnel," October 6, 2022. <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/reports-publications/caf-retention-strategy/where-we-are-investing-in-valuable-military-personnel.html>. *Ibid.*, 11

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 12

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 11

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 12

support and leadership oversight. So what MOSID will support the HRA if the HRO is removed from the RCLS as a specialty of employment?

The conventional practice of appointing unit Adjutants. These are officers responsible for administration to support Commanding Officers.¹⁷ They are often officers who are earmarked for future Commanding Officer roles, which raises concerns about their proficiency in HR functions as they do not hold HRO qualifications. As a result, the guidance provided to Commanding Officers by these individuals may lack the requisite technical expertise needed to effectively address intricate issues such as harassment, grievances, the application of benefits, and policy interpretation. Consequently, this situation can lead to mismanagement of files and, ultimately, have a detrimental effect on a unit's culture.

In comparing HRO-led initiatives they typically prioritize strategic human capital management, talent development, and fostering a positive organizational culture. They focus on compliance with HR regulations and enabling a diverse and inclusive workplace. Non-HR Officer-led initiatives may prioritize operational objectives over HR considerations, potentially neglecting personnel well-being, and organizational culture. While both may drive innovation, HR-led initiatives tend to emphasize people-centric solutions, whereas non-HR Officer-led initiatives may prioritize operational efficiency. Both are important which is why an inclusive approach to resolve the upcoming changes that will impact HROs.

Dedicated HR professionals in the CAF ensure policy compliance with HR regulations, foster a supportive workplace culture, and promote employee well-being. They can streamline recruitment processes, optimize talent management strategies, and provide specialized support for personnel issues based on the technical knowledge they hold. HR professionals enhance organizational resilience by addressing cultural challenges and promoting diversity and inclusion. Their expertise in HR policies and practices mitigates legal risks and enhances mission readiness. Additionally, they facilitate leadership development and promote continuous learning, driving organizational effectiveness. Overall, dedicated HR professionals contribute to a cohesive and high-performing military workforce in the CAF.

The CAF has been continuously dealing with cultural crises, concerning issues like sexual misconduct, harassment, and misconduct from Senior Officers. These crises profoundly impact the CAF. Firstly, they strain trust between personnel and leadership, hindering effective operations such as recruitment and retention.¹⁸ Addressing cultural crises demands significant HR resources, which can divert attention from core functions like personnel management. Moreover, the negative publicity surrounding these crises has tarnished the CAF's reputation, potentially dissuading potential recruits damaging morale among existing personnel, and a loss of trust from the public.¹⁹ Retention may suffer as employees lose faith in the organizations ability to address cultural issues.

Failure to address such crises poses risks, highlighting the importance of HROs role in ensuring compliance. Ultimately, cultural crises impair mission readiness. HROs can lead by advocating for robust diversity and inclusion training, fostering transparent reporting channels, and reinforcing accountability measures. They can also champion innovative HR practices to promote a culture of respect and professionalism. By actively addressing cultural challenges, HR officers can mitigate risks and drive positive organizational change, fostering a more inclusive and resilient CAF. However, if you go into most units, particularly in the Army they do not have HRO's.

¹⁷ Wikipedia. "Adjutant," April 30, 2024. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adjutant>.

¹⁸ Kirkup, Kristy. "Sexual-misconduct crisis in military affecting recruitment to Canadian Armed Forces, official says." *The Globe and Mail*, March 24, 2022. <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/politics/article-sexual-misconduct-crisis-in-military-affecting-recruitment-to-canadian/>.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 17

Potential strategies for overcoming HR challenges in the CAF include an increase in HRO's who serve as advisors not solely within units, but in organizations such as the CPCC. The oversight a HRO can provide on implementation of training programs on diversity, equity, and inclusion, supporting transparent communication channels for reporting misconduct, strengthening accountability mechanisms for addressing cultural issues, enhancing support services for affected personnel, and promoting leadership commitment to upholding values of respect and professionalism.²⁰

HROs can drive organizational change and innovation by advocating for progressive HR policies, leveraging technology for streamlined processes, enabling a culture of continuous learning and development, promoting diversity and inclusion initiatives, and spearheading talent management strategies that align with organizational goals. They can also facilitate cross-functional collaboration, identify emerging trends, and implement agile HR practices to adapt to evolving workforce needs. By serving as strategic partners to leadership, HROs can play a pivotal role in driving organizational growth, enhancing employee engagement, and fostering a culture of innovation.

Several countries have military HROs in their ranks, including the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and Germany.²¹ These officers are responsible for various human resource functions within their respective armed forces, such as recruitment, personnel management, training, and welfare support. They play a crucial role in ensuring the effective management of military personnel and the maintenance of organizational culture and morale. There are no indicators that these militaries are planning on removing this occupation particularly because many countries are struggling to fill their increased vacancy rates.

HRO's are more important now than ever in supporting the human resource capacities which will shape and develop the CAF's cultural initiatives. If the Personnel Administration Branch is not reinstated, then the HRO should be retained as a speciality within the RCLS and with the necessary professional designations as that will also align with the modernization of the RCLS.²² The training curriculum for military HRO's should be extensive to match the broad scope of duties in which an HRO could be employed. They will continue to play a pivotal role in organizational management by aligning human capital strategies with organizational goals. HRO's expertise in managing personnel issues, from performance evaluations to conflict resolution, are of increasing importance. Additionally, they mitigate legal and compliance risks by ensuring adherence to policy regulations. Through strategic planning and innovative HR practices HROs contribute to organizational growth and resilience.

In conclusion, it is imperative to recognize the vital role of the Human Resources Officer specialty in supporting a healthy organizational culture and driving essential cultural transformations. This essay has emphasized the importance of evaluating the delegation of tasks to positions lacking specialized training versus entrusting HROs with these responsibilities. Furthermore, examining the practices of other military forces regarding their HRO specialty provides valuable insights into how HROs can actively contribute to addressing cultural challenges. By acknowledging and reinforcing the significance of HROs within military structures, organizations can improve navigation of cultural crises and cultivate environments which in return will support improved cohesion and provide a strong foundation which will improve operational efficiency, which is essential to strong military force.

²⁰ Canada.ca. "Canadian Armed Forces Ethos : Trusted to Serve," July 19, 2023. <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/reports-publications/canadian-armed-forces-ethos-trusted-to-serve.html>.

²¹ Hemler, Jon. "Military Recruiting Across the Globe: The Netherlands, Germany, Japan, and France." Defense Security Monitor, September 15, 2023. <https://dsm.forecastinternational.com/2023/09/15/military-recruiting-across-the-globe-the-netherlands-germany-japan-and-france/>.

²² RPA. "Designations - HRPA," January 23, 2024. <https://www.hrpa.ca/designations/>.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Canada. "2.0 Where we are: Investing in Valuable Military Personnel," October 6, 2022. <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/reports-publications/caf-retention-strategy/where-we-are-investing-in-valuable-military-personnel.html>.
- Canada. "Chief Professional Conduct and Culture," October 19, 2023. <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/organizational-structure/chief-professional-conduct-culture.html>.
- Canada. "Our North, Strong and Free: A Renewed Vision for Canada's Defence," April 25, 2024. <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/reports-publications/north-strong-free-2024.html>.
- Canada. "Strong, Secure, and Engaged," 2017. Accessed May 5, 2024. <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/dnd-mdn/documents/reports/2018/strong-secure-engaged/canada-defence-policy-report.pdf>.
- Canada. "Canadian Armed Forces Ethos: Trusted to Serve," July 19, 2023. <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/reports-publications/canadian-armed-forces-ethos-trusted-to-serve.html>.
- DGPR. Logistics Officer Occupational Analysis Brief, November 4, 2021.
- Eichler, Maya. "Canada's problematic military culture warrants an oversight agency." Policy Options, March 16, 2021. <https://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/march-2021/canadas-problematic-military-culture-warrants-an-oversight-agency>
- Hemler, Jon. "Military Recruiting Across the Globe: The Netherlands, Germany, Japan, and France." Defense Security Monitor, September 15, 2023. <https://dsm.forecastinternational.com/2023/09/15/military-recruiting-across-the-globe-the-netherlands-germany-japan-and-france/>.
- HRPA. "About Us - HRP A," May 18, 2023. <https://www.hrpa.ca/about-hrpa/>.
- Human Resource Officer Course Syllabus, Canadian Forces Logistics Training Center, Indeed. "What Do Human Resources Do? (With 12 Key Functions)," July 20, 2023. <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/finding-a-job/what-does-human-resources-do>.
- Kirkup, Kristy. "Sexual-misconduct crisis in military affecting recruitment to Canadian Armed Forces, official says." *The Globe and Mail*, March 24, 2022. <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/politics/article-sexual-misconduct-crisis-in-military-affecting-recruitment-to-canadian/>.
- Wikipedia. "Adjutant," April 30, 2024. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adjutant>.
- Wikipedia. "Royal Canadian Logistics Service," March 11, 2024. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Canadian_Logistics_Service.