

Report Summary: Ready Forces Integrated Strategic Analysis

1258-3-060 (SMA[Svcs Ex])
978-0-660-48693-2
D2-651/2023E-PDF
March 2023

Evaluation Scope

This evaluation examined the overall effectiveness of Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) readiness and the ability to meet concurrency of operation commitments as defined in *Strong, Secure, Engaged (SSE)* and the *2018 Force Posture and Readiness (FP&R) Directive*, with a particular focus on the three Ready Forces environments also being evaluated during the same time period: Ready Joint and Combined Forces; Ready Land Forces; and Ready Air and Space Forces. Each of those evaluations focused on a particular pillar of readiness (e.g., integration and interoperability; equipment; and people and training). High-level findings from these three evaluations are summarized in this Integrated Strategic Analysis (ISA).

Methodology

Findings and recommendations in the report were informed by extensive data collection and multiple lines of evidence, which included: a review of documents; a survey; key informant interviews; site visits; a risk session; benchmarking; and administrative data.

Out of Scope

Components that were scoped out of this evaluation included Ready Navy, Cyber and Intelligence Forces, and Acquisition and Maintenance of equipment.

Program Overview

The Ready Forces Programs aim to produce field combat ready forces able to succeed in an unpredictable and complex security environment in the conduct of concurrent operations associated with mandated missions. Each CAF environment, including Land, Air and Space, and Joint and Combined includes a Ready Forces Program, which focuses on generating, sustaining and renewing combat effective, multi-purpose forces and capabilities that are ready for operations. The Programs are deliberately organized to ensure members are trained and adequately equipped, to allow environments to be scalable, agile, responsive and interoperable both domestically with civil authorities and other Government Departments, and internationally with allies and partners.

Findings

Finding 1: Although we do generally meet operational requirements, we may not always have the ability to do so concurrently as outlined in SSE and the FP&R.

The CAF engages in concurrent operations; however, it is not to the same scope or duration as outlined in SSE. It was widely recognized that should the CAF be called to fulfil all SSE concurrency of operations commitments simultaneously, the CAF would not be able to do so. Factors impacting concurrency include:

training and career development; cancelled exercises and operations; supply chain and rentals; recruitment and retention; and equipment and sustainment challenges.

Why it Matters: The wealth of stated commitments does not align with current resources or capacities within DND/CAF, and places significant pressure on personnel and equipment. Over committing can lead to diminished effectiveness and reliability amongst partners.

Finding 2: There is a lack of a joint readiness strategy, meaningful historical performance data and holistic readiness planning for the CAF as a whole.

While there are numerous CAF directives, policies, frameworks and individual environment strategy documents related to readiness, there are limiting factors that pose challenges to the CAF's ability to achieve readiness objectives. For example:

- the majority of existing readiness plans, strategies and/or directives are based on individual environments;
- there is a lack of direction and strategy on how to operationalize stated defence objectives, including those anticipated through reconstitution and what success will look like;
- the wealth of stated objectives (e.g., within SSE and FP&R) do not align with current resources and capacities within DND/CAF;
- there is an absence of readiness and operational prioritization criteria for stated commitments and objectives; and
- there are gaps in meaningful and historical readiness data despite the importance of consistent data reporting being identified as a key element in the 2018 FP&R directive.

Why it Matters: The lack of a realistic and coordinated strategic readiness approach has resulted in varied perspectives of DND/CAF's primary role and operational priorities. The misalignment between stated objectives and current resources and capacities risks varying levels of alignment with broader government priorities and readiness expectations for the Department. Gaps in meaningful and historical readiness data impede the availability of data to inform military strategic level decision making.

Recommendation 1: Develop a Departmental Strategic Approach to prioritize and streamline Departmental efforts to support CAF readiness. Holistic readiness planning should be revisited on a cyclical basis to ensure alignment with broader objectives and changes in the future threat landscape.

Recommendation 2: Establish processes to ensure readiness data is available to support decision making.

Finding 3: Increased domestic requests for assistance may be a risk to meeting other concurrent operational commitments.

With the CAF being called upon to respond to increasing domestic requests for assistance, including assisting with natural disasters (Op LENTUS), assisting with the COVID-19 pandemic (Op LASER), and responding to a consistently high demand for Search and Rescue assistance, the CAF's capacity to meet other concurrent operational commitments is being increasingly strained. The lack of consensus on the prioritization of domestic operations versus other operations continues to contribute to the CAF being considered the forces of easiest resort to assist in domestic requests for assistance. The impacts of increased involvement in domestic operations are wide ranging and include employee burnout, delays to training, and extra wear and tear on equipment.

Why it Matters: Domestic requests for assistance consume a significant portion of DND/CAF resources. Although responding to domestic requests for assistance is an important role in the protection of Canada, doing so may result in reduced involvement and readiness in other areas under the CAF mandate due to limited equipment and personnel availability.

Finding 4: Challenges with production, availability and maintenance of equipment and ammunition, threatens readiness and ability to meet concurrent obligations.

Budgeting and procurement challenges frequently impact operational readiness. The acquisition or replacement of new equipment and ammunition is often hindered by lengthy, complicated and expensive procurement processes. Challenges with supply chains were also said to compromise the capacity to sustain CAF forces, especially with respect to ammunition. The limited amount of equipment the CAF has ready is being used more than was originally anticipated due to less equipment being procured and increased use during domestic operations. This heightened use results in equipment needing more frequent maintenance, which impacts the availability of equipment for training or operations and ultimately impacts Force readiness and the ability to meet concurrent operations.

Why it Matters: Modern, sufficient and functioning equipment and ammunition is key for readiness. Without these key capabilities, DND/CAF readiness posture could be compromised both at present and to meet the evolving threat landscape. Additionally, Canada's domestic security could be weakened if DND/CAF is unable to procure and move needed equipment across the country in a timely manner.

Finding 5: The CAF's personnel are committed, highly capable and respected. However, challenges related to processes, training, recruitment and retention may have future impacts on career progression, health and wellness, and readiness.

Readiness programs experience several challenges related to training, personnel shortages, recruitment and retention. In 2020/21, the CAF's Regular Force was short 7% of its targeted 71,500 personnel and the Reserve Force was short 20% of its targeted 30,000 personnel. In addition, 51% of occupations had critical shortfalls, a proportion that exceeds the target of less than 5% for shortfalls. As of Fall 2021, recruiting is at approximately 1/3 of normal rates.

Why it Matters: People are at the centre of military readiness. If DND/CAF is unable to recruit, train and retain required skilled personnel, readiness is diminished, which could ultimately impact the success of operations.

Finding 6: Overall, DND and the CAF maintain good relationships with allies and partners. However, Canada's global standing risks being diminished if it falls short in meeting its international commitments.

As DND/CAF continues to fall short on personnel, equipment and its ability to completely fulfil partner requests, there is an increasing risk that Canada may become less relevant to its allies. Based on existing resources, it was felt that Canada must assess thoroughly, understand clearly, and prioritize future threats and the actions needed to address them. Canada is taking steps to remain interoperable with allies; however, interoperability challenges prevail as Canadian capability gaps persist and become greater. Digitalization and communication systems were seen as the key challenges to interoperability.

Why it Matters: Partnerships and coalitions are a key component of Canada's military strategy. If DND/CAF is not perceived as an active and equal military partner, there is a risk of

diminishing relationships with allies. Enhancing capabilities to remain relevant and interoperable with partners is not only essential to Canada's credibility as a serious defence partner, but also to ensure that our overall readiness posture is not compromised.

Finding 7: DND/CAF's readiness to meet the future threat environment is challenged due to current capability gaps.

Existing DND/CAF capability gaps and deficiencies threaten the organization's ability to be operationally ready for the future threat landscape. These gaps include cyber and information challenges, equipment and capability gaps, and personnel gaps.

Why it Matters: Existing capability gaps in personnel and equipment threaten DND/CAF's readiness to meet the future threat environment. An increased emphasis on joint enablers and in non-traditional domains such as cyber, information and space is necessary in order to be successful in meeting the evolving threat. Canadian allies and adversaries are investing heavily in research and capability development to help ensure they are prepared for the future threat environment. DND/CAF needs to take action now to also be ready for this changing landscape, including through dedicating resources and strategic planning in key areas and improving processes to facilitate agility.

Finding 8: Climate change will put an additional strain on resources as domestic and international requests for assistance are anticipated to increase. It will also place additional risk on our military structure, especially in the Arctic, where there is a need for better technology for domain awareness.

Climate change trends present challenges to CAF readiness and will affect how the CAF plans, trains and operates in response to anticipated increased requests for assistance against domestic and international climate-related crises. Comparing the 5-year period 2017-21 to the previous 5-year period 2012-16, there has been a 187% increase in climate-related domestic operations, 67% increase in deployed personnel, and 170% increase in deployment days.

Why it Matters: Climate change is anticipated to have a major impact on the face of future conflict with changes in the nature and location due to an increasing occurrence of natural disasters. The CAF needs to examine and clarify its role in the face of changing conflict and increasing domestic emergencies and continue planning and investing to meet anticipated needs arising from climate change.

Overall Conclusions

The Ready Forces Programs face significant challenges in being able to meet current and future concurrent operation commitments in-line with SSE and the FP&R. Current deficiencies in key readiness areas related to Personnel, Equipment, Training and Sustainment pose a threat to both current and future readiness. DND/CAF recognizes many of these challenges and is taking steps through various Departmental initiatives to address some of them. As part of these changes, the organization must re-examine and define what readiness means in light of the evolving threat landscape and identify and prioritize realistic readiness objectives, including concurrent operations.

Annex A—Management Action Plan

ADM(RS) Recommendation

1. Develop a Departmental Strategic Approach to prioritize and streamline Departmental efforts to support holistic CAF readiness. Holistic CAF readiness planning should be revisited on a cyclical basis to ensure alignment with broader objectives and changes in the future threat landscape.

Management Action

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.
- Incorporating direction and priorities contained in *Strong, Secure, Engaged 2023* (pending release).

Direction would be reviewed annually 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: Updated CDS Directive for CAF Force Posture and Readiness and/or supplemental guidance prioritizing force generation requirements.

Action 1.2 Incorporate CAF readiness prioritization and guidance 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. Ensuring CAF readiness and resilience is expected to be a core focus of such a strategy document which would also provide guidance on key enabling governance, processes, capabilities that form the foundation of the Defence enterprise that deliver the people, equipment, training, digital and physical infrastructure, munitions, spare parts and logistics that are essential to

military readiness. Such a strategy would provide near-term guidance (3–5-year timeframe) and be refreshed on a regular cycle (1-3 years).

OPI: SJS DGSER/ADM(Pol)

OCI: All L1s

Target Date: NLT December 2024

Deliverable: Draft a Departmental Defence Strategy to prioritize Defence activities and defence policy implementation with a focus on ensuring CAF readiness to meet defence policy direction.

ADM(RS) Recommendation

2. Establish processes to ensure readiness data is available to support decision making.

Management Action

Action 2.1 Implement guidance contained in the draft 2022 CDS Directive for CAF Force Posture and Readiness to improve the timeliness, accuracy and quality of FP&R data. The requirement for accurate and timely information on FP&R has become more acute given the requirement to undertake a concentrated period of reconstitution, modernize in the face of new threats, and address growing demands on the CAF, whether responding to increasingly frequent and severe climate-induced natural disasters at home or the complex and volatile global security environment. As such, the draft 2022 CDS Directive for CAF Force Posture and Readiness directs the provision of an accurate and reliable picture of CAF readiness, verified within no more than 30 days at all times. Force generators are directed to play an active role in improving readiness reporting by verifying and updating readiness assessments for assigned Force Elements on a monthly basis, as well as providing information on readiness limitations and mitigation plans to return force elements to READY status.

Publish the guidance contained in the draft 2022 CDS Directive for CAF Force Posture and Readiness which requires all L1 force generators to provide full and accurate reporting on all CAF force elements verified within no more than 30 days. Verify and track compliance with the guidance through Web SMaRT (Strategic Management and Readiness Tool) and report both the readiness data and L1 compliance to the CDS on a monthly basis.

OPI: SJS DGSER

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

Target Date: March 2024

Deliverable: Web SMaRT records and captures of readiness data on a monthly basis to provide a historical record and accurate current reporting. Monthly L1 compliance. Both data and compliance to be reported to the CDS on a monthly basis.

Action 2.2 Deploy Web SMaRT. A web-based improvement on the current Web SMaRT tool is currently in development and undergoing beta testing. The Web SMaRT tool will assist in collecting readiness data by leveraging modern web design features to guide users through the reporting experience and by removing the subjectivity of certain data using reporting fields with drop-down menus. The tool should also allow for better management and analysis of reporting data by allowing linking of force elements with CAF CONPLANs, operations and other data to understand the impacts of readiness levels on operational commitments, as well as the ability to link the tool to PowerBI analytics software that can generate intuitive graphics-based representation of the data. The Web SMaRT tool will also support more widespread adoption and the delegation

of reporting requirements to lower levels which should also allow the capture of more accurate data closer to the source, and to share the burden of reporting. Finally, Web SMaRT will enable analytics for user compliance, enabling both quality control action but also performance reporting on data input. Iterative improvements will also be pursued based on user feedback and senior leader information requirements. Demonstrations and training sessions will be offered to all users to facilitate the proper use of the tool.

OPI: SJS DGSER

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

Target Date: December 2023

Deliverable: Deployment of Web SMaRT reporting tool to all force generators.

Action 2.3 Include monthly readiness data in the L0 dashboard to ensure regular availability and visibility of readiness data with senior leadership.

The L0 dashboard managed by the VCDS provides a snapshot of key departmental data to the DM and CDS, and is available through a restricted access website on the DWAN at any time. Overall CAF readiness as well as eNRF and NRI commitments could be added to this Protected B reporting tool at a sufficient level of detail to provide CAF readiness data to senior leaders that complements the other data contained in the dashboard. This data would need to be manually incorporated at the outset, but SJS is currently exploring how to make this process more automatic using digital tools. Action 1.1 will support ensuring that this data is as accurate and as timely as possible, while the deployment of Web SMaRT and eventual incorporation of PowerBI will allow for more intuitive representations of the data for senior leaders.

OPI: SJS DGSER

OCI: VCDS

Target Date: Monthly, starting March 2023

Deliverable: CAF and eNRF/NRI Readiness data is published to the L0 dashboard on a monthly basis

Action 2.4 Incorporate Readiness requirements in DEFENCEX.

DEFENCEX will provide the long-term replacement for the Defence Resource Management Information System (DRMIS) and is anticipated to begin providing functionality to the department in 2027. DEFENCEX will be a significant evolution on DRMIS in that it is envisioned to play a larger role in data-driven, evidence-based decision support. It will also eventually replace Web SMaRT as the system of record for readiness data collection and analysis. While work has already begun to incorporate the requirements to collect and analyze readiness data as a part of this system and use it to support readiness-related decision making, it will be important to further formalize this requirement as a business process within the DEFENCEX statement of requirements as the project moves into the definition phase. The statement of requirements is expected to be completed by the end of the definition phases, currently targeted for December 2024.

OPI: ADM(DIA) and SJS

OCI: CFO, VCDS

Target Date: January 2025

Deliverable: Readiness incorporated as a Business Process within the DEFENCEX Statement of Requirements to enable the development and provision of readiness decision support and analysis functions.