

Report Summary: Evaluation of Ready Air and Space Forces

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Evaluation Scope

The Ready Air and Space Forces (RASf) evaluation examined the performance of Program Inventory Program 2.4 Ready Air and Space Forces over a five-year period, from FY 2017/18 to FY 2021/22. The scope included the personnel and training aspects of ready forces in the air and space domains to evaluate effectiveness and efficiencies in the context of direction from the past, activities in the present, and organizational positioning for the future of the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF). In alignment with the Department of National Defence/Canadian Armed Forces (DND/CAF) Departmental Results Framework and governmental initiatives, Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA Plus), *Strong, Secure, Engaged* (SSE) priorities, as well as the impact of COVID-19 were assessed throughout the evaluation.

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; questionnaires; key informant interviews; site visits; a risk session; and administrative data.

Out of Scope

Components that were scoped out of this evaluation included: equipment procurement; ammunition; interoperability; and concurrency of operations.

Program Overview

The Ready Air and Space Forces Program generates, sustains and renews combat effective multi-purpose air and space forces and capabilities that are ready for concurrent operations. The Program is deliberately organized to ensure that members of the RCAF are trained and equipped 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: The RCAF's ability to meet current and future Force Posture & Readiness (FP&R) requirements is compromised.

Program data suggests the RCAF is experiencing a personnel crisis linked to both recruitment and retention. There are vacancies in a number of key occupations across the RCAF. Personnel shortages are exacerbated by decreased numbers in recruitment during the pandemic, the overburdening of existing RCAF members, an increase in domestic operations, the "missing (hollow) middle" and an increase in RCAF capabilities that will require sufficient levels of ready and trained personnel.

Why it matters? A shortage of RCAF personnel risks the ability to prepare for and to meet the air and space personnel readiness requirements both now and in the future.

Recommendation 1: To improve force generation efficiency, the RCAF should undertake a review of key capabilities in order to determine which capabilities should be decreased in activity and/or ceased to meet future needs and mitigate current personnel pressures.

Finding 2: The RCAF is undertaking a number of creative retention initiatives to better support military members and their families, which aims to mitigate attrition.

The RCAF is facing notable attrition levels, comparably higher than the CAF, due to internal and external factors such as: COVID-19; mobility considerations; and familial aspirations. To increase personnel retention, the RCAF is utilizing diverse strategies ranging from expanding member/family support services, to the creation of new occupations such as the Air Operations Officer and considering flexible staffing models.

Why it matters? Internal and external factors contribute to the RCAF's ability to maintain personnel. A shortage of personnel will continuously impact the RCAF's readiness capabilities. However, the RCAF is already undertaking several strategies to mitigate attrition in an effort to maximize personnel for CAF operations.

Finding 3: GBA Plus and Diversity and Inclusion continue to be important considerations for personnel recruitment and training in support of readiness.

The RCAF has adopted a progressive team mindset, where rank and occupation appear to create less friction than in other domains. However, there is still evidence of cultural challenges within the RCAF around gender equality, diversity and the incorporation of GBA Plus into strategic development of training. The lack of adequate diversity and inclusion within the RCAF could be considered a hindrance to its readiness posture.

Why it matters? GBA Plus and Diversity and Inclusion considerations remain relevant for the RCAF's recruitment and training in support of readiness. The CAF desires forces to reflect the Canadian population that they defend.

Finding 4: Training and readiness responsibilities are distributed across the RCAF, leading to challenges in tracking personnel to inform strategic readiness planning.

Although 2 Canadian Air Division (2CAD) is the training authority responsible for qualification standards across occupations in the RCAF as well as overarching training development and innovation, it was noted that there are challenges in harmonizing Individual Training and Education due to the distributed nature of training and the absence of a coordination function. As well, there are challenges in communication between different Chains of Command, an unclear delineation of responsibilities and an insufficient number of administrative staff to support administrative services. It was also found that because personnel data are kept in separate systems, it limits the ability to have efficient oversight on real time personnel readiness.

Why it matters? A lack of a comprehensive monitoring system for personnel and training impacts the RCAF's ability to adequately conduct data-based decision making for strategic readiness.

Recommendation 2: Increase the visibility of RCAF members' status as they progress through training.

Finding 5: Current RCAF training challenges may be offset by the Training Modernization Initiative.

Some challenges impacting the RCAF's ability to effectively and efficiently produce Trained Effective Strength personnel numbers include training duration and redundancies, a lack of – or aging - equipment and a lack of instructors. The Training Modernization Initiative will help address some of these challenges.

Why it matters? Modernizing the RCAF's training processes and adapting their methods of delivery, where possible, will help to adequately force generate the air and space requirements of the future.

Recommendation 3: Maintain focus on training modernization by adequately prioritizing the work of 2CAD to deliver on this overarching initiative in support of readiness.

Finding 6: There is an increased emphasis on Space in DND/CAF; however, continued focus on awareness building and personnel development is essential.

In 2022, Director General (DG) Space transitioned into 3 Canadian Space Division (3CSD), making the organization more visible and recognized as a formation. Sufficient numbers of trained personnel will be critical to achieve 3CSD's vision of forming a structured space cadre to integrate space capabilities throughout DND/CAF operations as required in SSE. However, challenges with the general security classification within this domain were felt to hinder its visibility. Further challenges across the RCAF, such as limited space expertise could negatively impact staffing and recruitment in this domain.

Why it matters? Space domain readiness is dependent on a sufficient number of trained personnel. Continued leadership in this area will be essential to meet readiness expectations and to counter potential threat actors in a pan-domain environment.

Overall Conclusions

RCAF readiness in the context of personnel and training faces significant challenges, which is resulting in an organizational shift in order to meet current and future readiness requirements in the air and space domains. The flexibility of the RCAF, through its initiatives, culture and further establishment of the space domain, are positive steps that better position them to achieve future personnel and training FP&R requirements and to meet future operational demands.

Annex A—Management Action Plan

ADM(RS) Recommendation

1. To improve force generation efficiency, the RCAF should undertake a review of key capabilities in order to determine which capabilities should be decreased in activity and/or ceased to meet future needs and mitigate current personnel pressures;
 - a) Maintain focus on training modernization by adequately prioritizing the work of 2CAD to deliver on this overarching initiative in support of readiness.

Management Action

Activities Ongoing.

Action 1.1 Assessing priority positions/postings/requests to address determined priorities within resource constrained environment considering RCAF Strategy Objectives People/Readiness/Modernization/Partnerships. RCAF Commander (Comd) decision brief (December 2, 2022) and subsequent signal to Chief of Military Personnel (CMP)/Director Military Careers. RCAF Strategy published: est April 2023.

Action 1.2 Pending outcome of December 2, 2022 decision brief, assess impact to FP&R from the personnel, National Procurement and support perspective, produce Comd's FY 2022/23 Direction and Guidance: Endorsed Force Posture and Readiness directive.

Action 1.3 Renew Comd's Campaign Plan: prioritize/synchronize/sequence activities, establish metrics and reporting mechanisms within Air Staff and throughout subordinate formations/develop supporting material including RCAF Global Engagement Strategy/RCAF Communications Strategy:

Deliverable: Numerous, outlined above. Personnel resource limitations may affect timelines

OPI: RCAF/DG Air and Space Readiness/Director Air Plans

OCI: RCAF/ DG Air Strategic Resources and Air Reserve: 1CAD / Deputy Commander Force Generation

Target Date: July 2023: activities as outlined previously/annual review cycle to be established

ADM(RS) Recommendation

2. Increase the visibility of RCAF members' status as they progress through training.

Management Action

Action 2.1. The RCAF is working to prioritize personnel and postings/identify opportunities to potentially increase the number of full-time staff employed within the 2CAD Basic Training List (BTL) section in order to properly manage, coordinate and enable new recruits' ability to access their training continuum, and to ensure minimum time to operationally functional point.

Deliverable: Approval and staffing (Regular Force and/or Public Servant) of positions requested by the 2CAD BTL section.

OPI: RCAF/DG Air and Space Readiness/Director Air Plans; DG Air Strategic Resources and Air Reserve/Director Air Personnel Strategy

OCI: RCAF 2CAD/Chief of Staff

Target Date: July 2023

Action 2.2 Once staffing is identified, a point of contact will be assigned to discuss individual training plans/progression. BTL members benefit from having higher visibility and responsiveness to their status.

Deliverable: Timely updates to BTL members with visibility to their training continuum.

OPI: RCAF/2CAD Director Air Force Training (Dir AF Trg)

Target Date: July 2024

ADM(RS) Recommendation

3. Maintain focus on training modernization by adequately prioritizing the work of 2CAD to deliver on this overarching initiative in support of readiness.

Management Action

Action 3.1 The RCAF prioritized the posting of personnel to 2CAD in 2022, is prioritizing the positions required within the training system for 2023 and will maintain a focus as required across the entire training spectrum for the RCAF from initiation through to operational training.

Deliverable: Annual prioritized RCAF posting priority delivered to Director Military Careers through to ensure training units receive priority for posting

OPI: RCAF/DG Air and Space Readiness/Director Air Plans

OCI: RCAF/DG Air Strategic Resources and Air Reserve: 2CAD /Commander/Chief of Staff

Target Date: January 2024

Action 3.2 Additional Training Development Officer (TDO) support will be identified with the assistance of the Cadet Instructor Cadre to support TDO shortfalls at all levels of the RCAF enterprise.

Deliverable: Provide TDO support to Training Establishments (TE)/Operational Training Units (OTU)/Headquarters to facilitate the operationalization of training modernization across the Force.

OPI: RCAF/ 2CAD Dir AF Trg

OCI: RCAF/DG Air and Space Readiness/ Director Air Plans

Target Date: Immediate and ongoing

Action 3.3 The RCAF will conduct a performance gap of all TEs/OTUs TDOs, instructors, and training support personnel to clearly articulate the skill sets necessary to prepare unit personnel to support the design, development and implementation of technology enabled learning (TEL).

Deliverable: Recommendations for properly training RCAF training personnel to convert training plans to leverage TEL to support the future training environment.

OPI: RCAF/2CAD HQ/Director Training Support & Innovation (Dir TS&I)

OCI: RCAF/DG Air and Space Readiness/Director Air Plans

Target Date: April 2023

Action Item 3.4 Consult with industry and academia to determine how they may be leveraged as a force multiplier to support the training modernization objectives of the RCAF.

Deliverable: Proposal that will describe industry and academic expertise that could be solicited for additional support.

OPI: RCAF/2CAD/Dir TS&I

Target Date: April 2023

Action 3.5 Select an occupation to operationalize the vision for training modernization in coordination with CMP/Military Personnel Generation Group (MPGG) Directorate Training Modernization and the affected training establishment(s).

Deliverable: Model by which to demonstrate the training modernization process for other RCAF occupations.

OPI: RCAF/2CAD Dir TS&I), RCAF/2CAD/Dir AF Trg, CMP/MPGG Dir Trg Mod, DPGR, TE/OTU TBD

OCI: RCAF /DG Air and Space Readiness/ Director Air Plans

Target Date: April 2024