



Managing the Wrong Risk: Canadian Rangers and the Potential for Strategic Failure

Lieutenant-Colonel Kevin Langlois

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Exercise Solo Flight

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MANAGING THE WRONG RISK: CANADIAN RANGERS AND THE POTENTIAL FOR STRATEGIC FAILURE

INTRODUCTION

Canada is characterized by vast expanses, covering over nine million square kilometres, the world's longest coastline, and one of the lowest population densities in the world.¹ These three facts jointly pose a significant security and sovereignty dilemma. How can Canada ensure its security and sovereignty over the entire breadth of its territory when most of it is uninhabited and represents some of the most difficult climatic and physical environments on Earth? Attempting to do so with a conventional military presence would prove prohibitively expensive given the absence of either a population or infrastructure base to sustain it. As a result, Canada opted in 1947 to establish the Canadian Rangers to provide this military presence “in those sparsely settled northern, coastal, and isolated areas of Canada which cannot conveniently or economically be covered by other elements of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF).”²

The Canadian Rangers are a unique operational capability within the CAF for several reasons. Chief amongst them, however, is that they primarily utilize their personally owned equipment to carry out their military duties. While this results in a cost-effective way to meet Government of Canada (GC) objectives, it also means that the operational capacity of the CAF in remote, isolated, and sparsely populated regions of Canada is beholden to access to Canadian Rangers' personally owned equipment. Hurdles faced by Canadian Rangers in being compensated for the loss of or damage to their personally owned equipment are negatively affecting the CAF's operational capacity. If the hurdles faced by the Canadian Rangers in being compensated for loss or damage to personally owned equipment are not promptly addressed, the CAF will be confronted with localized operational failure, and potential strategic failure if the situation endures.

This paper is divided into two sections. The first section will serve as a scene-setter, initially by providing an overview of Canada's geography, population, and the Canadian Rangers. It will then address the benefits of the Canadian Rangers and finally, it will define several types of risk – financial, reputational, operational, and strategic – germane to the issue at hand. The second section will examine current CAF policies for dealing with requests for compensation resulting from loss or damage to personally owned equipment. It will also analyze the impacts of these policies on individual Canadian Rangers, and the CAF as a whole, and then extrapolate the likely outcomes if left unchanged. It will then outline a possible solution that addresses the current compensation framework's failings and avoids potentially negative consequences.

¹ “List of Countries by population density,” Statistics Times, accessed May 21, 2024, https://statisticstimes.com/demographics/countries-by-population-density.php#google_vignette

² Department of National Defence, Canada, Defence Administrative Orders and Directives 2020-2, Canadian Rangers, (Ottawa: Vice Chief of the Defence Staff, May 21, 2015), <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/policies-standards/defence-administrative-orders-directives/2000-series/2020/2020-2-canadian-rangers.html>

CONTEXT

To understand how critical the CAF's dependence upon access to Canadian Rangers' personally owned equipment is in assuring its operational capacity in remote, isolated, and sparsely populated regions of Canada, we must first look at the context and underlying concepts. Divided into four parts, this section will initially provide the necessary background to underpinning Canada's rationale behind the establishment of the Canadian Rangers through an overview of Canada's geography, population and the Canadian Rangers' unique form of service. It will then examine the benefits of relying upon Canadian Rangers' personally owned equipment, as well as define the relevant types of risk at play.

Canada – Geography and Population

After Russia, Canada is the second largest country in the world by total area, covering about nine million square kilometres, spanning more than 4,800 km east to west, and almost as far north to south, which includes more than 240,000 kilometres of coastline.³ It is also characterized by its relatively small population, slightly over 41 million, which results in a relatively low population density when considering its landmass.⁴ Furthermore, the distribution of the Canadian population is not uniform across the country, further skewing its population density. Most Canadians, over 90%, reside within 250 kilometres of the United States.⁵ Roughly put, that means that slightly less than 37 million Canadians reside within the southernmost 1.2 million square kilometres of Canada. As such, northern Canada is not merely sparsely populated, it is extremely so. Canada's three northern territories have a combined population of approximately 130,000.⁶ What communities there are remote, isolated and sparsely populated.

Since the Second World War, this reality has presented Canada with a significant security and sovereignty dilemma. Canada could ill-afford then, nor can it now, to maintain a conventional military presence as it is prohibitively expensive given its resource base. Canada therefore established and continues to rely upon the Canadian Rangers to ensure its security and sovereignty across its vast northern reaches.

Canadian Rangers

The Canadian Rangers are a specialized operational organization within the CAF that provides a presence, a local operational capability, and support to community resiliency in those sparsely settled, remote, northern, coastal, and isolated areas of Canada which cannot be expeditiously supported by other elements of the CAF.⁷ Established in 1947, the Canadian Rangers were seen as a convenient and economical solution to the government's need to assure security and sovereignty over vast stretches of sparsely

³ "Places," Canada Guide, accessed May 21, 2024, <https://thecanadaguide.com/places/>; "Geography of Canada," Wikipedia, last modified May 4, 2024, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geography_of_Canada.

⁴ "Canada's population clock (real-time model)," Statistics Canada, last modified March 27, 2024, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/71-607-x/71-607-x2018005-eng.htm>.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Department of National Defence, Canada, Defence Administrative Orders and Directives 2020-2, Canadian Rangers.

populated and isolated territory without needing to rely upon conventional military forces or the provision of significant resources.⁸ A defining element was, and remains, economy.

Formed as part of the reserve force, the Canadian Rangers are a unique form of service centred upon Canadians serving within their home communities.⁹ Modelled after the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers (PCMR), “a home guard established along the West Coast in 1942 to meet potential Japanese incursions,” the Canadian Rangers are a community-based force whose members can “perform useful military functions while carrying out their everyday civilian lives on the land and sea.”¹⁰

Originally unpaid volunteers, Canadian Rangers are now remunerated and receive some compensation and benefits for their service. As reservists, they are a part-time force whose intrinsic value stems from their residing within those sparsely settled northern, coastal, and isolated areas of Canada. Considered trained upon enrollment, with no requirement to undergo annual training, Canadian Rangers, unlike their counterparts within the Regular Forces or Primary Reserves do not represent a substantial investment in either time or resources before being employable.¹¹ Neither are they intended to be a line of defence and thus forgo much of the upfront training required by the Regular Force or Primary Reserves.¹² Rather, Canadian Rangers are enrolled based on their:

- Intimate familiarity with the local population, industries, terrain, weather, and other conditions within their area.
- Ability to recognize, observe and report on any unusual ships, aircraft, or incidents within their area.
- Possession of useful skills, in the opinion of the Commanding Officer of the Canadian Ranger Patrol Group, for duties in their area.¹³

Simply put, Canadian Rangers are the CAF’s “eyes and ears” at all times, within and around their home communities. This affords the GC and CAF a vast network of watchers in over 200 communities from coast to coast to coast. This network is always active yet only remunerated if they attend the once-a-year training, or when reporting on unusual activity. The remainder of the time, they are on station, going about their daily lives,

⁸ Lieutenant-Colonel Timothy Byers, “The Canadian Rangers: The Right Fit for Canada,” 5.

⁹ Whitney Lackenbauer, “Introduction,” In *The Canadian Armed Forces’ Eyes, Ears, and Voice in Remote Regions: Selected Writings on the Canadian Rangers*, v.

¹⁰ Whitney Lackenbauer, “The Canadian Rangers: A Postmodern Militia that Works,” In *The Canadian Armed Forces’ Eyes, Ears, and Voice in Remote Regions: Selected Writings on the Canadian Rangers*, by Whitney Lackenbauer, (Peterborough: North American and Arctic Defence and Security Network, c/o Trent University, 2022), 91.

¹¹ Department of National Defence, Canada, Defence Administrative Orders and Directives 2020-2, Canadian Rangers.

¹² Standing Senate Committee on National Security, Defence and Veterans Affairs, Canada, *Arctic Security Under Threat: Urgent needs in a changing geopolitical and environmental landscape*, 59.

¹³ Department of National Defence, Canada, Defence Administrative Orders and Directives 5002-1, Enrolment, (Ottawa: Chief Military Personnel June 4, 2018), <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/policies-standards/defence-administrative-orders-directives/5000-series/5002/5002-1-enrolment.html>

observing at no cost to the GC. Canadian Rangers are truly a full-time capability through part-time service.

Benefits of the Canadian Rangers Service Model

Similar to how the remuneration and training costs for Canadian Rangers are extremely low, thus particularly cost-effective, so too is how they are equipped. The communities and areas in which they serve are not only sparsely settled, and isolated, but also difficultly accessible and prone to weather extremes. Maintaining a conventional military presence would prove both arduous and expensive. The infrastructure, equipment and sustainment costs for such an endeavour alone would be substantial, not to mention that the Regular Forces do not have the numbers to garrison northern Canada.¹⁴

Calling upon the residents of these communities makes infinitely more sense, allowing the CAF to focus its Regular Forces and Primary Reserves on maintaining readiness. It also avoids the costs of having to move and sustain Regular Forces to and from these locations. Likewise, relying upon and compensating the Canadian Rangers for the use of their personally owned equipment, the only organization authorized to do so, including means of transport, means the CAF need not assume the costs of purchasing, maintaining and storing innumerable snowmobiles, toboggans, all-terrain vehicles, trucks, trailers, boats and even horses across northern Canada.¹⁵ All aspects from purchase to maintenance and storage are the responsibility of the Canadian Rangers. In return for access to this sizeable and diverse fleet of vehicles (and equipment), the CAF compensates the Canadian Rangers for the use of, and the normal wear and tear incurred during their military service. The CAF also compensates the Canadian Rangers for the loss or damage to their personally owned equipment when the loss or damage is attributable to their military service.

Risks

The Treasury Board of Canada defines risk as "the effect of uncertainty on objectives."¹⁶ In other words, it is the manifestation of the likelihood and impact of an event which can potentially affect the achievement of an organization's objective. While helpful, this definition is too general. Specificity as to the exact nature of the organizational risks incurred by the CAF in the conduct of Canadian Rangers' operations and activities is required to have a holistic understanding of the risks it faces.

There are four types of organizational risk of note in this matter. Firstly, there is the financial risk, which is the potential for an organization to suffer financial losses.¹⁷ Secondly, there is reputational risk, which is the potential for an organization to suffer

¹⁴ Lieutenant-Colonel Timothy Byers, "The Canadian Rangers: The Right Fit for Canada," 2.

¹⁵ Department of National Defence, Canada, "Chapter 210 – Miscellaneous Entitlements and Grants," in *Compensation and Benefits Instructions* (Ottawa: Chief Military Personnel, 2024), 210.82, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/policies-standards/compensation-benefits-instructions/chapter-210-misc-entitlements-grants.html>

¹⁶ Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, *Guide to Integrated Risk Management*, (Ottawa: Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, May 12, 2016) <https://www.canada.ca/en/treasury-board-secretariat/corporate/risk-management/guide-integrated-risk-management.html>

¹⁷ "Business Risks: Identifying Different Types & Solutions," Allianz Trade, accessed April 19, 2024, https://www.allianz-trade.com/en_US/insights/business-risks.html

damage to its reputation due to negative publicity or perceptions about the organization's actions or policies.¹⁸ Thirdly, there is operational risk, which is the potential for an organization to suffer financial losses or a disruption in operations due to failures or errors in its operational processes.¹⁹ Finally, there is a strategic risk, which is the potential for an organization to suffer financial losses or experience negative consequences because it is unable to deliver expected outcomes.

COMPENSATION FRAMEWORK

Having addressed the context which led to the establishment of the Canadian Rangers, the benefits of this unique service model and defined the relevant concepts, this paper will now look at the current compensation framework. It will do so by first providing a broad overview of the current governing policies. Secondly, it will examine the implementation of these policies. Finally, it will extrapolate likely outcomes and propose a possible solution to avoid the direst of these

Policies

Conditions governing compensation of Canadian Rangers for the use of, as well as for the loss or damage to their personally-owned equipment in the performance of their military duties are set out in chapter 210 of the Compensation and Benefits Instructions (CBI). The latter is an entitlement exclusively intended for Canadian Rangers.²⁰ It represents a clear acknowledgment of the uniqueness of this service model, as well as the CAF's dependence upon Canadian Rangers' personally owned equipment. The former establishes an exception in the case of the Canadian Rangers within a limited entitlement which applies to all members of the CAF.²¹

Conditions governing compensation for loss or damage to personal property for all CAF members can be found in Section 1 of Chapter 210 of the CBI. It is important to note, however, that compensation is payable only for articles that:

- are not issued as materiel;
- are necessary for the member:
 - to perform duties specifically listed in orders or instructions issued by the Chief of the Defence Staff; or
 - to perform duties determined by the Chief of the Defence Staff or such officer as the Chief of the Defence Staff may designate; and
- are lost or damaged.²²

The Canadian Rangers' service model is based upon the use of personally owned equipment that normally would be issued. Compensation would therefore not be payable. Given the

¹⁸ Allianz Trade, Business Risks: Identifying Different Types & Solutions.”

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Department of National Defence, Canada, “Chapter 210 – Miscellaneous Entitlements and Grants,” in *Compensation and Benefits Instructions* (Ottawa: Chief Military Personnel, 2024), 210.82.

²¹ *Ibid.*, Section 1 – Compensation for Loss of or Damage to Personal Property.

²² *Ibid.*, 210.01(3).

CAF decision not to provide materiel to the Canadian Rangers that would normally be issued, for eminently practical reasons, an exception to this restriction was required. Therefore, Section 1 also states that “compensation is payable to a Canadian Ranger for personally-owned equipment, including a personal motor vehicle or trailer that is owned or leased by the Canadian Ranger,” that:

- is necessary for the Canadian Ranger:
 - to perform duties specifically listed in orders or instructions issued by the Chief of the Defence Staff; or
 - to perform duties determined by the Chief of the Defence Staff or such officer as the Chief of the Defence Staff may designate; and
- are lost or damaged.²³

Also outlined within Section 1 are the conditions for when compensation is payable, which are rather extensive. Of note are (1) that the loss or damage must be attributable to the claimant's service in the CAF; (2) in the case of loss, replacement is necessary for the proper performance of the claimant's duties; (3) the member has not received or is not entitled to receive full compensation under any insurance policy; and (4) in the case of a Personal Motor Vehicle or trailer owned or leased by a Canadian Ranger, the loss or damage occurred off-road during the performance of duties.²⁴

Section 1 of Chapter 210 also addresses the requirements for the submission of a claim. The administrative procedures and implementation for submission are expanded upon and detailed in the Defence Administrative Orders and Directives (DAOD) 7004-2, *Compensation for Loss or Damage to Personal Property*. As part of the 7004 series, the policy direction governing DAOD 7004-2 can be found in DAOD 7004-0, *Claims By or Against the Crown and Ex gratia Payments* which states that claims for compensation by CAF members are “claims against the crown.”²⁵

Implementation

While CAF policy has (and continues to be) adapted to account for the Canadian Rangers' unique service model, the failure to recognize the CAF's reliance upon their personally owned equipment when it comes to compensation for loss or damage is problematic. Unlike other CAF members who would rarely, and only exceptionally be required to use their personally owned equipment, the Canadian Rangers do so as a matter of course. Treating these claims as claims against the crown, under a financial policy administered by military personnel management has resulted in an overly high degree of scrutiny focussed on ensuring the CAF is not being defrauded.

²³ *Ibid*, 210.01(4).

²⁴ *Ibid*, 210.01(5).

²⁵ Department of National Defence, Defence Administrative Orders and Directives 7004-0, *Claims By or Against the Crown and Ex gratia Payments*, (Ottawa: Canadian Forces Legal Advisor, June 7, 2017) <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/policies-standards/defence-administrative-orders-directives/7000-series/7004/7004-0-claims-by-or-against-the-crown-and-ex-gratia-payments.html>

This scrutiny has led to a checklist culture, where all forms (of which there are many, typical claim packages average fifteen pages) are all properly completed and resemble what a clerk in Ottawa is used to seeing. It fails to account for the fact that things are done differently in remote communities. For example, the local mechanic may not necessarily operate a business that issues receipts but rather functions via handshakes. This has led to statutory declarations being requested in place of receipts. This too is problematic, given that the declaration must be made before an officer (which are all at the Canadian Ranger Patrol Group Headquarters) as it fails to account for the fact that Canadian Rangers are often dislocated from their parent headquarters, by hundreds if not thousands of kilometres.²⁶

Questions will invariably be asked about the claimant's eligibility for compensation via personal insurance requiring proof of denial before the CAF agrees to compensate the member. This provision in the policy utterly fails to recognize that unless specifically insured for professional use (which the CAF does not compensate a member for), any loss or damage to Canadian Rangers personally owned equipment during the conduct of military duty does not fall within their coverage. This has led to an overly bureaucratic process and exceedingly long delays in providing compensation.²⁷ These delays have been highlighted as one of the greatest "challenges that are negatively affecting the recruitment and retention of Canadian Rangers."²⁸

Risk Management

Proper accounting of public funds requires a modicum of measures to be implemented to minimize the financial risk and ensure no fraud occurs. However, this must be balanced against the other risks incurred by the CAF (and the Canadian Rangers). The current policies favour exhaustive investigations which drag out adjudication and can result in significant hardship placed upon the Canadian Ranger as they await compensation for loss or damage to equipment they likely depend upon for subsistence. The financial risk must be balanced against the reputational risk to the CAF of not compensating, or not compensating promptly for the loss or damage incurred while conducting military duties. It must also be balanced against the personal risk the Canadian Ranger assumes when using their personally owned equipment for military duties if the CAF does not, or takes too long to compensate them.

The CAF risks losing access to the Canadian Rangers personally owned equipment if the Canadian Rangers lose faith that the CAF will compensate them promptly. This

²⁶ Department of National Defence, Defence Administrative Orders and Directives 7000-1, *Completion of Affidavits and Statutory Declarations*, (Ottawa: Judge Advocate General, June 7, 2017)

<https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/policies-standards/defence-administrative-orders-directives/7000-series/7000/7000-1-completion-of-affidavits-and-statutory-declarations.html>

²⁷ Standing Senate Committee on National Security, Defence and Veterans Affairs, Canada, Arctic Security, Background notes – Key Issues, Canadian Rangers, April 24, 2023,

<https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/reports-publications/proactive-disclosure/secd-april-24-2023/canadian-rangers.html>

²⁸ Standing Senate Committee on National Security, Defence and Veterans Affairs, Canada, *Arctic Security Under Threat: Urgent needs in a changing geopolitical and environmental landscape* (Ottawa: Senate, June 28, 2023), 68, https://sencanada.ca/content/sen/committee/441/SECD/reports/2023-06-28_SECD_ArcticReport_e.pdf

invariably would lead to a reduction in or complete loss of localized operational capacity given the communal nature of the Canadian Rangers. Even if this scenario does not come about, the mere delay in replacing or repairing a Canadian Ranger's personally owned equipment results in the loss of CAF operational capacity since that Canadian Ranger is no longer operational. These would have knock-on effects and further exacerbate the current recruitment and retention problems, diminishing the CAF's operational capacity further. If left unaddressed, an extreme scenario could see the CAF risk strategic failure through the loss of operational capacity across large breadths of Canadian territory due to a lack of Canadian Rangers or limited access to their personally owned equipment.

Ideally, a Canadian Rangers-specific entitlement for compensation for loss or damage to personally owned equipment would be adopted. Recognizing that Treasury Board approval is required, and would take quite some time, to stave off this operational risk, and avoid strategic failure, the CAF should immediately adopt an integrated risk management framework.²⁹ This would allow for the weighing of the financial risk and level of scrutiny required against the reputational risk the CAF faces (and the personal risk the Canadian Rangers assume) to minimize the operational risk and the possibility of strategic failure. The CAF must therefore transfer the risk back to itself by prioritizing the mitigation of the operational risk. This will require management of this issue by commanders and operational staff, rather than personnel management staff, as well as necessitate the elimination as much as possible of the personal risk borne by the Canadian Rangers.

CONCLUSION

The Canadian Rangers are a unique CAF operational capability whose service model is perfectly suited to meet the GC's objectives of safeguarding the security and sovereignty of Canada's northern reaches. As a community-based force whose members can perform military functions while carrying out their daily activities on land and sea, the CAF benefits from a full-time capability through part-time service, without incurring the costs associated with a conventional military presence. Through reliance upon the personally owned equipment of the Canadian Rangers, the CAF also avoids the costs of purchasing, maintaining and storing the equipment and vehicles that would normally be required for a military force. The Canadian Rangers, with a "force that is five times the size of [Canada's] combat troop deployment to Kandahar yet costs less than the sticker price for three light-armoured vehicles,"³⁰ represents an extremely cost-effective way to maintain a military presence in the remote and isolated areas of every province and territory (except for New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island).

While cost-effective, the CAF must acknowledge that its operational capacity in remote, isolated, and sparsely populated regions of Canada is beholden to access to Canadian Rangers' personally owned equipment. Hurdles faced by Canadian Rangers in being compensated for the loss of or damage to their personally owned equipment are negatively affecting the CAF's operational capacity. The CAF must therefore promptly address these hurdles by adopting an integrated risk management framework to ensure that all risks – financial, reputational, personal and operational – are properly considered when

²⁹ Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, Guide to Integrated Risk Management.

³⁰ Don Martin, "Invisible Force in the North: Rangers guard sovereignty with old guns, radios," *National Post*, October 26, 2007.

compensation claims are adjudicated. If financial risk continues to be the only consideration, then localized operational failure is likely, and strategic failure is possible.

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