

AFAC POSITION PAPER 02/2007

Issue: CF Personnel Retention

Background

- Considerable focus has been placed on increased recruitment of personnel for augmenting the size of the Canadian Forces. This is in direct response to the stated Government priority of expanding from 62,000 to 75,000 Regular Force members and from 25,000 to 35,000 Reservists. Commendable effort has been made to increase numbers, but the absorption rate of new personnel is limited by the ability to properly train recruits and place them in effective operational positions.
- The operational demands on the CF have impeded its ability to dedicate experienced personnel in sufficient numbers to this training effort. Significant effort has been made to outsource some training, especially the more common introductory courses where access to serving military instructors is not critical. Much of the more advanced and demanding training must be done by the military, however, and the sheer number of recruits over the past several years have stressed the training system to its limits.
- Although the most visible pressure may apply to the army, shortages in the air force cause significant concern. The availability of pilots, for example, is expected to become more acute. There is evidence that the demand for commercial pilots is increasing, just at a time when the health of the pilot occupation remains vulnerable. The airline industry is not only fully recovered after 9/11 but is in a growth mode, with passenger traffic expected to increase at an average annual rate of 4%. The demand for trained personnel will be aggravated by “boomer” generation retirements. In the US, 25,000 pilots will leave over the next 12 years, while India and China alone require 140,000 pilots in the decade beginning in 2002.
- In addition to aircrew and technicians, Engineers, project managers, logistics officers and others will be needed, at a time of aviation industry rejuvenation. Furthermore, demands for a trained and disciplined work force will be exacerbated as new fleets are introduced into the inventory. The acquisition of more uninhabited aerial vehicles will only increase the pressure.
- The number of pilots is currently about 6% below the preferred manning level. Figures for AVN, AVS and ACS 500-series technicians are 10%, 10%, and 3% respectively. The Aircraft Technician Transformation



initiative is well underway and producing results, but it will still take some five years for the AVN and AVS trades to return to health.

AFAC Position

- While maintaining a healthy level of recruitment is important to the long term future of the CF, some of the short term needs can be addressed through a proactive effort towards better retention. The investment made in training and developing any military member into an effective sailor, soldier, or airman/woman can be very extensive and should be protected to the extent practical. Those who have acquired the necessary skills, independently or in military service, should be motivated to remain in the military. There are several ways of accomplishing this, a few of which are listed:
 - Ensure flexibility in service by allowing broken service without penalty, seamless transfer from regular to reserve (including the Supplementary Reserve) and vice versa, and policies which consider personal preferences to a greater degree
 - Encourage those with desired skills who wish to re-enroll after leaving the military, focusing on a quick and easy process to do so, and employing them to the best advantage
 - Offer flexibility in career options after an initial period of service
 - Expand the medical release policy, with a view to greater accommodation of those who might not meet the full physical requirements, especially if this is related to prior service or if they have badly needed qualifications
 - Put in place an responsive policy to deal with shortages, through measures such as retention bonuses and adjustments to terms of service for any stressed occupations, before the such situations become crises
 - Maintenance of attractive pay, benefits, and health care services and continued attention to the needs of families
 - Better pay and benefits for reservists
 - Encourage a stronger sense of 'family' among military members, to enhance the sense of bonding and comradeship that is so important to dedication and service to country



- Continue to focus on the importance and meaningfulness of the roles performed, the need for appropriate equipment to perform them, and the commensurate operating budgets
- Of even more significance than these measures is the need for the current generation of CF personnel to have some control over their career and lives. The transformation of 'employment' practices to a two-way dialogue with individuals, catering to their personal priorities to the extent practicable and considering their careers more holistically, offers the potential of better overall personnel managed readiness in the long term.

Messages

- Recruiting and retention initiatives need to be maintained in a healthy balance in order to serve the short and long term needs of the air force. Every effort should be made to protect the investment made in the skills of CF personnel.
- Initiatives to increase retention and attract back to the air force individuals with the necessary qualifications should be pursued aggressively. The AFAC applauds the effort being made in this area and encourages continued application to meet the challenges of the future.
- Transforming the management of personnel readiness to one of greater flexibility and understanding of individual goals and priorities offers the potential for dramatic long term benefits for retention.

Developed by: Aviation Affairs Committee

Point of Contact: Don McLeod, donwmcleod@ns.sympatico.ca, 902-427-7151

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