

## AFTER ACTION REPORT

November 2014

Subject: Marine Corps Force Innovation Office (MCFIO) Visit to the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF)

### Summary of Findings:

Based on the order of the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal, Canada integrated female soldiers into all ground combat arms occupational specialties and units in 1989. Twenty-five years later, the total numbers of female Canadian soldiers serving in ground combat arms units and specialties remain very low. In Canada, political, legal and social imperatives - rather than operational requirements - drive military policies and standards. Active, dedicated leadership has been crucial to successful integration in the CAF. However, cultural change has been slow and there are still challenges to overcome.

Canada (28-30 Oct): The CAF talks included briefings, open discussions with combat arms leaders from infantry, armor and artillery (both male and female) and a panel discussion with females from across the combat arms community. The following major themes summarize the lessons learned from these sessions:

- Law and Policy:
  - The Canadian Human Rights Act of 1977 extended equal protections to individuals who had historically been victims of discrimination based on sex, race, ethnicity, disability, etc. The Act established the Canadian Human Rights Commission to investigate cases of discrimination and the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal to judge discrimination cases.
  - The consequences of the 1989 Tribunal decision were that first, the CAF, as an employer, would be charged with removing barriers to service of designated minorities. In practice, this requirement meant that any standard the CAF established would be subject to the "Meiorin test":
    - That the employer adopted the particular standard in an honest and good faith belief that it was necessary to the fulfilment of that legitimate work-related purpose;

- That the standard was reasonably necessary to the accomplishment of that legitimate work-related purpose. To show that the standard is reasonably necessary, it must be demonstrated that it is impossible to accommodate individual employees sharing the characteristics of the claimant without imposing undue hardship upon the employer. (Drawn directly from Supreme Court of Canada 1999 case: *British Columbia Public Service Employees' Relations Commission v. British Columbia Government Service Employees Union*)
  - The second is the Universality of Service principle, which states that "...CF members are liable to perform general military duties and common defense and security duties, not just the duties of their military occupation or occupational specification. This may include, but is not limited to, the requirement to be physically fit, employable and deployable for general operational duties." In practice, the universality principle drove the CAF to a single, cross-environment (i.e. Land, Sea, and Air) physical standard.
- Physical Standards: The mandate of the Universality of Service principle drove the development of minimum acceptable operational (not physical) fitness levels that would be common across the Army, Navy, and Air Force. The associated performance requirements:
  - Equate to very basic tasks and focus on humanitarian assistance missions as much as on direct ground combat, due to the mission and employment of the CAF domestically and abroad.
  - Are common to all environments. As a result, there are no specific physical requirements for the CAF Land Forces. Only a very narrow set of occupational specialties (e.g. Special Operations Forces assaulter, combat diver) had higher physical standards. Specifically, general purpose ground combat arms land force occupations (e.g. infantry, armor, artillery, combat engineers) did not. Canadian soldiers repeatedly pointed to low physical standards as a significant problem. Most commanders and soldiers agreed that introducing occupation-specific, operationally-relevant combat arms standards would be very helpful to both keep soldiers fit and to demonstrate that women (should they

meet the standard) could operate on an equal footing with men.

- Overall numbers of female ground combat arms soldiers remain very low. When combined with the imperatives of the Human Rights Act, the standards-related impact of the Universality Principle, and the fact that integration in Canada is well into its third decade, the low numbers suggest that factors other than standards and military cultural resistance are at play.

	Officers	Enlisted
Infantry	2%	0.40%
Artillery	6.80%	5.60%
Armor	4.30%	2.90%
Engineer	7%	0.40%

- Leadership  
Women have

Positions:  
se as

company commanders in Afghanistan. [redacted]  
 [redacted] (infan any comm [redacted] in  
 010). [redacted] served as  
 commanding officer (c [redacted] Task Force Kandahar  
 Engineer Regiment (2009-2010).

- Time, Culture, Challenges, and Measures of Success:
  - o CAF integration began in the late 1980's and was deemed complete by the late 1990's. Comparatively speaking, the CAF integrated all aspects of their military services concurrently, over a short period of time. Conversely, U.S. Defense Department integrated incrementally over a long period of time. DoD began meaningful gender integration in 1972 (specifically opening logistics and military police in the USMC) and, assuming that there are no exceptions to the January 2013 policy, will be completely integrated by 2016.
  - o Cultural change requires time, sometimes generations. During each of the focus groups, Canadian soldiers (male and female alike) emphasized that cultural progress remains a work in progress. While the majority of CAF officers and soldiers accept female soldiers as equals (many stated that they do not even think in terms of

gender), several female Service Members stated that they still felt the need to prove themselves in each new unit. Further, several female soldiers believed that their male peers still viewed and judged them as females first - a fact highlighted with each female in the unit. If a female succeeded, then that female was judged as equal. However, if a female proved not up to the task, the male soldiers judged her more harshly than an equivalent male not up to the task. This harsher sentiment carried over into a negative pre-judgment of female new-joins until such time as they proved themselves individually equal to the task.

- o Finally, several female soldiers stated that they had to struggle to be treated as soldiers. In their views, gender-based accommodations (e.g. separate billeting, separate hygiene accommodations, task-shifting, etc.) in field training and deployed environments were unnecessary cultural vestiges that impaired operational effectiveness and limited successful integration.
- o While the CAF have made great strides in integration, the total numbers and percentage of Canadian female general officers remain low (4 general officers; 4.35%). Further, although the CAF have taken progressive measures to eliminate sexual harassment and assault, these problems persist as evidenced by an on-going national review of this issue within the CAF.
- o CAF officers and soldiers universally agreed that numerical goals and critical mass objectives were misguided and not useful measures of integration success. From the CAF perspective, successful integration means that any Canadian - male or female - who qualifies for a position in the CAF can compete for selection, training, promotion, and retention in that position based on his or her talents and hard work.

#### Conclusions:

- Based on the visits to Canada, the MCFIO team can speak authoritatively about the legal and cultural influencers regarding women in the combat arms in Canadian Armed Forces.

#### Way Ahead:

- MCFIO plans to conduct visit to Australia to better understand their approach to integration and to establishing physical standards and assessment.