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SITTING, WAITING, WISHING: REDEFINING THE ROAD TO THE OPERATIONAL FUNCTION POINT

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Service Paper

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SITTING, WAITING, WISHING: REDEFINING THE ROAD TO THE OPERATIONAL FUNCTION POINT

AIM

1. The current training delivery pathway to the Operational Function Point (OFP) for a Signals Intelligence Specialist (SIGINT Spec) includes significant delays due to security clearance requirements. It is proposed that the Assistant Chief of Military Personnel (Asst CMP) change the occupation specifications (Occ Specs) to reduce the security clearance requirements from Level III SCI with Access Rights Privilege to the national Level III Special Systems to Level II Secret to reach OFP.¹ Close coordination and career management must be adhered to mitigate risk and employment for future members of 21 Electronic Warfare Regiment (21 EW Regt). This will significantly reduce the time to OFP, lessen the pressure on the Individual Training (IT) system, and improve the quality of life for new members of the occupation.

INTRODUCTION

2. The Communications and Electronics (C&E) Branch is one of the most challenged Branches in the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) at the moment in terms of occupational health. (See Annex A). Recruitment is at an all-time low and retention remains a constant reality within the Military Employment Structure (MES). Within the C&E Branch the SIGINT Spec continues to have the longest road to OFP, requiring prospective members to gain an Enhanced Top Secret Security Clearance (ETSSC) prior to commencing their respective Rank Qualification (RQ) Private's training. In order to achieve ETSSC, members must complete the Top Secret Special Compartmentalized Information (TS/SCI) clearance process and successfully complete a Polygraph exam. This is a significant change in recent years due to the Communications Security Establishment (CSE) intelligence community imposing this restriction with new clients to access the enterprise. Prior to this restriction imposed by the CSE, SIGINT Specs only needed to possess Level III Top Secret and successfully complete their respective Private's course to be granted OFP. The average time to OFP during this period was approx. 1 year. In consultation with the Canadian Forces School of Communications and Electronics (CFSCE) as it stands, the average OFP delay the ETSSC requirement is causing is approx. 735 days.²

3. At its peak, the Personnel Awaiting Training (PAT) at CFSCE included more than 150 SIGINT Spec members due to the ETSSC requirement. CFSCE incurs a significant instructor cost associated with PAT supervision and administration. Though Director General Defence Security (DGDS) continues to improve its internal processes, the time delays to obtain ETSSC continue to be unacceptably long from a training establishment perspective. This poses a significant challenge not only for the training establishment but

¹ DPGR, *The CAF Military Employment Structures Manual - Occupational Specifications Non-Commissioned Members Signals Intelligence Specialist* , [2014]). 14

² Greg Maj McDonald, Telecon with Chief Instructor CFSCE, 14 Feb, 2024.

also has detrimental effects on the mental well-being of our PATs, who endure an average wait of 2.5 years in CFSCE accommodations, often sharing a room with three others. An interim solution is needed due to the throughput limitations and burden it is causing on the IT system. This model is in complete contradiction to the CAF Reconstitution Directive released by the Chief of the Defence Staff who states “modernize the training processes and accelerate and adapt methods of delivery where possible, to minimize unproductive delays between foundational and career courses.”³

DISCUSSION

4. Upon completion of their OFP training at CFSCE, SIGINT Spec are generally employed in one of two units: Canadian Forces Station Leitrim/Assistant Deputy Minister (Information Management), representing 64% of the trade’s Corporal/Private Permanent Manning List (PML), or 21 EW Regt (Canadian Army) with 20% of the occupation’s Pte/Cpl PML. While the ETSSC is a requirement for employment within CFS Leitrim, due to access to the CSE-controlled network, members at the rank of Pte/Cpl can be gainfully employed at 21 EW Regt once they achieve a level II (SECRET) clearance.

5. From a training perspective the majority of the performance objectives (POs) and enabling objectives (EOs) for Pre-OFP SIGINT Spec are designed to work within the CFS Leitrim environment. CFSCE conducted a study to declassify the ETSSC POs and EOs to see if some of the fundamentals could be taught at the SECRET and below level. There was initial success of an unclass pilot Pte course, however, two of the POs could not be declassified delivered due to the nature of the material and access. Without an ETSSC security clearance and the classified RQ Pte course complete, SIGINT Spec Pte’s cannot be employed nor be unsupervised within CFS Leitrim.

6. The notion of proactively managing and redirecting the trajectory of postings from OFP to 21 EW Regt subsequent to the delivery of the declassified training model warrants thorough exploration. This strategic maneuver holds the potential to alleviate the prolonged waiting periods endemic within the training system, alleviate the burden placed upon staff at the CFSCE who are tasked with managing PATs, and foster enhanced employment opportunities and career progression avenues for SIGINT Spec members. By strategically implementing this approach, we can effectively address the significant challenges posed by the prolonged waiting period, while simultaneously capitalizing on the talents and capabilities of SIGINT Spec members. Within the typical 2-3 year interval required to obtain ETSSC security clearance, these individuals could be gainfully employed at 21 EW Regt. This not only serves to mitigate the potential stagnation experienced during the waiting period but also ensures that valuable resources are utilized effectively within the military structure. Moreover, upon return to CFSCE following their employment at 21 EW Regt, SIGINT Spec members can seamlessly transition into the classified portion of the training curriculum, ideally at the Corporal level course. This holistic approach not only optimizes the utilization of personnel but

³ W. D. Eyre, *CDS/DM Directive for CAF Reconstitution* , [2022].

also streamlines the training process, ultimately enhancing the readiness and effectiveness of SIGINT Spec members within the CAF.

7. CFSCE is poised to accommodate Pte's who are close to their polygraph process, to provide the full gamut of classified training when ready. This model would allow for flexibility down to the member and the training system can be more agile with its approach. This would alleviate the need to post members twice within a short period, where CFSCE would retain SIGINT Spec members who are close to ETSSC and polygraph and conduct classified training and onward movement/posting to CFS Leitrim. The risk is mitigated as SIGINT Spec members that are posted to 21 EW Regt will not be handling TS/ETSSC material until they are granted their clearance. There is a risk of a SIGINT Spec member failing the polygraph exam after having been declared OFP with this proposed new model. This risk is mitigated by processes already in place including a career review board followed by a compulsory occupational transfer (COT). This risk is minimal as the polygraph success rate has been over 95% according to DGDS.⁴

8. Most SIGINT Spec Pte/Cpl positions are under ADM(IM) (64% at the rank of Pte/Cpl), which benefit from a higher staffing priority (PRI A for CFS Leitrim vs PRI C for 21 EW Regt). There is a risk associated with the VCDS staffing priorities not being adhered to for postings at this rank level. This risk is mitigated through effective career management: once members receive their ETSSC, they can be posted to ADM(IM). A follow-on recommendation is to change the VCDS staffing priorities at the Pte rank level. Enabling members to join the ranks of 21 EW Regt upon completion of an unclassified training model and attainment of OFP not only presents them with the opportunity to swiftly start their career but also facilitates an accelerated commencement of their professional advancement, expediting their career trajectory by 1 to 1.5 years. Moreover, this initiative serves as a vital support system for individuals separated from their families, facilitating an earlier reunion and ensuring timely accommodation arrangements, thus fostering a stronger sense of stability and well-being. This also speaks to their mental well-being, esprit de corps, and perhaps to their overall retention if their first 2-4 years are not spent awaiting training and not gainfully employed.

9. An alternative avenue for exploration involves a comprehensive restructuring of positions within the SIGINT Spec occupation, specifically targeting the ranks of Pte and Cpl for separation. If the occupation were to confine Leitrim employment to substantive Corporals and above, this measure could alleviate the necessity of prioritizing ETSSC clearance and polygraph examinations prior to reaching OFP. However, this adjustment would require corresponding adjustments in the staffing of the 21 EW Unit to accommodate an increased influx of Privates. One potential strategy to offset this adjustment could involve reallocating a few mid-level NCMs to CFS Leitrim, although it's worth noting that 21 EW Regt still faces staffing shortages.

10. Another option to consider is transforming the entry pathway into the SIGINT Spec occupation into a remuster trade. This would necessitate Regular and Reserve force

⁴ Maj McDonald, Telecon with Chief Instructor CFSCE,

members to apply for admission and fulfill stringent prerequisites, including ETSSC clearance and polygraph examinations, before advancing to the training system. Alternatively, the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) could reassess the recruitment pipeline for SIGINT Spec and redirect potential recruits toward other critical occupations within the C&E Branch, which are currently experiencing significant staffing shortages.

11. In the absence of viable alternatives, there exists a considerable waiting period for OFP training and ETSSC polygraph examinations. During this interval, other branches such as the Navy might benefit from the inclusion of capable and willing non-qualified SIGINT Spec PATs in programs like the Naval Experience Program. This approach could help maximize the utilization of resources and talent across various branches of the CAF.

CONCLUSION

12. The SIGINT Spec trade urgently requires a thorough reassessment of its current OFP pathway. Presently, all occupational training is exclusively tailored towards deployment at CFS Leitrim and within the SIGINT enterprise, overlooking potential employment opportunities at 21 EW Regt. The additional requirement of an ETSSC security clearance, entailing a government polygraph examination, has needlessly prolonged the pre-OFP training phase. Consequently, a surplus of PATs at CFSCE has strained instructional resources, diverting staff from their primary instructional duties to manage this influx. The resultant average OFP timeline has ballooned to an astonishing 735 days, with a mere approximate 85 days dedicated specifically to training activities. This prolonged waiting period has had detrimental repercussions both for the trade as a whole and for individual members alike.

13. The redefinition of OFP within the SIGINT Spec occupation presents a multifaceted opportunity for a comprehensive overhaul and enhancement to the occupation. Among a plethora of potential strategies, the proposed paradigm shift involves a holistic reassessment of the security clearance prerequisites for OFP attainment, coupled with a deliberate deployment and management strategy directing individuals to 21 EW Regt while awaiting the completion of their ETSSC clearance. This proactive measure serves as a robust safeguard against potential security breaches during a transitional phase. Critically, the advantages of this approach far outweigh any conceivable drawbacks, harmonizing seamlessly with the overarching objectives of CAF Reconstitution. By streamlining training pipelines and expediting early employment opportunities, soldiers not only bolster operational readiness but also position themselves for potential deployment, thereby cultivating a more agile and responsive force structure. Furthermore, by optimizing the trajectory to OFP and mitigating wait times, we not only enhance the mental well-being of our soldiers but also instill within them a profound sense of purpose and responsibility from the outset. This proactive approach serves to mitigate any sense of disconnection or lack of awareness, fostering a more cohesive and engaged military community.

14. Finally, an exploration into diversified entry options into the SIGINT Spec occupation should be explored. With much longer than normal CAF average wait times

to OFP, the CAF would benefit from reallocating these individuals into other distressed occupations, most notably within the C&E Branch.

RECOMMENDATION

15. Recommendation #1. Asst CMP (Occupation Authority) redefines and changes the SIGINT Spec occ spec definition of OFP. This would include removing the requirement for an ETSSC security clearance and polygraph to reach OFP, by amending the security clearance to a Level II Secret to reach OFP. This recommendation is directly tied to CAF Reconstitution and in line with CAF priorities. If approved, this overcomes the obstacle of wait times until cleared to continue with training and produce SIGINT Specs much faster to the workforce.
16. Recommendation #2. Asst CMP through Director Military Careers (DMILC) to enable the posting of SIGINT Spec Ptes into positions within 21EW Regt, should the unit lack Pte positions to accommodate new graduates then an amendment to the Pte PML positions be adjusted to ensure all Pte's can be posted to 21 EW now and into the future. If approved, this enables rapid deployment of newly trained SIGINT Specs directly to a much needed unit, rather than waiting at CFSCE for extended periods of time.
17. Recommendation #3. Asst CMP through VCDS to recommend changing VCDS staffing priorities to reflect 21 EW Regt as a PRI A vice currently a PRI C at the rank of Pte. If approved, this enables Recommendation #2 above.
18. Recommendation #4. Asst CMP to acknowledge the residual risk with potential Compulsory Occupational Transfers (COT) or administrative reviews if members are not granted ETSSC post-OFP due to either a polygraph failure or training failure. Mitigation would result in an occupational transfer, preferably within the C&E Branch.
19. Recommendation #5. CMP to consider the reevaluation of the entry into the SIGINT Spec occupation, if recommendation 1 is not fulfilled. This would include looking at restricting direct entry into the occupation and leveraging a remuster model where Reg and Res forces apply and need to meet the security clearance requirements before moving to CFSCE and commencing occupational training.

Annex(es): A. 2024-2025 Strategic Intake Plan Matrix

Annex A – 2024-2025 SIP Matrix

Annexe A – Matrice PRS 2024-2025

Corps	Occ.	TES/PML 24/25	Last Year's SIP 23/24	Current SIP 24/25	Diff in SIP % - Diff in #/Curr. SIP	Diff in # = Curr. SIP - LY SIP	Trigger to schools if SIP at 60%	School Capacity	BMQ/BM OQ Attrition Rate	Surge SIP
INFANTRY	INF	92%	173	151	-14.57%	-22	91	136	23%	167
	infth	90%	1168	1068	-9.36%	-100	641	945	20%	1134
	ADST	85%	9	14	-35.71%	5	8	20	13%	23
ARTYLLERY	ARTY	82%	76	91	-16.48%	15	55	72	20%	86
	GNR	86%	332	337	1.48%	5	202	432	16%	501
ARMD	ARMD	99%	108	75	-44.00%	-33	45	64	30%	83
	Crmn	83%	346	346	0.00%	0	208	320	15%	368
ENGINEER	ENGR	84%	79	70	-12.86%	-9	42	48	30%	62
	Cbt Engr	87%	233	226	-3.10%	-7	136	200	12%	224
	Geo tech	85%	28	28	0.00%	0	17	32	3%	33
RCEME	EME	85%	91	84	-8.33%	-7	50	40	33%	53
	Veh Tech	80%	125	230	45.65%	105	138	160	9%	174
	Mat Tech	91%	22	32	-31.25%	10	19	30	5%	32
	EO Tech	80%	40	58	31.03%	18	35	60	7%	64
	W Tech	87%	44	46	4.35%	2	28	50	8%	54
Signalor	Sigs	94%	125	92	-35.87%	-33	55	80	25%	100
	Sig Op	61%	167	165	-1.21%	-2	99	168	10%	185
	Sig tech	53%	76	68	-11.76%	-8	41	60	9%	65
	Is Tech	83%	100	100	0.00%	0	60	104	11%	115
	Line Tech	73%	38	36	-5.56%	-2	22	32	11%	36
Total Army SIP			3380	3317			1990			3560

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