

Reserves on Operations

Major-General Dennis Tabbemor, D.C., CMM, CD

Introduction

Ladies and gentlemen:

First of all, on behalf of the chief of defence staff, General Walter Natynczyk, I'd like to welcome you and thank Doctor David Bercuson and his staff, for organizing this conference. Today's conference is but one of a number of conferences that Dr. Bercuson and the centre for military and strategic studies have organized over the years to examine the role of the reserves in today's ever changing world, and I have been fortunate to have attended all of them.

General Natynczyk sends his best wishes for the success of the conference and his regrets. He has a killer schedule that does not permit him to be with us today.

Over the course of the conference we hope to examine how the Canadian forces reserves support the missions undertaken by the Canadian forces as directed by the Canadian government.

There are challenges maintaining this high level of operational tempo which we will explore and discuss over the next few days.

The future is always an unknown, but as we look forward to 2011 and Canada's withdrawal from Afghanistan we need to be ready to face the next mission or operation demanded by the government.

Today there are three major documents which are of significant relevance to, and provide direction for the Canadian forces. All have evolved in this new century:

- the "Canada first defence strategy";
- "Canada's northern strategy"; and
- "A strategy for 2020 - shaping the future of the Canadian forces".

All of these documents are common in their purpose to define the role, responsibility and effectiveness of the Canadian forces, now and into the future.

These documents also recognize the value and significant role that the reserves and the reservist contribute to the defence team.

Today, regular and reserve force personnel work side-by-side in wide ranging operations such as:

- the conduct of daily domestic operations including arctic and NORAD missions;
- support to major international events such as the 2010 Olympics;
- support to civilian authorities during a crisis in Canada which could include a major terrorist attack;
- extended international operations; and
- humanitarian aid and disaster relief.

Because of the realities of the 21st century, Canada requires a military with the flexibility to respond to such challenges while continuing to carry out essential, day-to-day training and missions.

In the Canadian Forces, the greatest constant is change. For the reserve force, this is especially the case.

My military career began in the Reserves in 1967. Over these 43 years of service, I have personally witnessed enormous changes in the structure, equipment, role, numbers, and expectations of Canada's Reserve Force.

More changes are afoot.

The role of the Reserves has changed dramatically since the end of the cold war, morphing from a strategic base for mobilization to an organization intimately involved in domestic and international operations as well as the day to day business of the Canadian forces.

Numbering nearly 26,000, the primary reserve is a complex mixture of full and part-time personnel. Their primary role is to augment, sustain, and support the regular force. In recent years, reservists have made substantial contributions to Canada's international efforts and domestic relief operations.

However, the Reserve Force does more than augment the regular force. Today reservists are critical to the sustainability of Canadian Forces operations. They are also called upon to aid civil authorities in the management of natural or man-made emergencies.

And they are asked to connect with Canadian society, especially in communities not located near or served by, Canadian Forces bases.

As well, some operational capabilities, such as maritime coastal defence and civil-military cooperation, are resident in the reserve force.

Since the early 1990s, the Canadian Forces have been faced with a high operational tempo. More and more Reserve Force personnel have been called upon to assist the Canadian Forces in delivering on its mandate. The participation of reservists on international operations has reached a level where more than 20 percent of the troops deployed overseas are reservists.

The engagement of the reserves today is at a level not seen since World War Two.

Evolution of the Reservist Role

Before I go any further, let me provide some context, and explain where the reserves have been, and where they are now.

In the first and second World Wars, the reserves provided the mobilization base for the army, navy and air force. Local units, filled with part-time personnel who trained for only a few weekends a year, were called to active duty, and thousands of volunteers brought their units from skeleton strength to the point where they were turning away recruits in a matter of days.

The naval reserve divisions generated sailors to build Canada's navy helping to produce, by the end of world war two, the third largest navy in the world.

In times of peace Canada has traditionally relied on a small, and by some standards, tiny full-time force. The permanent force, or as it is known today, the regular force, have considered themselves the 'professionals', those who train to the highest standard, and bear the day-to-day tasks of guarding the nation. In contrast, prior to the 1990s, the reserve force was considered a partially trained or second class force.

The reserve force has existed to backfill the regular force, in times of national need.

Today it would be difficult to overstate the importance of the reserves to sustaining CF operations, particularly following the defence budget cuts and increased operational tempo of the 1990s.

At the end of the cold war, the Canadian forces had a total strength of approximately 89,000 regular force personnel. While this number declined to below 60,000 in the 1990s, the military's operational tempo increased significantly over the same period, placing extreme stress on Canadian forces personnel.

Faced with ever increasing demands and the need to respond to new and unforeseen crises, the Canadian Forces required, and continues to require, more recruits of higher quality with the right knowledge and skills.

Among other considerations, the government's decisions on rebuilding the Canadian forces are informed by experience gained in recent missions in Canada and overseas, including in Afghanistan.

Maintaining 3000 Canadian forces personnel in Afghanistan requires a pool of over 15,000. This includes 3000 personnel in theatre for six months, 6000 at different stages of training for upcoming rotations and 6000 recovering following their deployment, affording the soldiers a minimum of 12 months between deployments.

Additionally, about 10,000 civilian and military personnel are required at the same time, in Canada, to support the mission.

Indeed, the Afghanistan mission has demonstrated the importance of having a military that can operate far from home on a sustained basis and in a difficult environment, and that is capable of quickly adapting to evolving threats and changing conditions on the ground. These lessons will continue to be incorporated as the military adjusts its doctrine and capability requirements in the future.

OP Hestia was an excellent example of readiness put into practice. OP Hestia was the CF's response to the catastrophic earthquake that struck Haiti, on January 12, 2010. The readiness and efficiency of the CF made it possible to quickly deploy two thousand Canadian forces personnel, hundreds of vehicles, seven helicopters, two ships and airlift support to the recovery and reconstruction efforts in Haiti. These personnel provided humanitarian aid, medical care, engineering support, security and logistical coordination to alleviate the suffering of Haitians affected by this disaster.

In the modern era, reserve augmentation is usually on the individual, or depending on the theatre of operations, sub-unit level. Although nearly 20% of Canadian forces personnel currently in Afghanistan are reservists, the reservists are fully-integrated into the regular force units. Training and equipment are to the same standard for both the regulars and reserves.

Today, apart from the details of a shoulder flash or a hat badge, it is virtually impossible to spot the difference between a regular and reservist while overseas.

Furthermore, defence of the maritime approaches to Canada is provided in part by the naval reserve manning between 7 and 10 Kingston class ships for coastal operations. The air reserve is intimately integrated into air force and NORAD operations protecting the air approaches to Canada.

Domestically, Canada's northern strategy aims at putting more boots on the arctic tundra, more ships in the icy water and a better eye-in-the-sky. Significant investments have been made to support the strategy. We will see the establishment of an army training centre in Resolute Bay on the shore of the northwest passage, as well as the expansion and modernization of the Canadian rangers – the reserve force responsible for providing military presence and surveillance and for assisting with search and rescue in remote, isolated and coastal communities of northern Canada. The navy is developing an arctic off shore patrol vessel that will be jointly manned by the regular and reserve force. And the air force continues to fly sovereignty missions in the area, often inter-acting with our Russian friends.

And internationally it is important to remember that the period since the end of world war two includes such notable events as the Korean war, the Cuban missile crisis, the October crisis, the cold war, various domestic natural disasters, all of Canada's peacekeeping missions, the operations in the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Congo, Kosovo, to name but a few, and of course, Afghanistan.

During periods of crisis, such as world wars one and two, the government placed the reserves on active service, but notwithstanding the high operational tempo of the Canadian forces since the end of the cold war throughout all those events, the reserves have not been activated, and compelled to serve by the government. They continue to be volunteers.

Earlier I had mentioned that we have about 26,000 reservists serving in Canada.

Today, to support the operational demands of the Canadian forces, over one third of reserve personnel, or about 10,000, are being employed full-time with the

Canadian forces, or to use a term familiar to our American friends, serving on active duty.

This level of reserve involvement has not been seen since world war two. Although the government has not put the reserves on active duty, one could say that operational requirements have inadvertently caused the partial mobilization of the reserves.

It cannot be stressed enough that today's reserve force is an integral and indispensable partner required to execute today's demanding operational requirements. When employed together there is very little that distinguishes a member of the reserve force from that of the regular force, which demonstrates a strong degree of integration between the two components of Canada's armed forces.

Due to the significant change in the roles of the reservist in recent years, the Canadian forces recruiting web site states that "the Canadian forces are a modern and effective military capable of playing a number of important roles at home and abroad. For all our equipment and technology, it is our regular and reserve force personnel who truly allow us to play these roles. These men and women have the skills, knowledge and experience that make the Canadian forces modern, effective and professional. Expansion is essential for us to be able to continue to protect Canada and to assume a leadership role in the world."

However, the more "classic" view still prevails on some national defence venues, that "reservists are ordinary citizens who volunteer to devote a portion of their free time to military service with three roles:

- 1) To mobilize or expand the forces to respond to a large crisis;
- 2) To connect with Canadian communities through the local reserve; and
- 3) To augment the professional forces.

Depending on how one defines the role of the reservist, and therefore prioritizes them within the organization, the value of reservists as a resource can vary. Thus, decisions regarding the allocation of funds may differ when budgetary belts require tightening.

We continue the difficult challenge of ensuring that the capabilities and characteristics of Canada's reserve force are properly formulated and integrated into the development and implementation of Canadian forces policies, procedures and programs.

As I have said, thousands of reservists are now serving full-time. The question remains, where will they fit in the Canadian forces post-2011? The reserve force has answered the call - we have enabled Canadian forces' growth and operational capacity. Will these reservists now stand down and will the Canadian forces lose the skill sets that have been developed, much in combat?

Year-round service is far more common than it was 20 years ago ... but will it remain so as personnel demands on the Canadian forces change? With regular force strength at 68,000, and growing, will the need for so many full-time reservists remain the same? How will this change the look and feel of the reserves as we know them today?

The specific details of those changes remain to be seen, but for reservists, change in the future is a distinct probability.

Present Roles of the Reserves other than Afghanistan

It is important to remember that Afghanistan is not the 'only game in town.' although Afghanistan dominates the headlines, there are many highly significant operations and other commitments that involve reservists.

As a case in point, apart from Afghanistan, we have reservists deployed outside Canada, in Bahrain, Bosnia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, the gulf of Aden, Haiti, Kosovo, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Darfur, Jerusalem and around the Middle East.

Recently, thousands of reservists participated in operation podium, the Canadian forces contribution to the security of the 2010 Olympic Games. The operation was deliberately low-profile, and ultimately successful.

Reservists are preparing to augment security operations for the g-8 and g-20 summits to be held in Ontario later this year.

Whenever you see Canadian forces operations in the news, be assured that reservists will be involved in those operations, to a greater or lesser degree.

reservists provide 'boots on the ground', and those in full-time administrative and logistic positions are part of the usually-unseen 'tail' that allows the ships to sail, the aircraft to fly, and the soldiers to patrol.

Future Roles of the Reserves?

What are the potential future roles of the reserve force?

In the short term future, the reserves will continue to be a source of force generation for domestic and international operations.

As well, they will continue to be intimately involved in the day to day business of the cf. As always, the role of the Canadian forces is dictated by what the Canadian government directs. We will go where they ask us to go, and do what they ask us to do, for as long as they ask us to do it.

It is impossible to predict exactly what will happen, and it is difficult to speculate – but there are certain tasks for which the reserve force must be ready.

Humanitarian Emergencies

First, operational requirements are often ‘come as you are,’ which in military parlance means you may not have the luxury of buying new equipment or making large adjustments to your organization in the face of sudden demands. An excellent example of this was Operation Hestia, our response to the January earthquake in Haiti.

There will be other humanitarian disasters in the future – and the Canadian forces may or may not be tasked to respond to them – but having that flexibility to respond is important.

Territorial Defence Battalions

One role that has been discussed at length for the reserves is the ‘territorial defence battalion’. It is a concept that will see reserve units responsible for disaster-response in their geographical area. Thus, if there were an earthquake, flood, tornado, forest fire, ice storm – or even terrorist attack –the territorial defence battalion would be a key element in the Canadian forces’ ability to respond and assist the various levels of government. Because reservists usually have strong ties to the local area, their local knowledge would be useful in liaising with their local authorities.

Arctic Sovereignty

Arctic sovereignty is a high-profile issue today. It features heavily in the government’s Canada first defence strategy and receives a lot of coverage in today’s media.

The reserves have already been given notice that they will contribute to arctic sovereignty. Numerous army reserve units have been tasked to be arctic-capable, and have already exercised this capability. the naval reserve’s maritime coastal defence vessels continue to patrol arctic waters.

Peacekeeping

Canada continues to contribute to un peacekeeping. though the numbers have decreased from their peak in the early 1990s – when Canada had thousands of personnel overseas in blue berets, mainly in the former-Yugoslavia and Cyprus – many smaller missions have endured.

Canadian United Nations military observers continue to deploy to relatively little-known missions in Africa, the Middle East, and elsewhere.

Reservists contribute to these missions.

Cimic and Psyops

Reservists have taken the lead, and will likely continue to do so, in two tasks of growing importance – civil military cooperation and psychological operations.

Civil military cooperation is used to foster relations between the military and civilian agencies in a given area. in a counter-insurgency such as Afghanistan, where the 3d approach of defence, diplomacy and development is used, civil military cooperation has grown to be an important force enabler.

Psychological operations are related to, but distinct from, civil military cooperation. Psychological operations are about influencing the civilian population, much like an advertiser marketing a product, or a campaign manager running a candidate for election. Psychological operations are also vital in a counter-insurgency or peace-making mission.

The reserve force was tasked to force generate these specialties and commanders in Afghanistan have realized how important they are – so this tasking will likely remain significant for the reserve force in the future.

The Next Mission?

What does the future hold? That is a question that is determined by world events, and answered by parliament.

The Canadian forces will continue to change its policies and regulations to ensure we are able to meet the needs of the Canadian government and Canadian people utilizing all our personnel, regular, reserve and civilian.

One can read the papers to see many different theories – various global trouble spots are named, as well as the call to concentrate on domestic issues. Some politicians want to strengthen certain alliances, while others have a preference for other commitments and agendas.

This is politics, and to comment on it is not the business of the Canadian forces.

To be prepared to answer the call when it comes – *that* is our business.

There will be changes to the demands placed upon the Canadian forces post-2011.

In my years of service, the greatest constant has been change. The other great constant has been the willingness and the ability of the Canadian forces to meet those changes.

Connection of Reserve Force to Community

Regardless of what is asked of the Canadian forces, support of the Canadian public is always a vital component. Canada is a democracy and its military is all-volunteer. Without public support, the Canadian forces cannot achieve success on its missions. In fact, it is the public, through its elected government, that determines what the forces' missions will be.

That is why it is so important for the Canadian forces to connect with the Canadian public – and vice versa.

The public can be truly supportive only if it is knowledgeable – an informed public is good for Canada and good for the Canadian forces.

The Canadian military is part of the population; it is a reflection of the population.

It was mainly citizen-soldiers, sailors, and airmen who fought and won the great conflicts of the last century. Most were civilians when war broke out and became civilians again when peace returned.

In the 21st century, it is ordinary Canadians who continue to do extraordinary work to serve our nation.

Conclusion

Canada's participation in the mission in Afghanistan, its largest military effort in a generation, is coming to a close in 2011. The end of that mission is little over a year away, but anticipation of what is to come after 2011 is a question that is on the minds of many Canadians.

What will the Canadian forces look like post-Afghanistan? More specifically, what will the reserve force look like post-Afghanistan?

The fundamental underpinnings of current defence policy are sound. Canada needs and benefits from combat-capable maritime, land and air forces able to fulfill a broad range of missions and tasks. While Canada faces no direct conventional military threat, the world is becoming increasingly complex and unpredictable.

There remain direct and indirect threats to our national security for which a military response may be required, including drugs, organized crime, illegal

immigration, terrorism and the uncertainty caused by the growing proliferation of missiles carrying weapons of mass destruction.

As with our allies, Canadian defence planning is now based upon the capabilities Canada needs to protect and promote its interests and values in a responsive manner, rather than upon direct threats to our well being.

We will continue to maintain and improve the forces as a first-class, modern military, means recruiting, sustaining and retaining the "best and the brightest" that Canadian communities have to offer.

If today's realities are any indicator, the reserves have, and will continue to have, a key role within the Canadian forces, and within the government of Canada's long-range domestic and international plans.

Over the course of the next few days we will hear from a number of presenters and through your questions and discussion examine the roles played by reservists engaged in operations both internationally and here at home.

We will discuss the lessons learned and change and management strategies that have been employed, highlighting how the Canadian force and the department of national defence have adapted to ensure the sustainment of the reserve force, recognizing that this sustainment is every bit as important as the sustainment of regular force.

Thank you.