

The Chronicle Herald

THE MILITARY AFFAIRS COLUMN BY TIM DUNNE

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Military police costly, redundant in this day and age



A military police officer blocks the entrance to HMC Dockyard Halifax. CFB Halifax's 71-member MP detachment (66 military and five civilian support staff) polices HMC Halifax, 12 Wing Shearwater and the area from Windsor to Cape Breton. - Tim Krochak

Police and the work they do are expensive.

Statistics Canada has estimated the operating expenses of policing across Canada at more than \$15 billion in fiscal year 2017-18. Canada's military police (MPs) are responsible for about one per cent of this total. This sounds insignificant but, in this case, it approaches \$150 million annually.

Is the Canadian public getting value for money? Is there a better way of doing business?

Cpl. Stuart Langridge



Prior to his profound personal turmoil, Cpl. Stuart Langridge (pictured, right) attracted praise from his supervisors and superiors for his work-related performance. - Postmedia file

The military police branch might have hit bottom in its response to 28-year-old Cpl. Stuart Langridge's suicide at CFB Edmonton on March 15, 2008.

Prior to ending his profound personal turmoil that followed deployments to Bosnia-Herzegovina and Afghanistan, this young soldier's work-related performance attracted praise from his supervisors and superiors.

In his personal note to his mother, he told her he wished to escape his pain and wanted a small family funeral.

Military police entered his room and seized anything and everything they saw as "evidence," including the note to his mom. She was unaware of his wishes for more than a year following his passing.

The Canadian Forces National Investigation Service (CFNIS), the military police investigatory arm, opened three separate investigations into Langridge's situation. The first looked into the circumstances of his death. It was not immediately apparent that his passing was as a result of suicide until determined by the medical examiner. The second delved into the decision that his former common-law partner manage his funeral and estate. The third determined whether efforts to provide him effective medical care were negligent.

Their efforts were inadequate, and despite their profound pain over their son's loss, Cpl. Langridge's mother and stepfather, Sheila and Shaun Fynes, filed a complaint with the Military Police Complaints Commission (MPCC) in January 2011. The commission opened a two-year public interest hearing on March 27, 2012 into these investigations, and it laid open a significant number of flaws with military police procedures.

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) entered the public lexicon as we saw our troops and first responders exhibit their invisible wounds. We became aware of the disorder's debilitating effects. Many made strong efforts to deal with their malady, some with greater success than others. But sadly, this solitary affliction has numerous treatments but no known cure. It has stolen far too many of our young soldiers, recent veterans, first responders and people who encounter traumatic events.

Perhaps (and hopefully) arising from the Langridge tragedy, the MP branch has changed into a more professional organization that serves an ever-evolving Canadian society.

But one question remains unanswered: Does Canada need a second national police force in addition to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police?

MP presence in Halifax

CFB Halifax's 71-member MP detachment (66 military and five civilian support staff) polices HMC Halifax, 12 Wing Shearwater and the area from Windsor to Cape Breton. They are complemented by a detachment of the CFNIS.

MPs are responsive to the local military authorities, but responsible to the Ottawa-based Canadian Forces provost marshal, the military's police commissioner. Originally under the authority of the base commander, the MP chain of command transferred to the Military Police Group in 2011, currently commanded by Brig.-Gen. Simon Trudeau.

Operationally, the change eliminates local influence over investigations and inquiries and provides a nationwide standard of police services within the Defence Department. Local military authorities can present their observations and complaints to the provost marshal, but they have no authority to direct MP resources, personnel or operations for policing matters.

As with any police agency, there are shifts to cover the 24-hour cycle, with four regular shifts to respond 24-7, and a "super shift" when necessary. Duties include security sweeps, patrols, minor investigations and initial police actions on cases of sudden death, to name only a few

examples. Requirements for security, operations and deployments are in addition to local detachment requirements.

Formerly issued a weapon, handcuffs and a radio, they are now equipped with, and trained to use, pepper spray and naloxone, enabling them to address a larger spectrum of incidents. Tasers may be introduced in the future.

Any incident involving use of force by an MP is reported and investigated, as with any Canadian police service.

In-car cameras, in-vehicle mobile data terminals and multi-band encrypted radios allow MPs two-way communication with each other and with the Halifax Military Police Unit.

Today's military police are said to be far better trained than they were in the mid-1990s and more competent to deal with contemporary issues, like mental health concerns and opioid use. They react faster and have benefited from modern training provided by recognized police agencies and police training institutes.

But the question remains: with the RCMP as the national police agency, are MPs necessary?

Training and education



Canadian Forces Military Police Academy MP QL3 Graduation. - March 5, 2015 - Facebook/Canadian Forces Base Borden - Contributed

Since 1990, improved recruiting and training programs are said to yield better recruits. The Canadian Forces Military Police Academy (CFMPA), opened in October 2015, is a new and specially designed facility at CFB Borden, Ont., as an accredited police academy that provides reciprocal training opportunities with other police forces.

The results of a 2002 occupational analysis of the MP branch raised the bar of professional expectations and qualifications. One is the basic requirement to enrol as an MP recruit. Previously, applicants simply needed high school graduation. Prospective MPs must now complete a two-year Law and Security or Police Foundations program at a police school or community college at their own expense prior to applying for entry into the military police as regular force (full-time).

Military Police Assessment Centres screen candidates for specific competencies. Upon enrolment, they undergo basic military qualification at the Canadian Forces Recruit School, Farnham, Que., followed by military police training at the new academy in Borden, Ont.

Its annual operating budget is approximately \$825,000, plus pay and allowances of instructors, staff and students.

The new academy can accommodate 144 students per year but accept an additional 24 when necessary. Promoted to corporals on graduation of the MP branch's basic military qualification, they become the uniformed MPs and credentialed peace officers visible in and around military facilities.

The CFNIS, the MP branch's criminal investigatory branch, conducts investigations on criminal or sensitive matters, and examines all sudden deaths of service members, major accidents occurring on DND establishments and, since 2015, criminal and non-criminal sexual misconduct cases.

Additionally, it investigates criminal allegations and returns non-criminal files, such as cases of harassment, to local military police detachments.

The CFNIS Halifax detachment's staff consists of 20 qualified investigators. Two of them, on the "command team," examine offences against children, sudden death, fraud, significant theft, abuse within the cadet program and investigations of military police members suspected of having committed an offence.

However, sexual misconduct and drug investigations consume much of the CFNIS's attention. Each of the six regional detachments across Canada has a sexual offence response team, nicknamed SORT, and at least one member of the national drug enforcement team, NDET. While all CFNIS members are assigned investigations as circumstances require, these investigators are a general resource to all CFNIS detachment investigatory staff.

CFNIS members can take advantage of the Special Victims Capabilities Course (SVCC), offered in the U.S., to investigate traumatic situations such as sexual offences. Focusing on the victim is both more humane and more efficiently leads to a successful investigation. "I can see cases where people are very emotionally distraught relating the very worst incident of their lives," one NIS investigator told me.

"If I believe someone is in serious distress, I would feel an onus to ensure they're being examined and being assessed. The SVCC goes into great detail to being alert of the crisis the person may be experiencing."

MP representatives are quick to assert that the specialized training they receive from the 20 municipal, provincial, federal and foreign police training opportunities is among the best available and provides a comparable level of equivalency between the military police, CFNIS and any of Canada's police forces.

The costs of military police

The Defence Department operates its own incarceration network, comprising cells at Canadian Forces bases and the Canadian Forces Service Prison and Detention Barracks (CFSPDB) at CFB Edmonton, sarcastically dubbed “Club Ed.” The vice-chief of the defence staff, the military’s second-in-command, assigns responsibility for the operation, financing and equipping of the facility to the Canadian Forces Military Police Group.

Bill C-77 came into force last June and removed detention from the scale of punishments in tribunals for minor offences. However, until the bill’s provisions are fully implemented, the CFSPDB can continue to house detainees “sanctioned” by summary trial for a maximum of 30 days, despite the will of the federal government expressed through its legislation. It will remain the facility for service prisoners, sentenced by a military judge at a court martial for a significant breach of the Canadian military’s Code of Service Discipline or the civilian Criminal Code.

Service prisoners sentenced to “two years less a day” are incarcerated at the CFSPDB. If sentenced to longer terms, they move to a federal penitentiary as service convicts upon completion of two years of their sentences at CFSPDB.

CFSPDB detainees, prisoners and convicts have declined from 26 in 2015 to three in 2019, averaging 16 personnel per year. This costs the Canadian taxpayer slightly more than \$2 million per year, including staff salaries.

A quick change in incarceration practices to send service prisoners directly to federal penitentiaries would negate the requirement for the CFSPDB and its staff, saving the cost of the military prison and its staff for other departmental priorities.

Canadian statistics show that there is one police officer for every 500 people, but there is one MP for every 50 military members. They also conduct facility security checks, intrusion alarm responses and protection of critical equipment and infrastructure, requirements that can be met largely by the Canadian Corps of Commissionaires, augmented when necessary by military duty personnel.

What about the MPs’ additional security responsibilities in Canada and at Canadian embassies? All of these can be undertaken by Canadian army personnel, many of whom already have experience in these duties from previous deployments.

According to DND’s cost factors manual, personnel salaries and benefits of the 1,357 regular force military police amount to about \$140 million annually. The operation of the CF Service Prison and Detention Barracks and the CF Military Police Academy increase that cost by an estimated \$3 million.

Rethinking the 'military' in military police

In matters of policing, the RCMP do everything that MPs do, and more.

Historically, the RCMP served with the Canadian Army's wartime provost corps for investigations and more demanding police work while the military members of the provost corps were responsible for custody of prisoners of war, dealing with stragglers and vehicle management on roadways within the combat zone.

Today's RCMP are experienced in investigation and enforcement at national, provincial and municipal levels. Its membership of 18,500, compared to 1,300 regular force MPs, gives it a comparatively increased body of professional knowledge and experience. On the federal level, they are responsible to Attorney General David Lametti, and at the provincial level to Lametti's provincial counterparts. (Nova Scotia's minister of justice and attorney general is Mark Furey.)

With proven expertise and experience in all aspects of nationwide police work, the RCMP provides community policing in regions of Canada where there are no municipal police. It conducts investigations into activities involving the criminal, forensic, narcotics and controlled substances and unexpected-deaths, as well as provincial legislation and, sometimes, municipal bylaws. The RCMP have also deployed on international peacekeeping missions, peace enforcement and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations.

In matters of policing, the RCMP do everything that MPs do, and more. One of the very few exceptions is that the MPs operate the Canadian Forces Service Prison and Detention Barracks. In relation to "service prisoners," those who have been sentenced at a court martial to two years or more, the civilian equivalent is accomplished by the Canadian Corrections Services.

Service prisoners' sentences frequently include dismissal from the Canadian Armed Forces.

Detainees sentenced up to 30 days at a summary trial are in a different situation, but that category will end as soon as DND's legal department, the Judge Advocate General, fully implements the provisions of Bill C-77, replacing summary trials with summary hearings and eliminating detention as a summary punishment.

Replacing the military police with the RCMP for investigations and assigning commissionaires for routine facility security would negate the need for the Canadian Forces Military Police Academy. This could result in savings of \$2.5 million, according to budgeting and business plans obtained under access to information.

The RCMP has been conducting their initial training at the force's Depot at Regina, Sask., since 1885.

Legislative changes would be necessary to permit the RCMP's "military detachments" to enforce the National Defence Act as well as the Criminal Code and other federal and provincial laws and municipal bylaws.

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act (1985) notes that, "There shall continue to be a police force for Canada, which shall consist of officers and other members and be known as the Royal Canadian Mounted Police The Force may be employed in such places within or outside Canada as the Governor in Council prescribes."

Not only can the RCMP deploy, they have a long and honoured legacy of international service, including the Boer War and both world wars. Since 1989, some 4,000 RCMP and Canadian civilian police officers have served in over 33 countries, including Sudan, Kosovo, Haiti and Afghanistan.

The RCMP serve throughout Canada and its members collectively bring a level of experience that includes community-based policing, law enforcement in large and small communities, criminal investigations, VIP security, facility and critical infrastructure security.

Replacing the military police with the RCMP serving under the authority of the provost marshal could simply be mandated by legislative changes. However, it could provide increased capacity and a broader range of experience. It may also alleviate some infrastructure costs and some of the approximately \$140 million in annual personnel salaries.

While Canadians recognize Canada's armed services as an elite military organization, it is a small military with large responsibilities and even larger public expectations for peacekeeping operations, international deployments, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, assistance to law enforcement agencies and assistance in domestic emergencies.

The RCMP Act identifies the RCMP as Canada's national police force. Its jurisdiction includes the federal government with its more than 430 departments, agencies and sub-agencies, enforcement of federal legislation and contract policing for communities without their own municipal forces.

Expanding their responsibilities to include the Canadian Armed Forces would:

1. **provide the Canadian military with the same level, quality and spectrum of police services as the rest of Canada and Canada's public institutions;**
2. **give the Canadian military equal access to the resources and policing infrastructure of the RCMP;**
3. **provide a seamless process for all criminal investigations, where the MPs are unable to investigate murder, manslaughter and child abduction;**
4. **reduce the bureaucracy and support staff currently associated with the MP branch.**

This would not be unique among allied nations. France's Gendarmerie nationale, Italy's Carabinieri, The Netherlands' Marechaussee, Spain's Guardia Civil, Portugal's Guarda Nacional Republicana and Turkey's Gendarmerie are police agencies with both military and civil responsibilities.

Is there really a need for a second national policing agency that is concerned with only one department of the federal government?

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