

WE WILL FIND A WAY

**CANSOFCOM**



**COMFOSCAN**

NOUS TROUVERONS UN MOYEN



# BEYOND THE HORIZON

A STRATEGY FOR CANADA'S SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES IN  
AN EVOLVING SECURITY ENVIRONMENT



CANADIAN ARMED FORCES

FORCES ARMÉES CANADIENNES



National  
Defence

Défense  
nationale

Canada



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## MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF OF THE DEFENCE STAFF

Since its inception in 2006, the Canadian Special Operations Forces Command (CANSOFCOM) has excelled in providing the Government of Canada with unique solutions of high strategic value. Its strength lies in the professional excellence of its members: their discipline, precision, and accountability will continue to be critically important to their ability to conduct operations across the spectrum of conflict at home and abroad.

While maintaining high readiness, CANSOFCOM has grown as a lean, agile, and highly capable organization which continues to adapt, respond to, and defend against ever-evolving and complex threats. Increasingly, its professional commitment and reputation have contributed to strengthening relationships integral to Canada's national interests abroad.

CANSOFCOM'S new strategy publication, *Beyond the Horizon*, builds on the institutional gains made under its previous strategy. I believe that it accurately reflects the realities of today and sets the conditions to ensure that CANSOFCOM can continue to act and deliver decisive effects into the future.

**Jonathan Vance, General  
Chief of the Defence Staff**

## MESSAGE FROM THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENCE

Within Canada's defence and security nexus, CANSOFCOM operates in the grey zones of conflict and deterrence. As we sit at the dawn of 2020, Canada is increasingly faced with a geopolitical reality that lacks defined boundaries of war and peace, safety and danger. Many of the traditional rules of conflict are being bent by foreign entities – some state-sponsored, some rogue actors, and some a combination of the two.

In this environment, it is appropriate that CANSOFCOM leadership continue to ask hard questions of itself, its vision and mission, and the wider purpose and capabilities of the CANSOF team. The result is *Beyond the Horizon*.

As successor to CANSOFCOM's 2015 Strategic Plan, the new Strategy is a forward-looking document that is firmly grounded in Canada's defence reality, accounting for how CANSOFCOM stands today and how we must stand in the future. The document hits the right notes, from a more defined whole-of-Defence Team approach, to its critical alignment with *Strong, Secure, Engaged*, to its foundational elements of relevance, relationships and innovation.

I am pleased to endorse *Beyond the Horizon* and the thoughtful work of MGen Peter Dawe and his team, and I look forward to the manifestation of this Strategy over the next several years.

**Jody Thomas**  
**Deputy Minister of National Defence**

## COMMANDER'S FOREWORD

The Canadian Special Operations Forces Command 2015 Strategic Plan, *Consolidating the Objective*, focused on strengthening the institutional gains made by the Command over the previous nine years, and on establishing the strategic foundation for its future work. Building on the achievements of that Plan, *Beyond the Horizon* positions the Command for the next bound with the development of an updated vision for the Command's role within an evolving security environment, designed to help counter and mitigate new and evolving threats to our nation.

*Beyond the Horizon* recognizes that the existing international rules-based system is increasingly challenged by new forms of major power competition and by the diffusion of power through new structures by new actors, creating a rise in global uncertainty. It further recognizes that formerly emerging threats have now *emerged*: cyberattacks, electronic warfare, and disinformation campaigns are capable of posing as great a risk to our national interests as are terrorist attacks and that, while counterterrorism efforts remain critical, they are not the sole area of focus moving forward.

In a rapidly changing and unpredictable world where the distinction between our traditional boundary lines – national security versus national defence; domestic versus international – are becoming blurred, we need to protect our ability to respond to adversaries who are increasingly skilled in their capacity to shift around the edges of our strengths and exploit the openness of our society. The nature of power contests is also changing: traditional “conflict” is becoming entangled with levels of “competition,” making clear identification and response to security threats more difficult, yet also more important than ever before. This means that CANSOFCOM must be continually positioned, both operationally and organizationally, as a meaningful strategic military option for the Government of Canada in both responding to and helping shape the complex global environment. In this context, CANSOFCOM's core value proposition remains its ability to provide *unique solutions of high strategic value*.





For CANSOFCOM, success hinges on our ability to evolve our capabilities ahead of changes in the environment. We do so by proactively identifying and illuminating nefarious activity; constantly monitoring and adopting emerging technologies and processes; taking a unique approach to innovation and risk management; and enriching our existing relationships within the National Defence architecture, while deepening new relationships with other actors in the National Security realm – where threats and challenges to Canada’s national interests are increasingly falling – and beyond. Perhaps most importantly, we do so by focusing on the strength of our people and embracing diversity as an operational imperative. In our view, people are not *part of* CANSOFCOM, they *are* CANSOFCOM.

Moreover, in these times of high uncertainty, it is important to provide clarity on what

CANSOFCOM “is not” in order to avoid the risks of over-reaching and over-use. CANSOFCOM is *not a substitute* for the conventional military forces (the Royal Canadian Navy, the Canadian Army and the Royal Canadian Air Force) and the critical capabilities they have brought and will continue to bring to bear in defence of the nation. CANSOFCOM is also not *independent* of the rest of the Canadian Armed Forces; we rise or fall together.

Lastly, guiding us in all of our efforts is Canada’s Defence Policy, *Strong, Secure, and Engaged* (SSE). SSE sets out a deliberately bold and ambitious approach to defence, challenging us to *anticipate, adapt and act* in response to global shifts in the balance of power, to the changing nature of conflict and to the unprecedented speed of technological developments. CANSOFCOM will respond in kind.

**Major-General Peter Dawe**  
**Commander, Canadian Special Operations**  
**Forces Command**

**January 2020**

# INTRODUCTION

In 2015, CANSOFCOM's first Strategic Plan, *Consolidating the Objective*, outlined a roadmap for the development of the Command's growth from a small to a medium-sized military enterprise. Grounded in the CANSOFCOM Mission Statement, the 2015 Strategic Plan encapsulated the Command's aspirations and vision for the future as a trusted, agile, adaptable organization, ready to "Win Today," "Posture for an Uncertain Tomorrow," and "Prevail in the Long Term."





## CANSOFCOM's Mission Statement

To provide the Government of Canada with agile, high-readiness Special Operations Forces capable of conducting special operations in defence of Canada both at home and abroad.

CANSOFCOM has matured as a military force that now stands largely consolidated as an organization. Capable of projecting and operating globally in collaboration with partners, it is continuously engaged in operations within the Canadian National Defence / National Security nexus – both in support of core missions of the Canadian Armed Forces and, increasingly, in partnership with other government departments and agencies.

### NATIONAL DEFENCE / NATIONAL SECURITY NEXUS

Increasingly, the threats to Canada's national interests fall at the intersection of the mandates, capabilities, skill sets and partnerships of National Defence and other government departments and agencies working on the front lines of national security. Effective responses within this National Defence / National Security nexus require strengthened collaboration between DND/CAF and whole-of-government partners, in particular the Security, Intelligence and Law Enforcement communities.

Within this context, CANSOFCOM's ability to integrate domestic and expeditionary SOF effects within the inter-agency domain is critical. Our unique and complementary capabilities are leveraged on an ongoing basis. These discreet activities enable our partners and protect Canadians and Canadian interests.

CANSOFCOM will deepen, grow and expand its ability to support a wider range of available options in this space.

The global security environment has also evolved. The *convergence* of threats is accelerating as the interests of non-state actors are overlapping with those of certain states, creating new challenges to the global rules-based order by undermining international laws, norms and frameworks. These threats – which combine and re-combine previously distinct threats into a new united threat system, either temporarily or permanently (for example, transnational crime and terrorism) – are

further magnified by the unprecedented speed of technological developments, which also lowers the cost of entry for interested actors to engage in conflict, or on the margins of conflict, in ways never before possible.

Accordingly, this Strategy shifts focus outwards and over the horizon. It seeks to frame the contemporary security context, outline the key issues likely to influence the future operating context and



articulate the Command's role within them. It outlines what we need to do to remain strategically relevant in these environments, details the organizational attributes that guide the Command's actions, highlights the importance of relationships to every aspect of our work, and sets out the Command's concrete objectives in relation to a new strategic vision.

Ultimately, successfully delivering upon this Strategy will result in CANSOFCOM's ability to support National Defence and National Security

## GREY SPACE CONFLICT

Grey Space Conflict is conflict that is short of war but long of peace. It is best understood as a conceptual area of activity that is coercive and aggressive in nature and that is deliberately designed to remain below the threshold of conventional military conflict and open inter-state war, while at the same time falling outside the established norms of societal discourse of nations and peoples that underpin the existing rules-based global order.

efforts to re-establish and sustain a global equilibrium of accepted norms. CANSOFCOM will do so through the stewardship and use of asymmetric capabilities that contribute to re-establishing balance in the grey spaces of conflict, thus helping enable the CAF as a whole, the Government of Canada, and ultimately the nation to meet and overcome the complex challenges that threaten our national interests.

## BEYOND THE HORIZON OUTLINE:

**The Emerging Has Emerged – Section One** provides an overview of the contemporary security environment and the future operating environment, and what these realities mean for the Command.

**A Vision for CANSOFCOM – Section Two** articulates CANSOFCOM's vision for succeeding as a strategic military option within those contexts.

**Levelling the Playing Field – Section Three** details CANSOFCOM's role in enabling the CAF, the Government of Canada and its allies to strengthen global frameworks in support of national interests.

**Strategic Relevance – Section Four** details what it takes to stay connected to the problem space in order to offer strategic solutions ahead of demand.

**Strong Relationships – Section Five** highlights the importance of relationships in supporting those efforts.

**Competitive Advantage – Section Six** lays out the key conditions that allow CANSOFCOM to perform effectively and deliver results, regardless of task, environment or objective.

**Agility, Innovation and Risk Management – Section Seven** details the Command's approach to modernization, optimization and experimentation, as well as to managing associated risks.

**Assessing Achievement – Section Eight** sets out the considerations and metrics that will help assess whether the Command is making progress and realizing value in relation to its goals.



# SECTION 1

## THE EMERGING HAS EMERGED

The emergence of new forms of long-term strategic competition and a weakening of the international rules-based order are playing out on multiple fronts and across multiple dimensions of power. Economic coercion, influence operations, media manipulation, cyberattacks and the use of paramilitary and proxy forces are just some of the ways in which unfriendly actors are seeking to disrupt the *status quo*, often through blurred and ambiguous means and often while violating principles of sovereignty.







These developments can be expected to influence geopolitical dynamics, from migration patterns to liveability of coastal cities and from food security to access to natural resources, particularly as they intersect with growing and sometimes concerning trends such as increased technological speed with wider disruptive effect, global demographic growth, urbanization, and climate change. All of this will have significant implications for the defence of Canada and Canadian interests and the work of the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces.

CANSOFCOM must therefore continuously track the myriad ways in which global trends and related events could play out, and stay on top of how these are expected to impact Canada from an economic, political, and security perspective. CANSOFCOM must be prepared to adapt its knowledge, skills, capabilities, relationships and business practices to these changing times.

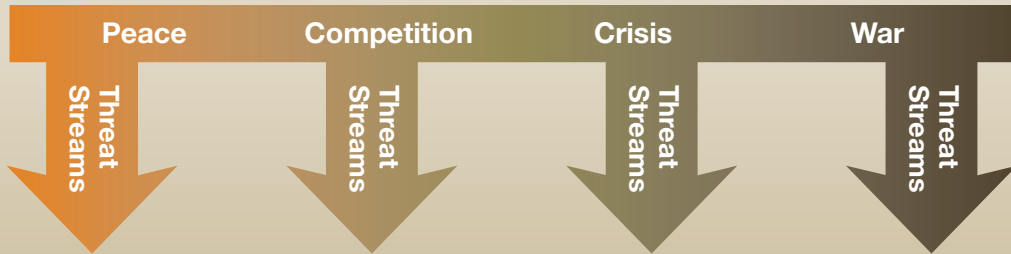
CANSOFCOM must also be ready to respond to the most likely threats of the day. They include the increasing use of hybrid methods (i.e., the employment of all components of national power) in the “grey space” of conflict below the threshold of state-on-state warfare; the diminishing distinction between domestic and international threats; the continued influence of terrorist and violent extremist organizations; the growing complexity and ambiguity of conflict and competition; and the proliferation and use of weapons of mass destruction.

Additionally, CANSOFCOM must remain ready to enable the CAF in supporting conventional deterrence, by having the ability to convince a potential aggressor that the consequences of coercion or armed conflict would outweigh the potential gains.

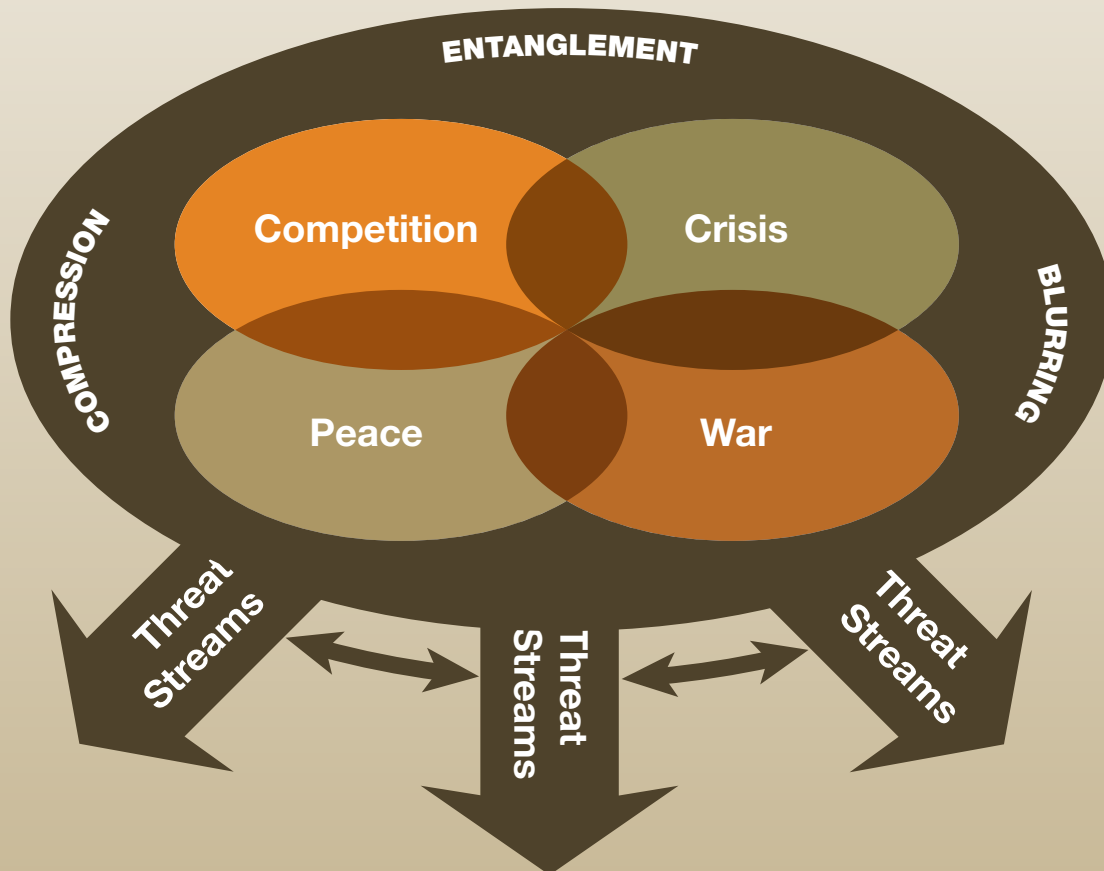
Lastly, CANSOFCOM must be prepared to support the CAF’s ability to engage in warfighting, should all other options fail.

## Changing Character of Conflict

“Conflict” moving from this  
**SPECTRUM OF CONFLICT**



to these  
**SYSTEMS OF CONFLICT**





Such an unpredictable and dynamic environment will require CANSOFCOM to maintain persistent engagement with key partners and other actors around the globe. It will require CANSOFCOM to anticipate the impact of new technologies on its current capabilities as well as on future conflicts. And ultimately, CANSOFCOM will have to be proactive and scalable, while maintaining mandated readiness levels at all times.

Within this environment, conflict can no longer be considered solely a linear spectrum with “distinct frequencies” to which responses are dialed. Instead, it is becoming an entangled set of systems through which threats emerge at all levels, simultaneously and non-linearly.

Several strategic trends are shaping these systems of conflict.

Firstly, state-level conventional military conflict continues to be restrained by the deterrent threat of weapons of mass destruction and effective collective conventional deterrence. This, in turn, is leading adversarial state actors to rely more and more on grey space conflict, which falls at or below the threshold of what has traditionally constituted conventional armed conflict, in order to advance their interests while avoiding all-out warfare.

Secondly, the shift in global power dynamics is leading existing and emerging global powers to attempt to enfranchise previously ungoverned or minimally regulated spaces (such as outer space and cyberspace as well as physical territories). This trend points towards a likely future of fewer small, independent organic start-up insurgencies and more hybridized state-influenced proxies directed by great powers.

Thirdly, technology is empowering all actors within society. The power of the individual *vis-à-vis* the state is increasing, thanks to the impact of disruptive technologies and transformative tools, which is heightening the potential for tension between the “individual” and the “state.” The ability of individual citizens to access information, amplify their voices and connect in order to advance their causes has never been greater. Concurrently, yet conversely, the links between social structures and the political structures that govern them are mappable with a greater degree of resolution than ever before, allowing the state to identify and track individuals in ways that were previously impossible, to communicate its own messages to a wider audience, and to engage with its citizenry in real time across a range of issues. The consequences of the inevitable collision between these two factors remain unknown, contributing to ongoing uncertainty within the strategic environment for the near-to-mid-term future.

The convergence of these trends is blurring traditional lines of conflict and entangling the thresholds between conflict and competition. The limits of what can be accomplished in terms of damage to an opponent’s interest or promotion of one’s own, particularly in the context of grey space conflict, are not clearly understood. Moreover, both state and non-state actors continue to re-define the realm of “the possible.” This is putting increasing strain on the globally accepted sets of ideas, rules, and beliefs that have traditionally provided the foundation for the actions and decisions of states, rendering them less able to respond meaningfully.

Against this background, CANSOFCOM must be ready to respond to a wide assortment of evolving factors while at the same time be able to focus quickly on the most likely threats.

# SECTION 2

## A VISION FOR CANSOFCOM

### CANSOFCOM'S STRATEGIC VISION

Fully integrated, connected and empowered Special Operations professionals, postured to:

- Advise, enable and lead in the detection, pursuit and defeat of asymmetric threats to Canada across all domains
- Excel as a military force at the National Defence/National Security nexus within the grey spaces of conflict
- Be a key partner in the joint force, and in the joint fight

CANSOFCOM's Strategic Vision positions us to contribute effectively to the defence of Canada, to the defence of Canadian interests, and to the protection of Canadians, in the context of this evolving security environment.

Realization of this Strategic Vision will result in continued success on operations, will position the Command to respond to future changes in the environment, will ensure that others benefit from CANSOF experiences, will reinforce the Command's role as a valued member of the Defence Team, and will lead to the recognition of CANSOFCOM among military and national security partners as an effective military force within the grey spaces of conflict.

#### **Advise, Enable and Lead in the Detection, Pursuit and Defeat of Asymmetric Threats to Canada Across All Domains**

The core of CANSOF is its ability to defeat asymmetric threats with unmatched precision and speed across all defence and security domains as required. The ability to detect, pursue, and rapidly defeat these threats, as well as to advise and enable other partners in doing so, will remain central to the CANSOFCOM vision. In the past, such threats fell under the rubric of terrorism networks built









around violent extremist ideologies of identified non-state actors. However, state-based disruptive actors are increasingly overlapping interests and capabilities with traditional violent extremist groups, creating much more potent and highly adaptive threats to the nation. As an entire enterprise, CANSOFCOM must remain prepared and postured to defeat these merging threat streams.

## ASYMMETRIC THREAT

A threat emanating from the potential use of certain means or methods of attack, designed by an adversary whose relative military power or whose strategy or tactics differ significantly from its opponent, in order to circumvent or negate the adversary's strengths while exploiting its weaknesses.

CANSOFCOM will translate resources and relationships into capabilities and effects in order to ensure that we are continually positioned to deliver strategic military solutions through operational excellence.

## Excel as a Military Force at the National Defence / National Security Nexus within the Grey Spaces of Conflict

CANSOFCOM will focus on enabling the development and implementation of strategic solutions within the grey spaces of conflict. Within this grey space, CANSOFCOM will excel as a strategic military force at the National Defence / National Security nexus, providing complementary capabilities to those of the conventional forces as part of the CAF's broader efforts to protect and defend Canada and Canadian interests.

CANSOFCOM will embrace and encourage a culture of flexibility, creativity, and strategic thinking.





The Command will also build and leverage strong internal, external, institutional, and interpersonal relationships to remain connected and relevant within the National Defence / National Security space. Relevance within the grey space is central to the realization of our Strategic Vision.

### **Be a Key Partner in the Joint Force and in the Joint Fight**

CANSOFCOM will contribute to institutional leadership within the joint force domain, including by sharing its experiences – both victories and setbacks – with other emerging joint capabilities. As a supportive and collaborative partner vis-à-vis other key stakeholders who work within this space, CANSOFCOM will enable and support the enterprise development within the joint domain and ensure that capabilities such as Cyber, Intelligence and Information Operations/Influence Activities benefit from the Command's experience as it continues to learn from theirs.

Lastly, CANSOFCOM will continue to be a critical enabler in the broader CAF joint fight, be it in support of collective conventional deterrence or via contribution to warfighting. Here, relationships with the other CAF services and joint force employers (Canadian Joint Operations Command and North American Aerospace Defence Command) must be continually reinforced and enriched; the Command's links to the broader CAF efforts are critical.

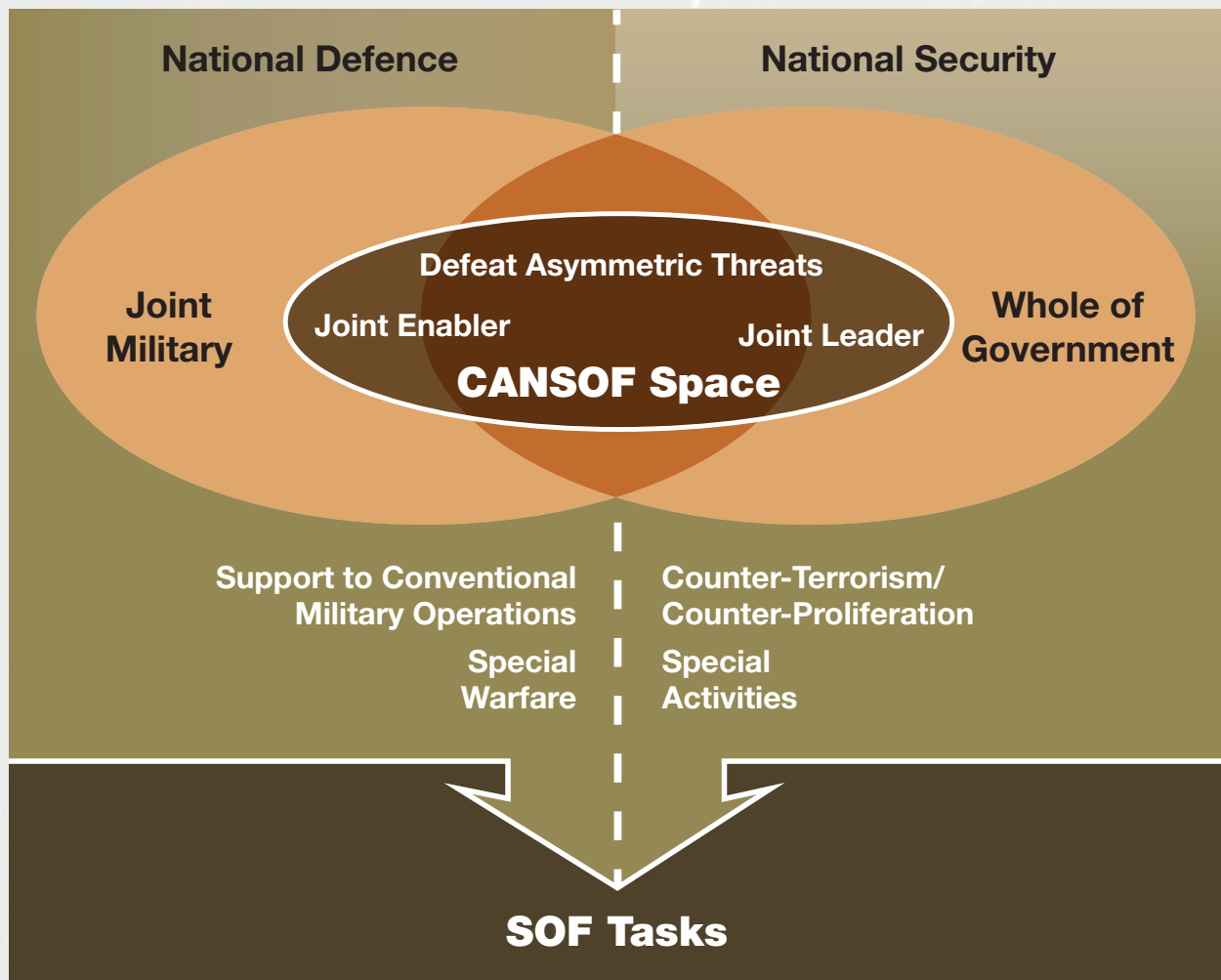
CANSOFCOM will set an example for joint institutional stewardship by solidifying past institutional gains and developing deeper partnerships within the corporate architectures of security and defence. CANSOFCOM will continue to modernize its contemporary business practices by integrating new processes and cutting-edge technology into its day-to-day work.



# SECTION 3

## LEVELLING THE PLAYING FIELD

The primary threats CANSOFCOM must be prepared to counter and the vulnerabilities it must be poised to exploit are increasingly asymmetric in nature. These threats seek to divide Western alliances, to undermine multilateral frameworks and to sow distrust in democratic institutions by exploiting perceived limitations and weaknesses in our rules-based society. Accordingly, CANSOFCOM's enduring relevance comes from its ability to enable the CAF, the Government of Canada and its allies to re-establish global frameworks in support of national interests, and in this way to help level the playing field.









The Command does so by conducting special operations and delivering strategic SOF effects while also enabling the other military services and Joint forces, from within its distinct sphere of responsibility inside the strategic military environment.

From within its space, CANSOF

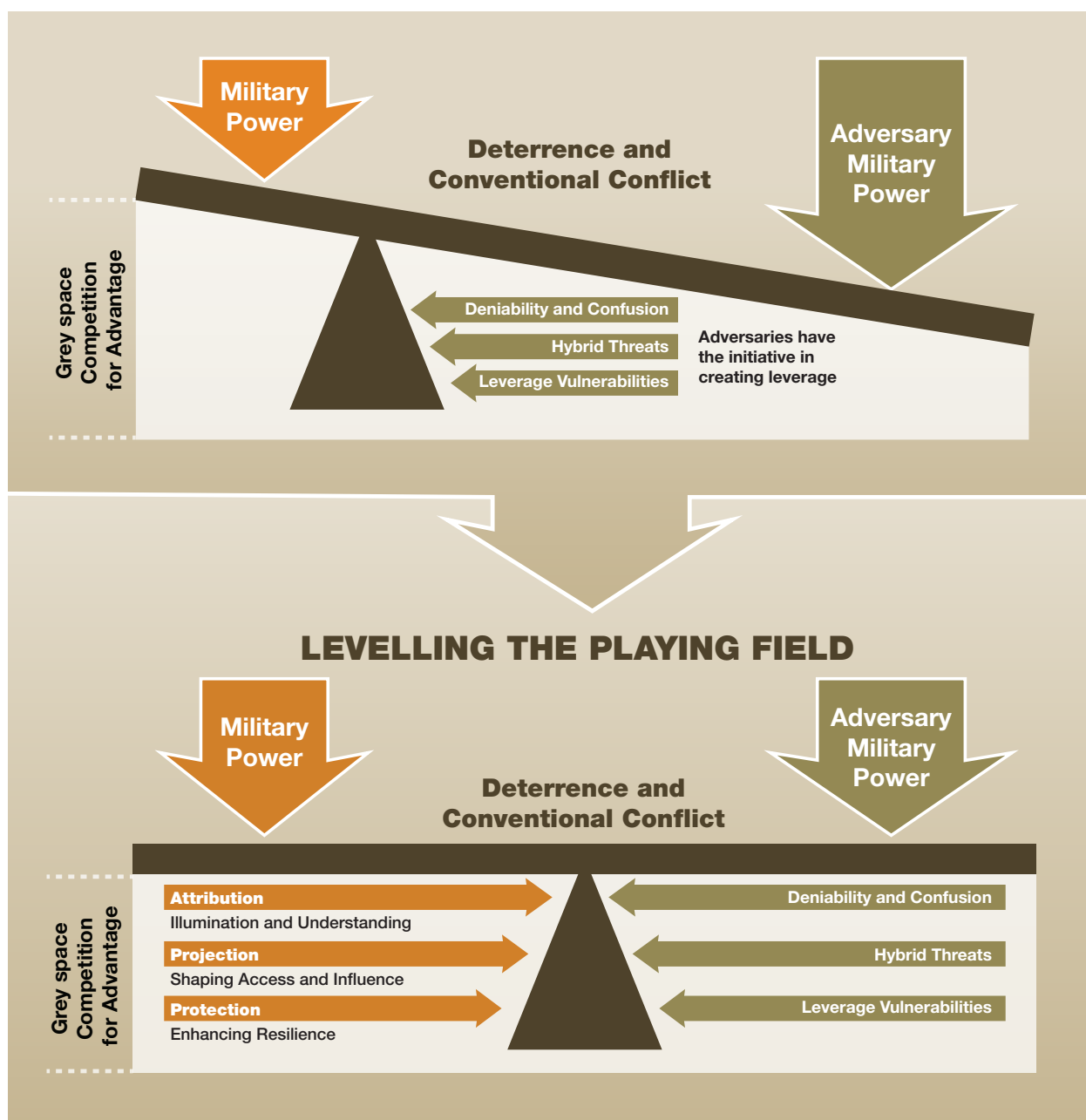
- shapes the environment through the generation and employment of SOF capabilities, and/or defends against asymmetric threats;
- enables military and national security partnerships to overcome converging threats by helping integrate respective efforts;
- leverages existing links with the conventional military services/joint forces and their national security partners;
- expands strategic military options through the use of capabilities and competencies that fall outside the scope of conventional military forces; and
- enables conventional military forces to operate more effectively through access, influence, understanding, and the delivery of precision effects.

In particular, CANSOFCOM acts as a “gaps and seams” force in the spaces between the national defence and security architectures, interfacing with the conventional military, between agencies, and with other government department partners. Moreover, the high-readiness nature of CANSOF capability fills temporal gaps in military response, broadening rapid intervention and contribution options for the CAF; faster intervention can often pre-empt later conflict by preventing or helping to mitigate any escalation.

Ultimately, the Command helps preserve the CAF’s and the Government of Canada’s freedom of action to counter the asymmetric threats of adversaries and competitors, by translating access and understanding into influence, options, and effects via attribution, projection, and protection.

- Attribution – Asymmetric activity is often undertaken by actors who wish to hide or obfuscate their involvement. Lack of clear attribution limits the spectrum of response options, including the use of force, whereas the ability to attribute activity to specific actors limits the freedom of action of those opponents. By helping to illuminate and understand nefarious activity, CANSOFCOM plays an important role in elevating actions out of the grey space, informing collective defence and security responses, supporting effective deterrence, and widening the Government’s latitude to respond.
- Projection – The power to hurt opponents at points of vulnerability through asymmetric SOF capabilities and the threat of the power to do so allows for a level of control in grey space conflict. When adversaries know how a scenario will end before it ever begins, they are deterred from engagement or escalation, whether through the threat of use of information; the creation of strategic leverage; or precise kinetic action. In this way, the projection of SOF Power helps preserve national freedom of action.
- Protection – Effective and active protection capabilities limit the options of an opponent while preserving Canada’s own national power. CANSOFCOM is able to help shield national systems from threats by recognizing and removing or mitigating the vulnerability points before they become liabilities, enhancing the overall level of collective national resilience.





In sum, CANSOF plays a critical role in setting the conditions for favourable strategic outcomes within a wide variety of contexts ranging from competition to crisis to conflict. CANSOF does so through the iterative application of SOF Power, via the full suite of SOF capabilities, in order to both sustain and expand our own strategic options

as well as to reduce the strategic options of our adversaries. Ultimately, this ability to shape the operational environment – including shaping both the battlespace and the adversary – can function either as the decisive operation itself or as the foundation for a future decisive operation.

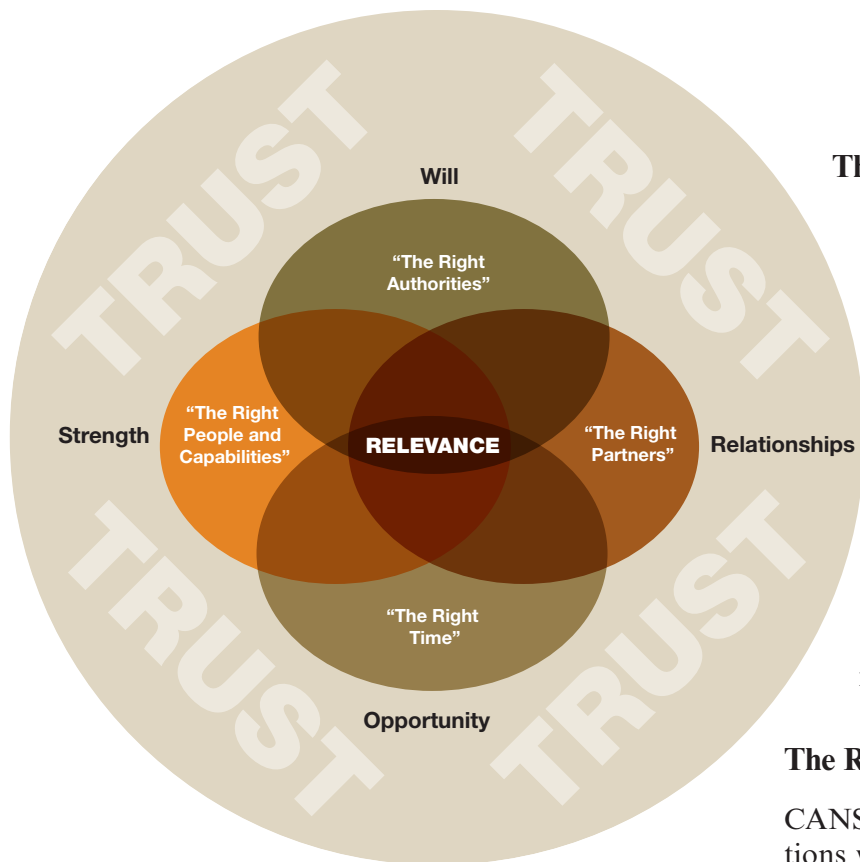
# SECTION 4

## STRATEGIC RELEVANCE

Strategic relevance means being a solution closely connected to the problem, offering a way forward ahead of demand. Given the evolving character of conflict, military relevance is continually challenged by threats that deliberately attempt to render national military power irrelevant. For CANSOFCOM, the issue of relevance is a contested concept, continually challenged by adversaries and the environment. The sustainment of relevance-in-opposition is a prime concern moving forward.







CANSOFCOM’s ability to realize its Strategic Vision hinges on its ability to maintain strategic relevance by having the right authorities, the right capabilities, the right people, and the right relationships at the right time.

### The Right People and Capabilities

People remain central to CANSOFCOM’s success; they define the organization’s depth, resilience, and potential. Their dedication, talent, and realized efforts must be supported, recognized, and leveraged through the exchange of value and loyalty between the individual and the Command.

Capabilities remain the Command’s core product. They go beyond personnel and equipment to include knowledge, experience, and expertise. To sustain its capabilities, CANSOFCOM must remain a learning organization that privileges opportunities to fight smarter. Alongside other members of the CAF joint force, CANSOFCOM will also build upon its current capabilities to help create new solutions that help it achieve asymmetric advantage.

### The Right Authorities

Mandates and Authorities constitute a sacred trust between CANSOF and the CAF, the Government of Canada and the nation. CANSOFCOM must continually earn them by demonstrating integrity and credibility in all organizational and operational contexts. These Mandates and Authorities will support CANSOFCOM’s ability to deliver on its mandated growth while remaining an agile and adaptable organization, and they underpin the Command’s ability to excel as a military force within grey space conflict.

### The Right Partners

CANSOFCOM will nurture its existing connections with traditional partners while deepening and broadening its partnerships across the larger national defence and security structures. Through these relationships, CANSOFCOM will help establish links between ideas, individuals, and institutions, in order to develop better strategic options to meet emerging asymmetric threats.

### The Right Time

The right time is all about opportunities – those we know about, those we recognize once seen, those we create, and those that go unrealized. Specifically, opportunity refers to the set of circumstances that “make possible.” Seizing opportunity is entirely dependent upon the experience and expertise of our people, upon the relationships we have built in order to enable a common understanding of “what is possible,” and upon the effective support of those responsible for the decisions to exploit or not, when weighed against risk. CANSOFCOM will continue to shape the operational environment in order to privilege its ability to create opportunities in the strategic environment.

# SECTION 5

## STRONG RELATIONSHIPS

Ultimately, realizing CANSOFCOM's Strategic Vision is impossible without trust – the trust of political decision makers, the trust of senior leaders, the trust of the interagency community, the trust of Allies, and the trust of each other. This investment of faith and exchange of vulnerabilities and strengths between parties is the foundation of everything CANSOFCOM does. Because it takes time to build and can be lost faster than it can be earned, trust must be consistently nurtured. CANSOFCOM's commitment to doing so is manifested through each and every one of our relationships.





Relationships provide the platform on which to create a shared language of understanding between actors. These links facilitate communications, reinforce shared vision and build a sense of common identity. In this way, relationships help further mutual interests and extend individual value, thus leading to a greater overall sense of collective purpose.

In concrete terms, relationships enable shared situational understanding, improve interagency systems and processes, deliver more effective use of stand-alone and complementary capabilities (to both the CAF and partner agencies), and provide better solutions for countering adversaries. CANSOFCOM will pursue a relationship strategy that allows us to leverage and contribute to these connections, in order to act more effectively in the operational environment. Doing so will help posture the CAF to increase the options available to the Government of Canada, such as by providing unique capabilities to support the operations/activities of partners in the Security, Intelligence and Law Enforcement communities, in furtherance of broader governmental interests and desired outcomes.

CANSOFCOM will therefore continue to capitalize on its long history of close cooperation with other Government departments, interagency partners and allies, in order to ensure full collaboration with other elements of state power such as diplomatic, informational, legal, economic and law enforcement power. It will also dedicate time, energy, and resources to identifying and nurturing a variety of other relationships, be they interpersonal or institutional; situational or strategic;

time-bound or enduring.

The Global SOF Network is critical to the Command's success and will remain a significant and important focus of its attention. In addition, multilateral organizations, non-governmental and civil society organizations, industry actors, strategic influencers, educational institutions and even non-defence-specific corporations all play important roles within the international security environment. Each offers unique perspectives, complementary capabilities and access to people, regions, tools and insights that CANSOFCOM would not otherwise have on its own.

In particular, the Command's relationship with our Five Eyes Plus partners, with the various nations around the world with whom we train and conduct operations, and within key military alliances such as NATO help enable Canada's broader contributions to these coalitions. CANSOFCOM will continue to pursue and nurture these opportunities, which allow the CAF, and by extension the country, to gain situational awareness, to improve shared understanding, and to implement, fulfill and leverage mutually beneficial protection and support agreements, to great effect.

Lastly, as the military joint space has become increasingly important, the Command will continue to strengthen its relationships within the CAF and improve its integration with the environmental services and other Commands, as well as with complementary joint capabilities such as cyber, intelligence and joint targeting, among others.

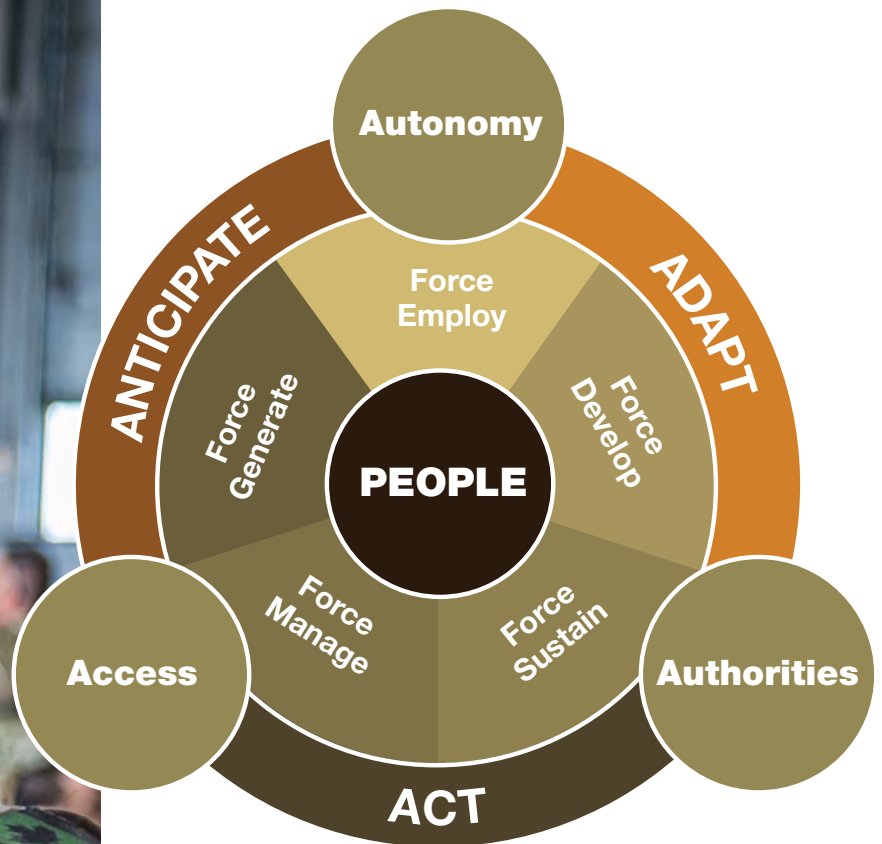
# SECTION 6

## COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

The ability to realize the Strategic Vision is also predicated on the elements that give CANSOFCOM competitive advantage. Central to this are *people* – the Command's most precious resource and its greatest strength. CANSOFCOM'S advantage also stems from the authorities, access and autonomy granted to it in relation to its five functional domains. This combination of structure, substance and talent allows the Command to work effectively as a dynamic, agile, versatile organization that delivers consistent operational excellence within an evolving security environment.







## People

The nature of the Command's work places significant demands on our people – Regular Force members, Reserve Force members and civilian employees – and their families. This makes it critical for those who work within CANSOFCOM to be the right fit. When identifying, recruiting, selecting, and leveraging those individuals, CANSOFCOM will focus on diversity of experience, perspective, skill set, and mindset, as well as on demonstrated maturity and good judgment. CANSOFCOM will also continue to place a premium on creating an inclusive environment in which creativity, initiative, and innovation thrive.

By taking a deliberate approach to attracting, selecting, and supporting talent, the Command will be able to draw from a diverse range of accomplished individuals from across the Canadian Armed Forces as well as Canada as a whole. Moreover, it will continue to invest heavily in those individuals, empowering them to help resolve complex security problems and training them to enable, support and/or conduct high-risk, high-value and often politically sensitive strategic missions.



## Structure

CANSOFCOM's unique structure – in which the Command is self-contained across the five military functional domains and units are grouped under one integrated command and control structure – allows for better alignment of military power with policy direction, under the appropriate oversight mechanisms and accountability frameworks. This ensures that forces are developed and unified coherently, cohesively and effectively. It also ensures rapid and continuous feedback, allowing the Command to preserve the power of initiative to identify and exploit opportunities. Moreover, by maintaining a clear, flat command structure that deliberately removes hierarchy – allowing the Commander to directly engage with all SOF elements without any additional layers – CANSOFCOM will continue to privilege shared understanding and agility.

CANSOFCOM will continue to integrate and harmonize its efforts to direct, support, and produce military capabilities, in collaboration with the other Service Commanders within the CAF. CANSOFCOM works closely with the Royal Canadian Navy, the Canadian Army, and the Royal Canadian Air Force, as well as joint enablers, to generate forces, while sharing the joint force employment space with the Canadian Joint Operations Command and North American Aerospace Defence Command.

## The 3As

Direct *access* to decision makers is critical for effective employment of SOF operations. CANSOFCOM's readiness requirements, domestic and expeditionary mandates, and certain compartmented programs necessitate routine and direct communication with the Chief of the Defence Staff and other senior departmental leaders. This access allows SOF to shape its role at the strategic level so as to ensure maximum return on investment for the Government of Canada.

*Autonomy* as a distinct entity within the CAF allows the Command to keep pace with the speed of change. CANSOFCOM is self-reliant while



being able to integrate and interoperate with the CAF Environments as well as with other partners around the world with whom it has strong relationships through the Global SOF Network. In this context, autonomy means being empowered to make self-informed decisions without undue influence, in relation to its operational imperatives, while balancing the requirements of accountability, responsibility, and transparency.

Effective command, control, and stewardship of the institution, both corporately and operationally, rely upon having appropriate *authorities*. These are vital to CANSOF's decision–action cycle and they are fundamental to CANSOFCOM's ability to





meet readiness requirements, to detect, deter, and respond quickly and effectively to threats, and to do so in discreet ways, with a small footprint.

Ultimately, CANSOFCOM's unifying purpose is the pursuit of operational excellence in order to provide high-value strategic solutions to national defence and national security problems. This necessitates a commitment to good governance and strong institutional management in order to achieve military outcomes that are aligned with CAF policies. It also requires willingness and ability to evolve with changing times by challenging traditional assumptions about our identity, functions, and ways of doing business.

CANSOF walks a path that is different from, yet complementary to, that of the conventional military forces. Employing small, highly empowered force elements, we rely on speed, precision, and the power of human relationships to deliver effects, rather than on mass military might. Through the conduct of independent missions and/or in support of missions led by other National Defence / National Security partners, we create distinct options for the Government of Canada in defence of the nation and of national interests.



# SECTION 7

## AGILITY, INNOVATION, AND RISK MANAGEMENT

Success in the evolving security environment requires CANSOFCOM to be both agile and innovative. Both are necessary, but each requires a radically different mindset.





Being agile is about adapting positively to change. It requires CANSOFCOM to be an action-oriented organization supported by flexible resources, driven by rapid decision and learning cycles, enabled by technology, empowered by flat teams built around end-to-end accountability, and inspired by shared purpose and vision.

Innovation is about creating change and establishing the future on our own terms. It requires CANSOFCOM to undertake continuous learning

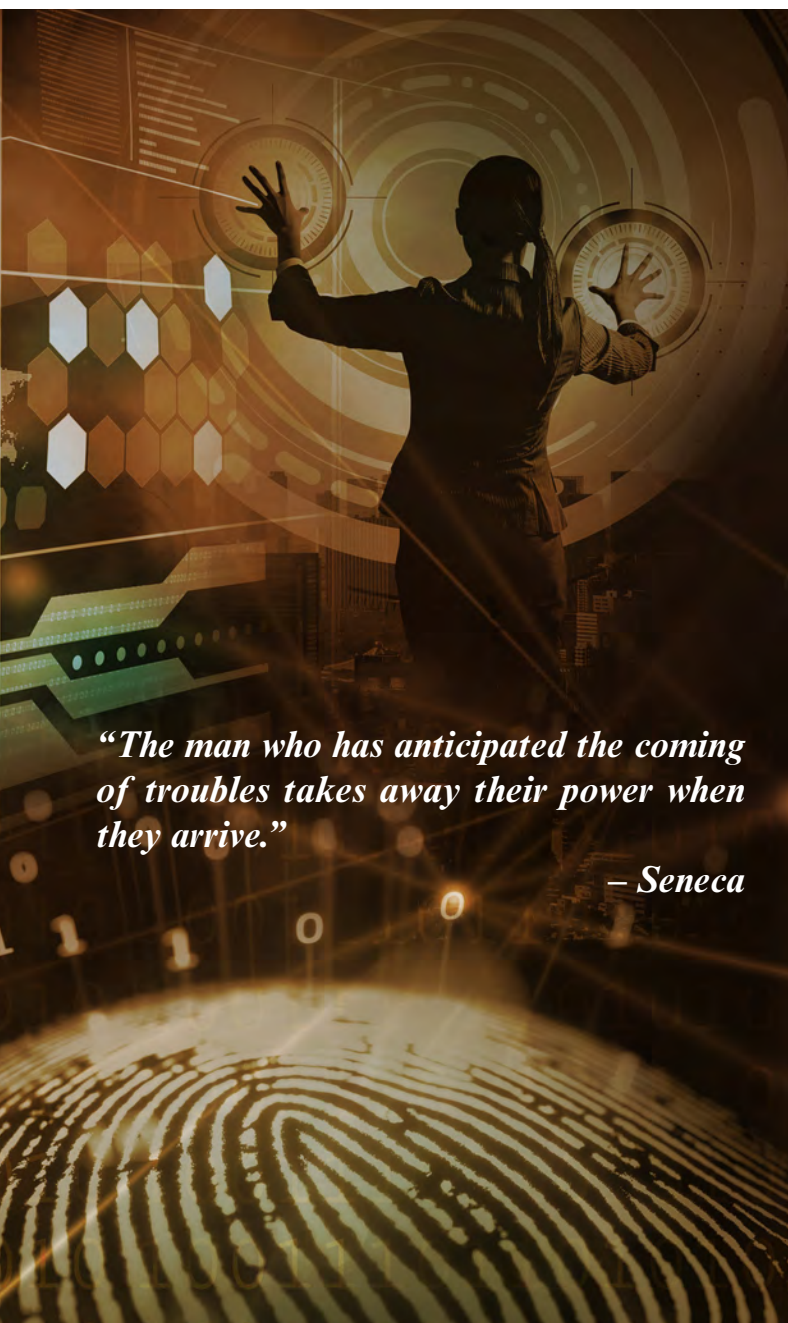
and ongoing experimentation in all aspects of its work, from military operations to organizational design to relationship building, privileging both learning to innovate and innovating to learn. To do so, the Command must move past the idea of simply “doing more faster.” It must also shake off any expectations of how the world should be in order to accept the world for what it is and then evolve accordingly.

The Command’s commitment to innovation must also go hand-in-hand with a continued focus on implementing and improving existing and well-understood areas of operation. The Command will continue to focus on optimization and modernization in relation to operational effectiveness and institutional stewardship, allowing for predictability, resilience, and reliability.

Throughout it all, the Command must embrace judiciously pursued risk. This means that it must accept the risk of mistakes and missteps in certain contexts, such as experimentation and new ideas, in order to ensure that it is always fail-safe when it comes to operational matters. Managing this risk calls for a high degree of clarity vis-à-vis the problems to be solved, along with enough data to make informed decisions.

To this end, the Command will prioritize the implementation of *Gradient Ascent* – a new digitalization and data analytics initiative designed to ensure a level of competency in the digital space commensurate with what we have achieved in the kinetic space – in order to attain information dominance over adversaries on operations, while simultaneously leveraging the advantages that digital technologies provide for improving institutional efficiency and effectiveness.

Lastly, the ability to know how to learn and how to think effectively are key ingredients for organizational success. In recognition of this, the Command will carve out deliberate time and space for effective strategic thinking, with a view to optimizing the cognitive capacity of all leaders within the Command.



*“The man who has anticipated the coming of troubles takes away their power when they arrive.”*

*– Seneca*



# SECTION 8

## ASSESSING ACHIEVEMENT

CANSOFCOM's ability to deliver on its Mission and Vision rests upon the successful implementation of a number of Key Initiatives that are identified in the Command's Strategic Implementation Framework – the implementing mechanism for this Strategy. These initiatives range from the fulfillment of specific prescribed activities articulated in the Defence Policy to building an integrated Targeting Enterprise, and from launching the *Special Operations Capabilities and Recapitalization Project* pilot to finalizing the CANSOFCOM Airpower Integration Concept. Each initiative serves a distinct purpose in moving the Command towards its strategic objectives, and each is evaluated throughout the implementation process in relation to both progress and value. Indeed, while progress is a necessary requirement in implementing the Key Initiatives, such progress must also create tangible value.



## Measuring Progress

Implementation progress is evaluated through specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound indicators that are monitored on an ongoing basis through a Key Initiatives Dashboard. This formal approach to tracking progress will continue to be underpinned by a Command culture wherein every member, as a stakeholder in the future of the enterprise, is empowered to play a role in implementation.

## Measuring Value

CANSOFCOM's enduring strategic relevance rests on the ability to realize value through concrete actions, in other words by linking means and ways to ends. As a high-energy organization, continually challenged to remain aligned with a dynamic and unpredictable operating environment, CANSOFCOM uses several methods to assess this interconnected system and to determine the degree to which each initiative is satisfying the needs and benefits for which it was undertaken. These include the "Measures of Effectiveness" evaluation process and the Commander's regular Strategy Implementation Sessions. This model for measuring value leads to ongoing synchronization and a shared understanding of where to focus efforts, which in turn allows the Command to also determine whether certain initiatives should evolve, change, merge or even be abandoned.

## Evaluating Outcomes

Ultimately, the only way to understand the relationship between means, ways and ends – and in turn to establish whether their interplay has contributed to realizing the Strategic Vision – is by analyzing them holistically. Within CANSOFCOM, this will be done through the Pan-Command Portfolio Management Analysis Tool (PMAT), a Command-specific tool built upon the Treasury Board Secretariat's Outcome Management Framework. The PMAT aligns data on progress with assessments of value, while taking into account related risk, in order to make a determination of overarching benefit.





# LOOKING AHEAD

By leveraging its skills, tools, structures, and philosophies, our Command will continue to provide Canada with highly skilled, adaptable, multi-purpose SOF forces, held at very high readiness levels. Moreover, it will continue to create unique strategic military options for the country by deepening Canadian military capability into the grey space.

Guided by its Strategic Vision, steered by ongoing feedback processes, supported by a Strategic Implementation Framework, underpinned by an agile organizational structure, and comprising a talented and diverse group of committed Canadians, CANSOFCOM will be well positioned to achieve success today, tomorrow, and in the long term. In this way, the Command will continue to contribute to the achievement of overall competitive advantage for the Canadian Armed Forces and for Canada.

However, *Beyond the Horizon* is only a snapshot in time of what is a continuously evolving military venture. Although this Strategy has evolved out of the 2015 Strategic Plan and sets the stage for follow-on iterations, it is an organic document. In other words, it must be read broadly and progressively so that it can be adapted to the evolving security context. Its function is not to limit the evolution of the Command but rather to facilitate its ongoing strategic relevance by positioning CANSOFCOM to be continuously able to anticipate, adapt, and act, in all evolving operating environments.











WE  
WILL  
FIND  
A WAY