

Defence Review - Edmonton Roundtable 04 June 2016
Executive Summary by Col (ret'd) Charles Hamel, CD

Preamble - The nature and types of warfare have significantly changed in the Post-Cold war era and the CAF has adapted, to the best of its abilities, in re-establishing a credible “war-fighting” ethos, which was duly recognized and appreciated by our most trusted Allies. In spite of this, we have not collectively achieved the desired outcomes in these protracted, asymmetrical, hybrid, etc... conflicts abroad. Furthermore, emerging threats such as cyber, terrorism, climate change, and their associated 2nd order effects (i.e. Refugee migration, Child Soldiers, etc...), are still relatively nascent. We must, therefore, seize this opportunity to reflect on the most effective means of utilizing our military power in achieving our political goals at home and abroad.

International Operations Policy Recommendations: Develop and employ more capabilities with effects on the psychological and informational planes where our adversaries appear to have made more substantial gains. Aside from SOF, our high tech centric physical plane focus won battles, but not the war. SOF forces should be increased but needs a robust well trained force generation base. Influence Activities (IA) and ISTAR capabilities (i.e. HUMINT, drones, etc...) must be enhanced and leveraged to win the battle of narrative on the war of perception to gain the ‘trust and confidence’ and win the ‘hearts & minds’ of the indigenous and Homefront populations, respectively. Secondly, we should optimize best practices from recent conflicts that include: The Strategic Advisory Team (SAT) for national institutional human capacity ‘nation-building’ support; and, Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT), which regrettably never reaches the desired end-state of being fully integrated with the indigenous sub-national governance Centres. This capability should have a small operational footprint supported with a robust whole of government ‘comprehensive approach’ reach-back capabilities on the Homefront, which should include academic institutions and the corporate sector (i.e. marketing, media, etc...).

Domestic Operations Policy Recommendations: Over the past few years the CAF has re-established former customs and traditions that have serve us well in shaping our culture and war-fighting ethos. The “war-fighter” versus “peacekeeper” debate is moot given the challenges of the present contemporary environment. Besides, it’s a public decision, as long as we are in agreement that all CAF members must be “soldiers first”. Our current roles have not changed in decades, nor should they, but a compelling argument can be made that the third priority, contributing to global peace and security, trumps the first two given that the GWOT is already at our doorstep and that Canada’s prosperity and security depends on global stability. We must, however, seriously re-visit the attribution of mission and tasks for both the Regular Force (Reg F) and Primary Reserves (PRes) in a “Total Force” construct. The latter component bears its historical roots in the defence of Canada and has recently proven its vital contribution to international peace and security operations. Its recent questionable viability is no fault of its own and the greatest attribute is its

resilience to institutional neglect. Furthermore, it is a viable framework for national mobilization.

It must be clearly articulated that the primary role of the PRes is domestic operations and they should be resourced accordingly. The merits of “Two Divisions Model” that was proposed a few years ago could provide a viable institutional framework. For example, the creation of the 2nd Canadian Domestic Div could have an 80%-20% PRes-Reg F establishment and vice-versa for the 1st Cdn Expeditionary Div. Obviously, each would augment the other depending on the need. Of course, there are other models that could achieve a clear articulation of role and tasks. A robust logistical component would be ideal to support ‘first-responders’ dealing with local emergencies. A secondary role of ‘connecting with Canadians’ is paramount and fully congruent with the PRes national footprint. Another, critical role is maintaining our Canadian Sovereignty in the Artic. The Canadian Rangers are the force in place and it would be a cost effective measure to double their strength and support infrastructure, as well as increase the number of Sovereignty Exercises.

Institutional Policy Recommendations: Major changes are required to create parity or a “level playing field” between the two components that will contribute to operational readiness and the elimination of significant unnecessary bureaucracy. Creating common terms of service such as: Full-time unlimited liability; Full-time limited liability; Part-time unlimited liability; and, Part-time limited liability are proposals offered for consideration. Any serving member could have the options of seamlessly changing their status to accommodate a plethora of reasons (i.e. Reg F member not accepting a posting or deployment to accommodate a temporary familial need, or a PRes member on high readiness status committed for deployment on either a domestic or international operation). Of course, pay and benefits parity would be based on unlimited (100%) and limited (80%) liability. This recommendation would infer a common HRMS and pay systems. Funding allocations for PRes salary and benefits should also be managed in the same way (e.g. ‘Fenced-in) as the Reg F and removed from existing budgets. In addition, the PRes should be funded for all annual ‘mandated’ training, which is about 55 man-days versus the present 37.5. The final constraint of our operational effectiveness is our capacity to offset our attrition and reach our employment equity goals with an effective recruiting system. Our failure to address this perennial problem might imply a radical change such as outsourcing this process to the corporate sector.

As Board Chair of the Calgary Military Family Resource Centre (MFRC), I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the stellar guidance provided by CMP, CFMWS and MFS in honoring the pledge of the “CF Family Covenant”. As such, military families should be recognized in the Defence Policy as an integral element of the Canadian Armed Forces. They have made significant contributions to operational effectiveness and, therefore, must be supported by all levels of government through the MFRCs that are governed by families, for families- “Strength Behind the Uniform”

It would be my pleasure to elaborate on any of the above recommendations.

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