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Canadian Divisions or Militia Districts: Support for Army Restructuring as Planned in Force 2025

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SUPPORT FOR ARMY RESTRUCTURING AS PLANNED IN FORCE 2025**

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CANADIAN DIVISIONS OR MILITIA DISTRICTS: SUPPORT FOR ARMY RESTRUCTURING AS PLANNED IN FORCE 2025

AIM

1. The aim of this service paper is to propose that the Canadian Army be restructured so that all three Canadian Mechanized Brigade Groups form a single High Readiness division (HR) focused on force generation and expeditionary operations, with the Canadian Brigade Groups remaining under the command of geographically associated divisions. Specifically, FORCE 2025 Field Force Structure Course of Action (COA) 3.0, as selected by the Army on 9 December 2022 should be enacted as initially planned, which proposed such a formation.¹

INTRODUCTION

2. In 2020 *Advancing With Purpose* acknowledged the Army's force structure was problematic, specifically noting a requirement to "validate the functions, organization, and distribution of land formations, including Canadian Army divisions, brigades, and combat support units."² In order to address this the Army launched FORCE 2025 which led to the proposal of three Courses of Action (COA). COA 1: Enabled Canadian Mechanised Brigade Groups (CMBG) was essentially the status quo with a "necessary structural realignment to integrate future capability."³ COA 2: Light/Medium/Heavy Divisions called for each division to be designated as light, medium, or heavy forces, giving the Army the "ability to assign specific Division (Div) to force generate for current named operations as well as future contingency operation under a new Managed Readiness Plan (MRP)."⁴ COA 3: High Readiness (HR) Level 2 Headquarters (HQ) called for the three CMBGs be structured under a single division, with the CBGs remaining under their current. This COA was intended to enable "the CA to generate sustainable Ready Forces that are capable of operating within a pan-domain environment against peer adversaries" while enabling an "Individual Training (IT) system that could function independent of major augmentation from the field force."⁵

3. COA 3 was ultimately selected, however, during Army Council (AC) 21-05 it was decided that fundamental components of this COA conflicted with the centrality of the Brigade, therefore COA 3.1.2 was introduced which "stopped short" of adopting an HR Division.⁶ Without the HR division COA 3 is arguably no longer maintaining its own Centre of Gravity and does not enable the constituent parts upon which such a COA rests.

¹ Department of National Defence, *Warning Order – Canadian Army Modernization Strategy: Sub-Initiative 4.1. - FORCE 2025*. Ottawa: Canadian Army Headquarters, 2022.

² Canada. Ministère de la Défense nationale and Canada. Dept. of National Defence. *Advancing with Purpose: The Army Strategy*. Ottawa, Ont: Dept. of National Defence, 2014.

³ Canada. Dept. of National Defence. *Briefing Note 29 Nov 21 FORCE 2025 COA 1 – ENABLED CMBGs*. 1901-1 (DLFD SI-2) Ottawa: Dept. of National Defence, 2021.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Canada. Dept. of National Defence. *Briefing Note 19 Nov FORCE 2025 COA 3 – HIGH READINESS LEVEL 2 HQ*. 1901-1 (3 Cdn Div G5). Ottawa: Dept. of National Defence, 2021.

⁶ Department of National Defence, *Warning Order – Canadian Army Modernization Strategy: Sub-Initiative 4.1. - FORCE 2025*. Ottawa: Canadian Army Headquarters, 2022.

DISCUSSION

FORCE 2025 – Force Structure & Course of Action 3

4. COA 3, as originally proposed, sought to address the fact that the Army had for some time struggled to fulfill conflicting commitments, namely the need to address personnel issues, individual training requirements and enable Army Reconstitution, while still fulfilling both domestic and expeditionary commitments. As well, COA 3 was described as being relevant to the Pan Domain Force Employment Concept for various reasons, one being the introduction of a functional, relevant HR Division HQ that would actively command and enable a tangible divisional structure for roughly symmetrical Brigades. COA 3 did not necessarily call for the unlikely deployment of an entire Canadian division, but rather proposed that “the CA does not need to replicate Joint capabilities with organic elements, but rather needs to be optimized to force generate tactical mission elements that integrate into the Div/Corps pan-domain fight,” implying that this has been hampered by a the lack thereof in the current structure.⁷ Such a force structure, it was argued, would enable the CMBG’s ability to “fight within a divisional construct...enabling elements to integrate “down” to the brigade or “up” to the division level.”⁸ In order to accomplish this, four key components were described:

- a. Regrouping of CMBGs under a single L2 HQ for unified Force Generation and Force Management;
- b. IT schools to be mostly independent of the Field Force;
- c. Maximize Force Employment output while maintaining a strategic reserve; and
- d. Enhance Land Domain integration potential within the PFEC concept.⁹

5. At AC 21-05 COA 3 was drastically amended, despite the deductions that led to its selection and arguably no longer meets its initial intent. At AC 21-05, Comd 4 Cdn Div expressed concern that “the current structure of the CA may not allow sufficient flexibility to support both international and increasingly common domestic operations.”¹⁰ Further, several L2s commented that, for various reasons, the time had come for Army structure to be seriously revisited and that “all our structures should be scrutinized and be subject to change if it is deemed necessary, even if that results in disbandment or reorganization of long-standing organizations.”¹¹ Despite these comments, it was determined that a more detailed review of the presented COAs was required, ultimately resulting in a redesigned COA 3 (3.1.2) that functionally resembles the status quo more than the originally approved COA 3. The HR Division would be completely removed and our geographically based, mixed Army Reserve and Regular Force divisions would remain largely unchanged.¹²

⁷ Canada. Dept. of National Defence. Briefing Note 19 Nov 21, *FORCE 2025 COA 3 – HIGH READINESS LEVEL 2 HQ*. 1901-1 (3 Cdn Div G5). Ottawa: Army Headquarters, 2021.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Canada. Dept. of National Defence. Record of Discussion, 24 Nov 21. *Record of Decision ARMY COUNCIL (AC) # 21-05*. 1150-3 (AC 21-05). Ottawa: Army Headquarters, 2021.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Department of National Defence, *Warning Order – Canadian Army Modernization Strategy: Sub-Initiative 4.1. - FORCE 2025*. Ottawa: Canadian Army Headquarters, 2022.

CoA 3.1 – Canadian Army Order of Battle



Figure 1 - CoA 3 as presented at FORCE 2025 Working Group, dated 23 Aug 21. A single HR Division with all three CMBGs is depicted, with the four other divisions being made up largely of reserve units.

Historical Context

6. For a relatively small Army, which often follows the lead of our larger partners, the Canadian Army and wider CAF has taken several approaches to organization over its existence. Canada's Army structure has long been influenced by our geography. After having employed armies, corps and divisions in the Second World War, the Army reverted to a peacetime structure based on Militia districts. 1st Canadian Division would be resurrected briefly in the 1950s as the formation commanding Canada's regular Army and again at the end of the Cold War in order to command Canada's overseas land commitments. This decision was made following the publication of the 1987 Defence White Paper which noted that a geographically based command structure was not sufficient to react during a crisis, due to the nearly constant requirement to transfer forces from regional force generators to operational commanders. This, it was decided "would not suffice and would have to be reorganized precisely the moment when continuity would be essential."¹³ Despite having deduced the above, the Army would eventually place all land forces in Canada under geographical formations branded as Land Force Areas. In 2013 these Land Force Areas (largely unchanged) became the divisions we now have, which are not operational L2 formations, but rather renamed administrative entities.

Allied Army Force Structure Examples

7. Armies often review their force structures, however, the vast majority of our allies structure their forces roughly in line with doctrinal principles. In 2019 the UK began its controversial restructure titled *Future Soldier*, which has drawn much criticism. Despite reservations, the force structure is still arguably closer to doctrine and better suited for operations than that of the Canadian Army. The British Army is now composed of three divisions, one of which (3UK Division) is their primary 'warfighting' formation, with the other two divisions providing enabling or complimentary effects. According to Lieutenant-

¹³ Beatty, Perrin and Canada. Dept. of National Defence. *Challenge and Commitment: A Defence Policy for Canada*. Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services, 1987.

General Ivan Jones, Commander Field Army, the “three complementary British Army Divisions harness the wide range of British Army capabilities,” built “on the strong foundation of the 3rd Division’s world class warfighting force.”¹⁴ While Permanent Joint Headquarters, much like our Canadian Joint Operations Centre controls all overseas military operations, 3 UK Div provides a high readiness operational headquarters, a division level command structure, force generation, administration for several brigades, and a deployable task force HQ up to the division level. 1 Can Div does not have most of these capabilities, as much of these functions are divided between several different HQs in Canada or do not exist.

8. The Australian Army operates a somewhat similar force structure to the British Army, with most of their Army’s units existing within semi-doctrinal formations. Australia groups much of its full time, deployable army, under the singular *Forces Command*, which is essentially a division by another name, which contains most of the Army’s deployable units as well as the Army training authorities and institutions. The Australians also operate a separate, deployable division headquarters that reports to Army HQ (similar to 1 Can Div). Most of the reserve elements of the Army fall under their own formations, as do their Special Operations Forces, which results in most of the Australian Army falling under three ‘L2’ HQs.¹⁵

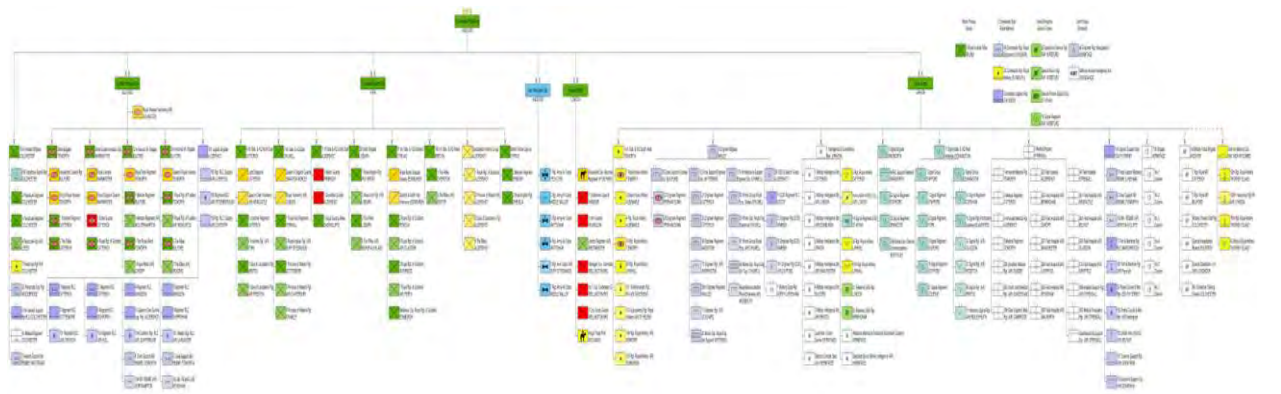


Figure 2- British Army Force Structure as part of Army 2020 Refine, depicting 2 divisions, with 3 UK Division being the ‘primary warfighting’ formation.

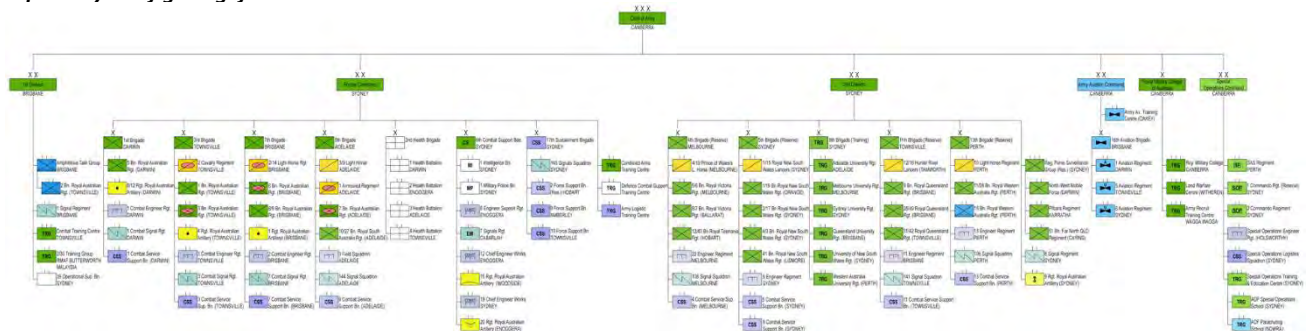


Figure 3- Australian Army Force Structure as part of 2020 Force Structure Plan depicting FORCE COMMAND which is essentially a division construct of mostly regular soldiers, with 2nd Division being the primarily reserve based formation.

¹⁴ Ministry of Defence. *Army restructures to confront evolving threats*, dated 31 Jul 19. <<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/army-restructures-to-confront-evolving-threats>>

¹⁵ Department of Defence. *Force Command Raised as Adaptive Army Flies the Flag*. Canberra: Department of Defence, 2012

Why Revisit Force Structure?

9. The Canadian Army's current structure appears to be historically derived and fit for conflicting purposes, with expeditionary operations existing in a stovepipe, despite our self-identification as an 'expeditionary army.' According to a Canadian Forces College dissertation written by Maj R.A. Cooper in 2018, this results in divisions that are "saddled with many conflicting priorities."¹⁶ A division commander in Canada must balance the differences between regular force and reserve units, the requirement to function as a domestic operations Task Force Commander, while considering the existential considerations that come with a non-deployable, non-operational formation functioning largely as a force generator. Given the geographic fixation of our command structure, the Army's divisions often simply own what physically exists within their Joint Task Force's Area of Operations (AO). Therefore a division commander in Canada commands two forms of brigade group, a Ranger Patrol Group, a divisional training centre, and divisional support group.¹⁷ Oddly, the largest and most deployable formations in most of the Army's divisions are the CMBGs, which Cooper postulated "tend to be seen as 'being able to look after themselves' and so are not given the same amount of attention on a day-to-day basis as other direct-reports."¹⁸ Compounding this is the fact that the Army's divisions are by no means symmetrical in form or function. As an example, 5 Can Div, which does not contain a CMBG, commands the Canadian Combat Support Brigade, which has units that would typically be described as 'divisional troops'. Clearly this is not ideal, given the identification of force structure as a Line of Operation (LOO) in FORCE 2025. The FORCE 2025 Warning Order, published in March 2022, stipulated the emphasis for a force structure review as:

- a. Align CAF strategic initiatives, by integrating key Army wide deductions within a force structure suited to continental defence, Joint Surveillance Reconnaissance (JSR) modernization, Information Related Capabilities (IRC), Operations Sustainment Modernization (OSM) and Digital Transformation;
- b. Address 'The Hollow Army' by streamlining force structure (among other initiatives);
- c. Enable the Army in a Pan-Domain environment by generating a HR formation capable of simultaneous operations; and
- d. Modernize Command and Control (C2) structures so that they align with CA operational outputs.¹⁹

10. The COA 3 development team proposed that a force structure centred around a HR Division in command of all three CMBGs would at least give the Army the best start state from which to tackle these concerns. They proposed that the Army was beset by structural issues largely due to a habit of "either reinforcing existing deficient institutional functions or in developing new capabilities," often outside of our own doctrinal concepts.²⁰ To put it plainly, there appeared to be an impression that the Army's formations had too many conflicting priorities, were not enabled to actually command their formations (certainly never on operations) in a Pan-Domain context, and were interacting with other institutional

¹⁶ Cooper, R. A. and Canadian Forces College. *Canadian Army Redux: How to Achieve Better Outcomes without Additional Resources*. Vol. JCSP/PCEMI 44. Toronto, Ont.: Canadian Forces College, 2018.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Department of National Defence, *Warning Order – Canadian Army Modernization Strategy: Sub-Initiative 4.1. - FORCE 2025*. Ottawa: Canadian Army Headquarters, 2022.

²⁰ Canada. Dept. of National Defence. *Briefing Note 19 Nov FORCE 2025 COA 3 – HIGH READINESS LEVEL 2 HQ*. 1901-1 (3 Cdn Div G5). Ottawa: Dept. of National Defence, 2021.

bodies that leverage friction, but who themselves were suffering structural issues. In examining how best to address these issues, the COA 3 team proposed the following considerations could be best addressed by a doctrinal, HR Division:

- a. Joint enablers would be better integrated within a division than a brigade (re: division troops, joint HQ);
- b. The CA's operational outputs are tactical in nature, with elements that integrate into higher Joint components. The CA does not need to replicate Joint capabilities with organic elements, but rather needs to be optimized to force generate tactical mission elements that integrate into the Div/Corps pan-domain fight, and leverage its effects;
- c. F2025 cannot lead to the creation of a force that has a surfeit of enablers and a scarcity of core manoeuvre arms;
- d. In a period of adversarial competition, the CA will mainly contribute to Close Engagement through Security Force Capacity Building (SFCB) and conducting demonstration and deterrence activities; and
- e. Initially deployed forces against our present adversaries will likely need to be generated on very short notice, requiring minimal regrouping and a high level of readiness.²¹



Figure 4 - COA 3.1.2 as depicted in Warning Order - Canadian Army Modernization, dated 22 Mar 22

²¹ Ibid.

CONCLUSION

11. Despite the identification of force structure as a major hinderance to Army Modernization, and a subsequent collaborative planning process that led to the proposal of COA 3 and its selection, during AC 21-05 it was decided to amend COA 3 so extensively that it no longer, at least from a tangible perspective, has much resemblance to what was deduced and chosen. Interestingly the Army Operational Plan for FY 2023-24, written after COA 3 was amended, notes the requirement for Canada to have an ability to operate at the division level as part of CONPLAN JUPITER, specifically lacking the ability to deploy an entire division “does not preclude our requirement to train HQ and supporting enablers at the Div level”.²² As of the 22 March 2022 Warning Order – Canadian Army Modernization, COA 3 looks much like the status quo and no longer contains a HR L2 formation at all. According to the FORCE 2025 Operational Design, the End State of LOO 1: Force Development remains a Land Force that is modernized and “robust” with “structurally ready force elements.” Arguably, if the self-identified “Critical Component” was to create “rapidly deployable and scalable forces,” which the Army deduced was hampered by the very nature of our force structure, then the decision to extensively amend COA 3 indicates either that our initial planning was flawed, or that the decision to amend it so extensively was not based on the Working Group’s deductions.²³

RECOMMENDATION

10. From a purely doctrinal standpoint, it is for reasons other than simple effectiveness, that any Army would structure itself in a manner unrelated to operations. Concerns about domestic operations and the Army Reserve continually have undue influence over our expeditionary effectiveness, as there are too many divergent priorities. The Army should candidly admit to itself that expeditionary operations and the defence of the North American continent take precedence. To these ends, the Army should either re-evaluate how it chose COA 3 and revise the planning process at COA development, or implement COA 3 in the way it was intended. Doing so would enable our CMBGs to operate within an operational division construct, provide a clear and effective chain of command between Brigade and Army, provide the field force with an L2 HQ on par with CADTC, eliminate the requirement for a separate Brigade level support formation (they would become division troops), and better enable our formation staffs to understand the Pan-Domain.

²² Department of National Defence, *Canadian Army Operating Plan: FY 2023-2024*. 1948-2 (DAS 2-2). Ottawa: Canadian Army Headquarters, 2022

²³ Department of National Defence, *Warning Order – Canadian Army Modernization Strategy: Sub-Initiative 4.1. - FORCE 2025*. Ottawa: Canadian Army Headquarters, 2022.

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