

SPECIAL COMMISSION ON THE RESTRUCTURING OF THE RESERVES: 10 YEARS LATER – SELECTED CONFERENCE SPEAKING NOTES

AIR AND NAVY RESERVE PERSPECTIVES - BACK TO THE FUTURE: A NEW GOLDEN AGE FOR THE AIR RESERVE?

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It was a great pleasure to attend this conference, and I learned a great deal from the participants. However, when I was invited to attend this conference, I was somewhat surprised by its focus, as most of the conference seemed to be oriented towards a Land Force view of the reserves. This was indicated by a number of things, such as the title of the URL for the internet link to the conference “Homeland Defence & Land Reserves” and this panel “Air and Navy Reserve: Supporting or Equal?” As a former air force officer and son of a member of the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) Auxiliary, it seemed to me that the Air Force was being marginalized. On reflection, I accepted that the Air Force probably deserved this marginalization.

After unification in 1968, the RCAF was the only one of the three services to lose all of its professional military education institutions, particularly the RCAF Staff College, upon which it depended as its centre for doctrine and ideas about the use of Canada’s military air assets. This loss had a particularly detrimental effect on the development of Canadian air doctrine, and in the 1970s it degenerated into the views of separate air warfare communities cobbled together with little coherence or consistency.¹ This loss is

¹ K.R. Pennie, “The Impact of Unification on the Air Force,” in William March and Robert Thompson, eds., *The Evolution of Air Power in Canada*, vol. 1 (Winnipeg, MB: Air Command History and Heritage), 1997, 108-109.

still felt today as a September 2005 Canadian Forces College (CFC) curriculum note stated that: “As of this year, [the] CAS [Chief of the Air Staff] has discarded *Out of the Sun* as restrictive and inadequate. New doctrine is to be drafted in the coming years by the new Air Warfare Centre. In lieu of Canadian-sanctioned doctrine, CFC will rely on USAF and US DOD Joint Air doctrine.”² It must seem strange indeed to the Chief of the Defence Staff and other senior Army officers leading current transformation initiatives, who view doctrine as a central part of their culture and as the foundation for much of what they do, to be dealing with an organization, the Air Force, that has no doctrine above the tactical level.

With the publication of *Strategic Vectors*³ in 2004 and the stand up of the Aerospace Warfare Centre in October of this year, this situation will soon be rectified, but we must recognize that without doctrine to guide it over the past 37 years, Canada’s air forces, including the Air Reserve, have been somewhat adrift (if you will pardon the mixed metaphor) – that is the bad news. The good news is that starting from a clean sheet of paper, doctrinally speaking, the Air Force and the Air Reserve can adopt bold new directions that will complement Canadian Force (CF) transformation.

I would like to present one idea for this direction, based on principles taken from the “golden age” of the Air Reserves in the 1950s, that could provide new capabilities for the Air Reserve in addition to the excellent work that its members are already doing. At its peak in its “golden age,” the RCAF Auxiliary⁴ consisted of almost 6,000 personnel

² CFC, AMSC Schedule for 27 September 2005, “A/JC/CPT 404/LE-3, Nature of Air Operations,” accessed 15 Oct 2005.

³ DND, *Strategic Vectors: The Air Force Transformation Vision* (Ottawa: Director General Air Force Development, 2004), available at http://www.airforce.forces.gc.ca/vision/strategic_e.asp.

⁴ In February 1946, the Cabinet approved a new peacetime structure for the RCAF, which was to be comprised of four components: a Regular Force, an Auxiliary, a Reserve, and a cadet organization. The Regular Force consisted of units manned

and its order of battle counted some 13 fighter or fighter/bomber squadrons, 14 Aircraft Control & Warning (AC&W) squadrons, 16 Auxiliary Medical Units, and 9 Wing headquarters, plus other units.⁵ At this time, early in the Cold War, the RCAF Auxiliary's roles were mainly complementary to the Regular RCAF, as opposed to the supplementary roles that the Air Reserve has today in supporting the Air Force. The RCAF Auxiliary was responsible for providing most of the frontline air defence of Canada, with fighter and mobile radar squadrons, while the Regular RCAF was relegated mainly to its pre-war duties: aerial photography, transport and training.

The factors that underpinned the success of the RCAF Auxiliary in its "golden age" were 1) the realization that to raise such a force quickly, the Air Force had to match the needs of the Air Force with the skills and availability of certain people in the civilian population; 2) the realization that a vision and a plan to guide the creation of this force had to be created; and 3) the will to implement the plan.

I submit that a similar opportunity, but in a different context, exists today for the Air Reserve based on similar factors. First of all, we know that so-called "knowledge workers" are a key part of any profession, like the profession of arms. For example, a recent article on Knowledge Management in *Bravo Defence* stated that:

EBO [Effects Based Operations] requires a broad-based, comprehensive, and systematic knowledge of the adversary, friendly forces and neutral parties. It must address the full range of a region's political, military, economic, social, information and infrastructure systems.⁶

by personnel engaged for full-time military service; the Auxiliary consisted of units with personnel engaged for part-time military service, while the Reserve was a pool of inactive personnel available for activation in the event of mobilization. Over time, all members of the Auxiliary and the Reserve were referred to as "reservists." Source: DND, Air Reserve History, Post-Integration, http://www.airforce.forces.ca/air_reserve/history/post_integration_e.asp, accessed 26 Nov 2005.

⁵ R.P. Haskel, "The Rise and Fall of the RCAF Auxiliary," unpublished RMC BMAS paper (nd, [1998?]) 9, 38-9.

⁶ LCol Tom Gibbons, "CF Experimentation Centre: Leads KM Multinational Project," *Bravo Defence* vol. 5 (Summer 2005), 17.

And yet the range of skills required to acquire and manage this knowledge is considerable, and the CF already finds it difficult to recruit, educate and retain such people.

However, Canada has large numbers of civilian “knowledge workers” whose skills might be employed, on a part time basis, by the Air Force Reserve. Imagine the Air Force creating Knowledge Creation and Management (KC&M⁷) Squadrons around the country (composed mainly of Reservists but with a leavening of Regular Force personnel). These squadrons could fulfil many functions, like those required to support EBO in the example cited above, for example, strategic, economic and political analysis, social and cultural analysis, risk analysis.

The jobs of those in these KC&M Squadrons would be similar to their civilian jobs so that their training would be minimized. They could work from home or some other place of their choice in a virtual environment, linked by the internet, meeting face-to-face only from time to time, mainly for team building and social activities. This virtual work environment would mean that these squadrons would not need permanent facilities requiring capital expenditure or overhead costs. Furthermore, members of the squadrons would not need to meet the same physical standards as other members of the CF, and some might even be in wheelchairs.⁸ Therefore, KC&M Squadrons would not be required to physically deploy their members, but like the old sedentary militia

⁷ I chose the designation KC&M deliberately to reflect the roots of some of the original air force knowledge managers - the AC&W squadrons.

⁸ Another example recently shown on the Canadian Forces College Spotlight on Military News and International Affairs web page highlighted another example, a peanut allergy, where someone might not be eligible for some types of service in the CF, but where that person could serve in a KC& M squadron, Shi Davidi, “Pyear has high hopes,” (2 December 2005) <http://slam.canoe.ca/Slam/Football/NCAA/2005/12/01/1332915-cp.html>.

they would be “based” in a fixed geographical location. Nevertheless, with concepts like “reach back” and “reach forward” they would be able to support expeditionary operations in a virtual sense. KC&M Squadrons could, therefore, provide services to any number of CF organizations, for example strategic planning and analysis to the CDS’s new Strategic Staff or virtual support to Canada Command.

The type of person who would likely join a KC&M Squadron would be someone who was prepared to make a worthwhile contribution to the CF based on their expertise in their civilian job, but with minimum disruption to their lives. In most cases money would not be the main motivator for them to join the reserves, but, as study after study in Organizational Behaviour has shown, the most powerful motivator – doing challenging work as a member of a high performance team – would induce them to join. Without going into detail here, I suggest that the Air Force, as a force whose culture is rooted in technology, would provide the best organizational culture for these technologically-minded people to work in.⁹

I submit that this idea is viable based on my experience with the Joint Reserve Command and Staff Course (JRCSC), that I have been working with for over two years now. Two things about JRCSC lead me to believe that “knowledge-based” KC&M squadrons are possible: 1) process, and 2) the personal qualities of the JRCSC staff and students. As for process, JRCSC is a 10 month course with approximately 300 program hours. It has two residential terms: Term 1, two days of personal contact and team building, and Term 4, two weeks residential group study in syndicate. Two thirds of the course work is done at a distance via internet in Terms 2 and 3. Despite its

⁹ The issue of differing environmental or “service” cultures is discussed in detail in Allan English, *Understanding Military Culture: A Canadian Perspective* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2004).

challenges, this distance education methodology has worked very well. For example, the syndicate I was Academic Staff for last year was spread across the globe. The syndicate DS was a Colonel in the Australian Army who was deployed to East Timor for half the course and back in Australia for the other half. The syndicate was composed of students from Canada, the US, and the United Kingdom, and we worked successfully together as a staff-student team, meeting all together for the first time in Term 4.

In terms of personal qualities and qualifications, generally speaking, those of JRCSC students are excellent and they have many valuable civilian, as well as military, qualifications that lead me to believe that creating KC&M Squadrons would be feasible. Yet many more people with these types of are not in the reserves, and this proposal suggests that it would be a great benefit for the CF to tap in to their capabilities to the fullest extent possible. This proposal is not without its challenges but, like the RCAF Auxiliary in its golden era, with a sound plan and the will to execute it, the obstacles to implementing it could be overcome.

In closing, I would like to make it clear that this model would complement, not replace, current Air Force Reserve roles. If adopted, this proposal has the potential to give the CF access to a previously untapped pool of highly skilled “knowledge workers,” who would require minimum training and infrastructure, but who could make an important contribution to the Air Force and the CF of the future.
