



Artillery Reserve Units

Importance, Issues, Future

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The Historical Footprints of the Reservists

Our history has revealed that Militia units played an important role in the War of 1812, as well as during most wars in which Canada has participated. These units have existed in British North America and post-Confederation Canada for most of its history. They were formed from able-bodied men locally recruited to defend against invasion or rebellion in support of British Regular Forces. Units were formed on a county basis and unit officers were chosen from the local elite¹. The battle of Crysler's Farm is only one example among many others. Adjutant James Prendergast was a member of the Corps of Canadian *Voltigeurs*, a French-Canadian regiment incorporated into the British army. He was active in the Battle on November 11, 1813, when an outnumbered British force, together with the Canadian *Voltigeurs* militia and Mohawk warriors, drove off an American army twice their size². During this period, the British forces were not only engaged in war with the Americans but also against the French forces of Napoleon. Therefore, limited forces were available to help in defending Lower and Upper Canada. However, they were able to win and to repel the invader due to the support and strength from the many volunteers and people from the first nation.

The Canadian Artillery reserve unit has played a particularly significant role in our history that is worth acknowledging. For instance, this can be illustrated by the history of 7th Toronto Regiment. The 7th Toronto Regiment is a reserve unit and descendant of the Volunteer Incorporated Artillery Company created in 1813 under the command of Captain Alexander Cameron. Later renamed the Toronto 1st Artillery Company, the unit ended the Mackenzie rebellion in Upper Canada, December 5, 1837, when Major T. Carfrae, then company commander, ordered the firing of several cannonballs in the roof of Montgomery's Tavern³.

In general, Reservists are people from the community who want more than what their civilian lives provides them with. People have numerous and diverse reasons for

¹<http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/Pages/confederation-1914.aspx>

² <http://www.1812.gc.ca/>

³ <http://www.army-armee.forces.gc.ca/en/7-toronto-regiment/index.page?>

joining the Reserve Force. Some search adventure, or a chance to serve others. Others seek a challenge, or even a second income. However, they all share one common attribute. They possess various skills that are not necessarily developed in the Regular Force. These various sets of skills allow them to provide depth, breadth and expertise to our army. This is useful in missions or in operations where one's ability to adapt to his environment is critical, or when there is a unique need for a special set of skills that may not have been developed, or even thought of, during military training. Throughout this essay, we will discuss the relationship between the regular and reserve forces and the various concerns that arise due to their differences. As Susan Del Gatto⁴ said "If you choose to not deal with an issue, then you give up your right of control over the issue and it will select the path of least resistance." Therefore, we will also discuss alternatives in order to cope with the deficiencies of the training system. This discussion will also give us a glimpse of what the future may hold for Artillery Reservists and their place amongst the artillery branch of the Canadian Armed Forces.

The Royal Canadian Artillery is the artillery branch of the Canadian forces. It encompasses the regular and reserve forces. The regular force part of this branch of the land force is often known as the Royal Canadian Horse Artillery. Their assigned mandates are mostly air defense, air space coordination, and fire support to expeditionary forces. While the reserve units focus mainly training individual and up-to Battery level reinforcements.⁵ Although there are many similarities between the preparation and training of the artillery forces, it is worthwhile to examine the differences between the reservists and their comrades from the regular force.

Difference Between Reservists and Regular Force Members

As aforementioned, there is a difference in mandates assigned to the artillery reserve force compared to the regular force, mainly in the level of preparedness and reaction time. While the regular force has an extended mandate, the reserve units are

⁴ Susan J. Del Gatto, *Creating Balance in a world of stress: Six key habits to avoid in order to reduce stress*, 102

⁵ Field Artillery Doctrine: *B-GL-371-001-FP-001*

mainly field artillery. It is a type of mobile artillery used to support the forces in the field during operations. In general, the weapon systems used are specialized for mobility, tactical proficiency, and going from short to extremely long target engagement.⁶ Within the Canadian field artillery, there is a small but quite important difference between both entities, Regular and Reserve components. In fact, the royal Canadian artillery uses three firing platforms. It includes the C3 105mm Howitzer, an updated version of the C1 105mm Howitzer. Mostly used for training purposes by the reserve units, it has the ability to fire all types of NATO 105 rounds, but is not considered an operational gun that could be deployed to support expeditionary forces. Another platform is the mortar. Previously used by the infantry units, the Royal Canadian Artillery now uses it to defend their gun position and as fire support when needed. The last firing platform used is the M777 Howitzer. It is the most used platform in operation and is the primary weapon system of the artillery. The M777 provides close and deep fire support without sacrificing range, stability, accuracy or durability. It is equipped with a highly advanced Digital Gun Management System which enables the crew to destroy targets in a very precise manner at all range distances⁷. This is a weapon that the Royal Canadian Artillery is proud of. However, only a small number of reservists are qualified on the M777 Howitzer because it is usually not part of the reservist unit's training program. Due to the disparity between reserve and regular force training, various problems may arise.

Problems that face the Royal Canadian Artillery

This essay contest is a great opportunity to uncover issues that exist within the reserve units of the Royal Regiment of Canadian Artillery. It will help to discuss ideas in order to improve not only the reserve units but also the Royal Regiment of Canadian Artillery as a whole.

Although we have a limited budget compared to our peers from USA and England, this has not stopped us from providing one of the best, most efficient trainings

⁶ <http://www.army-armee.forces.gc.ca/en/38-cbg-atg/index.page>

⁷ <http://www.army-armee.forces.gc.ca/en/weapons>

to our soldiers. This proves that although budget is important, one's will, skills, and dedication can overcome the obstacles of producing a strong artillery force. Presently, the Canadian Artillery is going through an important transition. Things are changing. Our mission in Afghanistan is nearing completion and it is time to adjust and prepare for future deployments.

A major issue that we are facing now is the fact that the C3 is becoming obsolete and at the end of its useful life, and an alternative has to be found in the near future to replace it. Otherwise our reserves will not be able to train and in consequence, the reserve component will not be able to accomplish its mission, reinforcing Regular forces units during operational deployment, such as it has been done in Afghanistan. More importantly, only few reservists are qualified on the M777 Howitzer, our main firing system. How is it useful to train a reservist on guns that they are not going to use on the battlefield? It raises the question of the future role of the reserve unit within the Royal Canadian Artillery. This is really important to consider once we realize that one fifth of our soldiers deployed in Afghanistan were reservists. An emphasis should be made on the training of the reservists. In fact, I strongly believe that the future of the artillery relies on it. The mission of the reserves force is to provide individual and collective support to the regular force both nationally and internationally. In other words, its role is to augment, sustain and support deployed forces when needed. However, considering the current of the C-3 howitzers, I am skeptical on the readiness of our units to achieve this mission. We should ask ourselves how many reserve units are qualified on all different firing platforms used in artillery by the Canadian forces. Surprisingly, none of these units can pretend to be fully qualified.

Moreover, each reservist should be seen as a potential candidate for a position in the regular force, hence the necessity to have adequate training. Fortunately, in artillery we have the chance to have a very similar training as the regular force. However, the only major difference, and a very important one, is that only few reservists get the chance to be qualified on the M777 Howitzer, our artillery's primary firing system. By addressing this issue, we will make a huge step forward in smoothing the transition from reserve to regular force. Working back up to standard for the reservists will no longer be necessary

or at least will be much easier. In fact, preparation delays and level of preparedness, which reserves lack, could be shortened

In addition, reservists receive only 80 percent of what a regular force earns. Therefore we could see this as an opportunity to kill two birds with one stone. We are training a complete soldier at a lower cost. Furthermore, a budget is allocated to each reserve unit. It includes several training exercises, also known as Primary Training Audience (PTA). The purpose of these exercises is to put soldiers under a series of stressful situations, in which they will be able to put into practice the skills they have learned throughout their training and military career. Therefore they will be able to maintain their skills and be operational when required. It would make more sense for the reserve units to train on the M777 rather than the soon-to-be replaced C3.

We are aware of our relatively small defense budget, but maintaining a higher readiness level for most of our reserve force personnel, should be one of our priorities. It could only be of benefit to the Royal Canadian Artillery. As difficult as you might think on making this possible, it could start by simple project such as the one initiated by the 2nd Field Regiment under the command of Lcol Richard Garon.

2nd Field Regiment's initiative

Lcol Garon's vision and primary goal in the next years is to turn his regiment into the first reserve unit qualified on all firing platforms. His main focus will be on the non-commissioned members as they are the ones on the guns. His biggest challenge is not the availability of the M777 as such but mostly on the accessibility of the rounds. Even if the theoretical training has been completed, the soldiers must fire the M777 at least once to be considered qualified. Right now he is leaving no stone unturned to achieve his goal. I believe this noble objective should be shared by all the artillery reserve units across Canada and supported by the Royal Canadian Artillery. As Dr. Richard Weitz⁸ said "if

⁸ Senior Fellow with the Hudson Institute and author of *The Reserve Policies of Nations: A Comparative Analysis* (2007)

we are going to use the reservists as an operational force, we need to treat them as if they were close to active duty”. This should commence by the uniformity of the training.

Since the C-3 will have to be replaced soon, it would make sense to train on the M-777 and have 155 mm ammunition available to Reserve force units, especially if a training weapon system replacement cannot be acquired due to budget restriction.

Conclusion:

I am only a simple reserve officer who loves his country and shares the passion of artillery with his comrades. I would like to take advantage of this rare opportunity to reach a large audience and to attract attention towards the threat that the artillery force is facing. It takes years to train a good soldier, therefore, a decision must be made and action must be taken, before we lose what we took years to build. Investing in the reserve force will not be in vain. Instead, it will have a dual impact. Firstly, it will make our army as a whole stronger and ready for combat. Secondly, it will impact the public views of the Canadian Forces. There is a moral impact on the population because civilians can relate more easily to a member of the reserve force compared to a member of the regular force. Also, reservists are considered first as a civilian, then as a soldier. These factors will increase the support of the Canadian population for the Canadian Forces. The Canadian Military is experiencing a period of change, and the Artillery branch is no exception. Now is the time to create a strong foundation for our future soldiers and officers. The time has come to examine the areas in which we fall short, and to find solutions to issues that have been exposed.