

Report Summary: Evaluation of Ready Joint and Combined Forces

1258-3-053 (SMA[Svcs Ex])
978-0-660-48691-8
D2-650/2023E-PDF
March 2023

Evaluation Scope

The Ready Joint and Combined Forces (RJCF) evaluation examined the performance of Program Inventory Program 2.8 Ready Joint and Combined Forces. As key elements to Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) Readiness, the RJCF Evaluation examined the five-year period from Fiscal Year (FY) 2017/18 to FY 2021/22 and focused on interoperability, integration, and the effectiveness of joint and combined training.

Out of Scope

Equipment procurement, concurrency of operations and personnel were out of scope for this evaluation. These topics were addressed by the Thematic Evaluation of Defence Acquisition Effectiveness, Readiness Integrated Strategic Analysis and the Ready Air and Space Forces evaluations respectively.

Methodology

The findings and recommendations within this report were informed by extensive data collection and multiple lines of evidence, which included: a review of documents; a survey; a questionnaire; key informant interviews; site visits; and administrative program data review.

Program Overview

The RJCF Program focuses on preparing force elements that can operate jointly across all environments and domains and, in some cases, combined and interoperable with allies and/or domestic organizations. The evaluation focused on integration and interoperability elements of readiness in the context of the past, present and future for joint and combined readiness.

Findings

Finding 1: Pre-existing challenges integrating joint enablers have been compounded by current world events.

Personnel shortages and a perceived lack of training have impeded the integration of joint enablers. Among survey respondents, 44% felt that space and cyber capabilities are not being fully integrated. Furthermore, according to the planned allocation of Joint Exercise Training Account (JETA) funds, joint enablers received only 10% of funding on average. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in 54% of exercises being cancelled in FY 2020/21 and 35% being cancelled in FY 2021/22. Simultaneously, there are increased demands for joint enabler resources.

Why it matters? Without the quality and quantity of training required of CAF ready forces including the joint enablers, operations can be compromised. Looking to the future, this could affect the CAF's ability to be a fully integrated and interoperable force within a pan-domain environment.

Finding 2: Current classified system capabilities are insufficient for CAF Readiness activities.

Connecting with allies on international interoperability engagements has proven arduous due to technological issues. Communication issues on a variety of exercises throughout 2019 – 2021 hampered the CAF's ability to be effective participants. However, Canadian Joint Operations Command (CJOC) participates in a Coalition Interoperability Assessment Validation group, a working group that is addressing interoperability concerns with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) with the aim of enhancing this situation for the future. Domestically, a lack of secret and top-secret communications hinders the Department of National Defence/CAF's ability to communicate securely with other government departments.

Why it matters? Secure communications with partners is essential for CAF mission success, and effective training with those capabilities impacts the level of success achieved on operations.

Finding 3: The CAF will be challenged to meet its commitments to NATO without a correction to its strained human resource levels.

Readiness reporting does not provide an accurate picture of the CAF's readiness posture. Beyond this, increasing requirements for high readiness forces both domestically and abroad have made significant demands on the CAF's limited human resources.

Why it matters? Challenges in meeting NATO commitments while simultaneously maintaining CAF readiness posture and responding to emerging domestic operations could strain the Joint Forces, potentially resulting in over-dependency on allies and reputation erosion.

Finding 4: There is no coordinating function that is holistically looking at all elements of joint force readiness.

No specific entity has overall responsibility for joint readiness direction or the ensuing results. This affects training, finances and strategic direction. There is no clear prioritization on which international exercises to participate in, and a lack of centralized direction has led to participating in exercises that are not seen as meeting the CAF's joint readiness goals. In a survey with CAF respondents, 50% felt that training was unorganized. From a financial perspective, JETA funds could be better strategically directed, which has recently occurred to focus on joint enablers as the first priority for these funds.

Why it matters? The end result of the four main challenges within this report can, in part, be associated with the absence of an overarching coordination function looking holistically at all elements of joint force readiness. Taken together, there is a risk that the CAF's ability to deliver formed, fully exercised Force Elements to respond to operations is compromised.

Recommendation 1: Ensure there is a mechanism to enable the coordination and prioritization of joint and combined initiatives.

Overall Conclusions

The evaluation found that there are challenges that impact the RJCF program's ability to fully deliver on stated responsibilities as indicated by current performance measures that have not met targets. However, improvements such as the anticipated update to the Force Posture and Readiness initiatives to address interoperability gaps and a change in priority direction for joint training are underway that may enhance the program's overall effectiveness and the CAF's ability to meet its readiness obligations.

Annex A: Management Action Plan

Management Action 1.1:

Update and/or provide supplemental guidance to the Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS) Directive for CAF Force Posture and Readiness that prioritizes force generation according to the highest priority operational outputs, joint force capabilities and reconstitution requirements.

The update would provide formal CDS strategic guidance to Force Generators on priorities for force generation to ensure CAF readiness. This would help prioritize and streamline decision making, resource allocation and force generation activity across the CAF. Considerations for guidance could include:

- Prioritizing essential, no-fail force elements for force generation (e.g., domestic requirements, very high readiness elements on short notice to move, international commitments);
- Establishing joint force element priority capability areas with a particular focus on high demand, low density joint force enablers;
- Calibrating force generation priorities to refocused operational commitments as driven by reconstitution;
- Identifying the force employment outputs that are no longer realistic given priorities, assigned resource levels and personnel staffing; and
- Incorporating direction and priorities contained in *Strong, Secure, Engaged 2023* (pending release).

Direction is currently being reviewed and will be reviewed annually going forward as either part of the regular update of the CDS Directive for Force Posture and Readiness, or through other documents supplementing this keystone readiness direction.

OPI: SJS DGSER

OCI: RCN, CA, RCAF, CANSOFCOM, CJOC, ADM(IM), CMP, MP Gp

Target Date: NLT June 2024

Deliverable: Update the CDS Directive for CAF Force Posture and Readiness and/or supplemental guidance prioritizing force generation requirements.

Management Action 1.2:

Incorporate the coordination and prioritization of joint and combined force initiatives into a departmental Defence Strategy to guide Defence activities and defence policy implementation.

A departmental Defence Strategy is being pursued to prioritize and direct Defence activities and defence policy implementation (e.g., current efforts, continental defence, and including the release of *Strong, Secure, Engaged 2023*). Given the breadth and depth of CAF transformation required to continue to meet Government of Canada direction and a rapidly evolving global security environment, such prioritization will be essential to appropriately sequence and manage Defence activities and defence policy implementation. Further, given the requirement for pan-domain operations, a number of joint, combined and pan-domain initiatives are expected to be included in *Strong, Secure, Engaged 2023*. Such a strategy would provide near-term guidance (i.e., 3-5 year timeframe) to coordinate and prioritize these and other important enabling initiatives (e.g., digital transformation) and the intent will be for the strategy to be refreshed on a regular cycle (i.e., 1-3 years) after its finalization.

OPI: SJS DGSER/ADM(Pol) [SJS DGSER is accountable for MAP reporting requirements]

OCI: All L1s

Target Date: NLT December 2024

Deliverable: Draft a departmental Defence Strategy that incorporates the coordination and prioritization of joint and combined force initiatives.