

Canadian
Forces
College

Collège
des
Forces
Canadiennes



The Requirement of a Semi-Permanent Air Task Force Lentus

Major Samuel Boudreault

JCSP 49

Service Paper

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, 2023.

PCEMI n° 49

Étude militaire

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, 2023.

CANADIAN FORCES COLLEGE - COLLÈGE DES FORCES CANADIENNES

JCSP 49 – PCEMI n° 49
2022 – 2023

Service Paper – Étude militaire

THE REQUIREMENT OF A SEMI-PERMANENT AIR TASK FORCE LENTUS

Major Samuel Boudreault

“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 Defense. This paper may not be released, quoted, or copied, except with the express permission of the Canadian Department of National Defense.”

« 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. »

THE REQUIREMENT OF A SEMI-PERMANENT AIR TASK FORCE LENTUS

AIM

1. Climate change continues to pose a threat to Canadians and the number of domestic operations has steadily increased during the last decade. In order to assist the provincial and territorial authorities responding to natural disasters, the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) activate the contingency plan (CONPLAN) LENTUS. The aim of this service paper is to demonstrate the effectiveness of standing a single semi-permanent air task force (ATF) supporting all LENTUS operations.

INTRODUCTION

2. Since the CAF decided to name an operation that involved responding to a natural disaster in Canada *LENTUS* in 2012, the RCAF was directly involved in thirty of the thirty-three Op LENTUS.¹ The implication of the Royal Canadian Air Force varied from strategic airlift to a complete air centric mission. The command and control (C2) structure of the RCAF elements is either an air detachment (Air Det) or an ATF if the scope of the mission warrants it². In accordance with the managed readiness plan (MRP), 2 Air Expeditionary Wing (2 AEW) is mandated to lead and form the core of the ATF C2.³ With every new Op LENTUS, 1 Canadian Air Division (1 CAD) stands up a new C2 structure and assign a different team to command and lead the new Air Det or ATF. At the end of the mission, the personnel return to their usual place of employment. The cycle restarts every time another Op LENTUS is activated.

3. There is a critical time during the year (historically from March to October) where the probability of multiple Op LENTUS conducted simultaneously is very high. This is the part of the year when fires and floods occur the most often and in different parts of the country. This paper introduces the concept of a semi-permanent ATF LENTUS, establishes the no-fail aspect of domestic operations, links this proposition with the existing doctrine, explains the synergy created with other stakeholders, supports the notion of a smaller deployed footprint, and finally, describes how it would facilitate 2 AEW to fulfill its mandate.

¹ Government of Canada, Current Operation List, last modified 2022-11-23 available online at <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/operations/military-operations/current-operations/operation-lentus.html>

² Barnes, Pux (LCol). "The RCAF Air Task Force: Considerations for the Employment of Air Power in Joint Operations". Article #5 in a series on command and control and the Royal Canadian Air Force. Available online at <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/rcaf-arc/migration/docs/en/aerospace-warfare-centre/c2-article-5-the-rcaf-air-task-force.pdf>

When selecting the best option for the employment of an ATF Comd, a number of factors must be weighed, including the size, complexity, and length of the operation. As an operation evolves, it may be necessary to recommend a change in the ATF Comd option in order to ensure the appropriate level of air leadership is present in theatre.

³ 1 Canadian Air Division, Managed Readiness Plan (annual). Available on DWAN only.

DISCUSSION

4. The concept of this C2 node, ATF LENTUS, should reach an initial operational capacity (IOC) by 15 February and be stood down by December 1st of every year. Those timings would obviously be amended as required if an operation was ongoing. The time between the standing down of the ATF to the standing up would be used to capture lessons learned, amend the concept of operation (CONOPS) as required, and would allow for the reconstitution of the 2 AEW personnel. Also, this timeframe is historically a low risk period for Op LENTUS and a high-risk period for Op RENAISSANCE. Having the ATF LENTUS stood down would generate more flexibility to reshuffle personnel on other ongoing or potential deployments and effectively deliver airpower where it is most needed.

5. The safety and the reduction of suffering of Canadians at home is a no fail task for the CAF. As stated by the Assistant Deputy Minister Review Service (ADM(RS)), “domestically, the CAF will normally respond to any contingency, under Op LENTUS, with any resources required and available to support the provincial Emergency Management Organizations.”⁴ Since these types of missions are inevitable, it is paramount for the RCAF to adopt a proactive approach rather than a passive stance. Furthermore, it would be unlikely that the federal government would not support a request for assistance (RFA) from a province or a territory. As stated in a directed research paper on domestic operations, “regardless of the current military state of affairs and beliefs on expeditionary operations, an armed force’s readiness to respond to a public RFA in a domestic emergency should be considered one of its “*raison d’être*” and priorities.”⁵ The current approach of the RCAF is to stand up an ATF during an Op LENTUS and to stand it down when the operation is completed – even if it means multiple times per year.

6. The RCAF doctrine describes the principles of war as “fundamental guidelines for military action and are the most basic form of military doctrine”.⁶ The standing up of a semi-permanent ATF-LENTUS echoes the principles of war of concentration of force as well as economy of effort. Concentration of force implies that “force must be concentrated at a decisive time and place”⁷ while the principle of economy of effort dictates that “while resources are always limited, prudent risk may have to be accepted to achieve maximum concentration at the main area of interest.”⁸ The ATF is defined in the doctrine as a “temporary grouping of Royal Canadian Air Force formations, units or detachments that is formed to conduct a specific operation, mission or task”⁹ and this is the organization that can “effectively plan, coordinate,

⁴ Government of Canada, Assistant Deputy Minister Review Service (ADM(RS)), Evaluation of Canadian Armed Forces Operations, November 2017, available online at https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_mdnd/D2-550-2017-eng.pdf

⁵ Maj Rock, James D.H. Directed Research Paper, Canadian Forces College, The Canadian Armed Forces and Domestic Operations: Unbalanced and Overstretched? 2021

⁶ Department of National Defence, B-GA-402-001/FP-001, Royal Canadian Air Force Doctrine: Command and Control (Trenton: Canadian Forces Aerospace Warfare Center, 2018)

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Department of National Defence, B-GA-402-001/FP-001, Royal Canadian Air Force Doctrine: Command and Control (Trenton: Canadian Forces Aerospace Warfare Center, 2018)

⁹ Ibid

and deliver air power”.¹⁰ Although the structure of an ATF itself could be challenged, a large amount of flexibility is given to the ATF commander, allowing the shaping of the ATF to better fit the mission set. The task-tailored approach of an ATF is an example of success proving once again that flexibility is the key to airpower. However, the idea of standing up and down an organization every time there is an Op LENTUS is counterproductive. When a RFA is submitted to the federal government, it usually does not take long before the CAF and the RCAF begin to plan. Whether the mission is complex from an air operation’s perspective (high altitude, lack of refueling point, no instrument approaches, etc.) or spread across different provinces, multiple rounds of Air Operation Planning Groups (AOPG) must occur before all actors agree with the plan. Another important aspect of those AOPG rounds is the establishment of the C2 structure and the appointment of an ATF commander. As mentioned by LCol Barnes, the “ATF concept was designed to fix these problems (a lack of planning capability, a constantly changing command structure, difficulties associated with different communities working as a whole) and bring structure and predictability to the way the RCAF formed its deployable forces”.¹¹

7. Considering that all air mobility assets and crew are located in Trenton, basing the ATF headquarters (HQ) at this base would increase the synergy between the ATF staff and the air mobility community. Although aircraft and crews could not be tasked until the proper authority would be transferred to the ATF via a Transfer of Command authority (TOCA)¹² message, face-to-face time is valuable in building relationship and must not be neglected. In preparing the air force for the future, Dr. Goette accurately defines 2 AEW as a specialized expeditionary unit/capability, who “directly supports Canada’s domestic first-principle priorities by freeing up other wings to ensure the smooth functioning of domestic air operations instead of putting undue pressure on them to support a rapid overseas deployment.”¹³ Since the ATF staff main body would be composed of members from 2 AEW (located at CFB Bagotville) it would be relevant to have them geographically pre-positioned in Trenton for the duration of the LENTUS season. This would allow the possibility of face-to-face meetings with other key partners during this type of operation such as the Canadian Forces Joint Operational Support Group (CFJOSG) and 1 Canadian Army Division (1 Can Div) both located in Kingston. Once the appointment is official, it is important to note that the ATF Comd will report directly to the Joint Force Air Component Commander (JFACC) and does not report to 2 AEW anymore. This fracture in the chain of command is important to understand and physical separation enables personnel assigned to the ATF to focus on their mission rather than been dragged back in their 2 AEW’s responsibilities.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ LCol Pux Barnes, “The RCAF Air Task Force: The New Kid on the Block,” *Royal Canadian Air Force Journal* 4, no. 4 (Fall 2015): 39, 45, accessed Jan 26, 2018, <http://www.rcafarc.forces.gc.ca/en/cf-aerospace-warfare-centre/elibrary/journal/2015-vol4-iss4-fall.page>.

¹² Tactical control (TACON) permits effective “local direction and control of movements or maneuvers necessary to accomplish missions or tasks assigned.”⁹ TACON is normally exercised by tactical-level commanders during air power operations. During air power operations, TACON is normally delegated to a commander capable of managing a complex operational environment for a specified period of time.

Department of National Defence, B-GA-402-001/FP-001, *Royal Canadian Air Force Doctrine: Command*

¹³ *Preparing the RCAF for the Future: Defining Potential Niches for Expeditionary Operations*. Trenton: Royal Canadian Air Force Aerospace Warfare Centre, 2020, https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2021/mdn-dnd/D2-420-2020-eng.pdf

8. Historically, the ATF HQ has generally moved forward with air assets and co-located to get closer to the affected areas. This way of operating has also been proven to have negative effects on smaller communities. Real life support (RLS) required by an ATF can be a burden and strain the local economy and rapidly overtake all available commercial lodging, water, and food. By establishing an ATF HQ in Trenton and pushing forward the minimal required footprint, the ATF contributes to missions' success via centralized command and decentralize execution and increase the flexibility of the forward detachment to find suitable accommodation for aircrews while ensuring a positive image of the CAF. The ATF HQ can rely on detachment commanders (DetCo) at multiple locations to report to the ATF HQ directly. This approach also facilitates the line of communication to and from the combined air and space operations center (CAOC). Essentially, all Op LENTUS correspondence would be directed to one point of contact rather than fetching information from different ATF spread across the country. Two years after the RCAF adopted the ATF model for deployed operations, LCol Barnes noted as a lesson learned that "having several ATFs spread out across Canada and the rest of the world at one time can challenge commanders and their C2 systems".¹⁴ A single point of contact for all domestic operations solves this issue as most of the responsibility is therefore delegated to the operational and tactical level allowing the CAOC staff to focus on other expeditionary operations.

9. As mentioned in a directed research paper on the RCAF's transformation into an expeditionary air force, for "LoO2-type contingency operations, 2 Wing is the RCAF's standing high readiness and rapid response formation of choice, the spearhead of the expeditionary RCAF."¹⁵ Experience cannot be created out of thin air but requires training, lessons learned, and deployment opportunities. Currently, the RCAF does not have any type of formal training for domestic operations and ATF commanders are selected by the 1 CAD commander based on the recommendation of the 2 AEW Comd. Exercise Phoenix Warrior is an annual training event led by and for 2 AEW where participants learn to operate and lead different parts of a deployed ATF. Although having a semi-permanent ATF LENTUS could be perceived as an increase in staffing requirements, it would have the opposite effect. By having an office space staffed by 2 AEW personnel from February to December, 2 AEW would be filling its mandate of maintaining the required two lines of tasks for domestic operation with only one ATF. Furthermore, having a semi-permanent office in Trenton would allow the ATF to build long-lasting relations with the provinces' emergency management team, the different Joint Task Force (JTF) and their air component coordination element team (ACCE) as well as all other CAF units that are involved in domestic operations.

¹⁴ LCol Pux Barnes, "The RCAF Air Task Force: The New Kid on the Block," Royal Canadian Air Force Journal 4, no. 4 (Fall 2015): 39, 45, accessed Jan 26, 2018, <http://www.rcafarc.forces.gc.ca/en/cf-aerospace-warfare-centre/elibrary/journal/2015-vol4-iss4-fall.page>

¹⁵ Girouard, Luc (Col), The RCAF's transformation into an expeditionary air force, Directed research paper, Canadian Forces College, 2018.

There are three potential scenarios regarding the outcome of a LENTUS season.

Scenario 1: This is a quiet season and there are very few domestic operations.

The personnel deployed to ATF LENTUS would continue to monitor the situation and continue to liaise with provincial emergency response teams as well as with 2 AEW and 1 CAD. If not gainfully employed, they could then continue their usual 2 AEW tasks in a remote work model. The ATF HQ could also work on documentation such as standing orders, best practices, lessons learned and eventually come up with some work up training. The doctrine pertaining to the employment of the RCAF for domestic operation is thin and would benefit from a permanent staff able to shape the doctrine on the subject.

Scenario 2: The LENTUS season is an average year with a few operations spread throughout the year. The ATF LENTUS would manage all operations and augmentation would come from within 2 AEW.

Scenario 3: The season is catastrophic and multiple requests for assistance (RFA) from different provinces have been approved. Multiple domestic operations are launched at the same time, surpassing the capacity of the ATF. This scenario would require the augmentation of 2 AEW and then from 1 CAD as required. The command structure of the ATF could be reviewed from within -without changing the command relation with 1 CAD or the JTF. As an example, the A3 function could be divided by operation or region.

10. Looking back at the last decade, scenarios 2 and 3 seems to be the most probable. As a former 2 AEW Comd noted, operations LENTUS “are persistent yet temporal in nature”.¹⁶ If the RCAF can pre-positioned an ATF HQ in Trenton that would establish the right connection between all the key players in a whole of government effort state of mind, it would result in a massive gain in synergy. Also, a substantial amount of staff work would be avoided by the standing up and down of an ATF following every single operation LENTUS of the season.

11. The C2 aspect of the ATF LENTUS would be the same as any other ATF during a domestic operation. Tactical command (TACOM) should be delegated to the ATF and operational control (OPCON) should remain within the appropriate joint task force (JTF). It would be easier to maximize the employment of every single asset by employing them at the right place for the right duration of time once the assets for the mission are transferred from the JFACC to the ATF. Essentially, the ATF could return an unused line of tasks to 1 CAD that could then generate a local training mission achieving local force generation (FG). With a restricted number of assets, the maximization of each aircraft is fundamental to maintain an adequate balance of force employment (FE) and FG. The concept of having an ATF HQ in Trenton with detachments located at different places in the country has been put to the test during LENTUS 21-03 & 21-04 and the concept was proven effective. However, there was no lesson learned that captures this innovative idea.

¹⁶ Girouard, Luc (Col) The RCAF's transformation into an expeditionary air force, Directed research paper, Canadian Forces College, 2018.

CONCLUSION

12. As mentioned by a former 2 AEW Comd, “the ATF construct is now completely embedded in the RCAF’s expeditionary culture, institutionalized and operationalized”.¹⁷ By assuming the responsibility of staffing the LENTUS ATF HQ, 2 AEW would fulfill its current mandate without having to reshuffle personnel as other LENTUS operations are stood up. 2 AEW, the spearhead of the RCAF, would also boost its credibility by developing experts on domestic operations that could produce lessons learned and push the doctrine further on the subject. The standing of a semi-permanent ATF LENTUS would ensure leadership continuity throughout the year. The ATF would be the main point of contact with regards to air support for LENTUS operations for all agencies involved. From a command and control’s perspective, 1 CAD would benefit of having only one ATF. It would reduce the staff work required to bring an ATF to life for every LENTUS operations as well as the work required to terminate the ATF.

RECOMMENDATION

13. This service paper recommends the creation of a semi-permanent ATF LENTUS with an IOC of 15 February and a closing date of December 1st each year. Staffed and augmented by 2 AEW personnel, this ATF HQ shall be located in Trenton and transferred TACOM of air assets as required. All DETCO deployed during LENTUS operation shall report to ATF LENTUS.

¹⁷ Girouard, Luc (Col) The RCAF’s transformation into an expeditionary air force, Directed research paper, Canadian Forces College, 2018.

Bibliography

1 Canadian Air Division, *Managed Readiness Plan* (annual)

Barnes, Pux (LCol), The RCAF Air Task Force: The New Kid on the Block, *Royal Canadian Air Force Journal 4*, no. 4 (Fall 2015): 39, 45.

Barnes, Pux (LCol), The RCAF Air Task Force: Considerations for the Employment of Air Power in Joint Operations. Article #5 in a series on command and control and the Royal Canadian Air Force.

Department of National Defence, B-GA-402-001/FP-001, *Royal Canadian Air Force Doctrine: Command and Control* (Trenton: Canadian Forces Aerospace Warfare Center, 2018)

Girouard, Luc (Col) "The RCAF's Transformation into an Expeditionary Air Force", Directed research paper, Canadian Forces College, 2018.

Goette, Richard Dr., "Preparing the RCAF for the Future: Defining Potential Niches for Expeditionary Operations". Trenton: Royal Canadian Air Force Aerospace Warfare Centre, 2020.

Government of Canada, Assistant Deputy Minister Review Service (ADM(RS)), *Evaluation of Canadian Armed Forces Operations*, November 2017

Rock, James D.H. (Maj) Directed Research Paper, Canadian Forces College, "The Canadian Armed Forces and Domestic Operations: Unbalanced and Overstretched?" 2021