

Rethinking the Role of Military Police

Instead of the new age of peace that had been so eagerly anticipated at the end of the Cold war, new conflicts arose and Canadians began to see military personnel return, some as fallen, to travel along Ontario's *Highway of Heroes*, others broken, with injuries so severe that their lives were profoundly altered. Some were invisible wounds, and our society gradually became aware of the debilitating effects of post traumatic stress disorder. Many of those affected made concerted efforts to deal with their malady, some with greater success than others.

Regrettably, some of the afflicted were unable to reach out to accept help, and some took their own lives in an effort to escape the demons arising from the hellish sights, sounds and experiences of unconventional modern warfare.

What does this have to do with the role of the Military Police, you might ask. Well, the case of Corporal Stuart Langridge highlights a level of bungling by Military Police that requires an urgent rethink of the role of that entire organization.

Cpl Langridge, a 28 year-old soldier with the famed Lord Strathcona Horse, was one of those battling invisible demons after a number of praiseworthy deployments. He had deployed to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia from October 2002 to April 2003, and to Afghanistan from August 2004 to February 2005, earning recognition from his superiors who described Langridge as a "dedicated, loyal and motivated" soldier, and a "definite asset to the CF". He was on the promotion track, and then his life began to change, in the most profound ways. Military Police reports describe a descent into the maelstrom of drug and alcohol abuse, hospitalization and, ultimately, tragic self-destruction. His family claims the report paints an unfair picture, as Langridge continued to work when not in the hospital, and "did not run around drunk or stoned."

Cpl Langridge hanged himself at CFB Edmonton on 15 March 2008 – tragically ending the personal turbulence that followed his last return to Canada. In a suicide note to his mother, he wrote of the need to escape his pain, and confided his wish for a small family funeral.

Immediately, the Military Police swooped in with their legendary zealous intensity and confiscated anything and everything they saw as "evidence", including the note to his Mom. Through either negligence or overreaction, investigators kept the letter and its content from her for more than a year, denying her any knowledge of her son's dying wish to have an intimate family funeral. The family now lives with the eternal regret of agreeing to an unwanted military funeral.

The CF National Investigation Service (NIS), the investigatory arm of the Military Police, opened three separate investigations into Langridge's passing. The first was into the circumstances of his death; the second, into the decision to allow his former common law partner to manage his funeral and estate, though they were separated; and the third, into whether efforts to provide effective medical care were negligent.

Corporal Langridge's mother and step-father, Sheila and Shaun Fynes, filed an official complaint with the Military Police Complaints Commission (MPCC) in January 2011, and a Public Interest Hearing began in March 2012 into the three NIS investigations.

The MPCC levelled an accusing finger at the Military Police. "The Commission found significant deficiencies in the investigations conducted by the Canadian Forces National Investigation Service and unac-

ceptable errors in the way the Military Police interacted with the Fynes, particularly in the mishandling of Cpl Langridge's suicide note," said Glenn Stannard, Chair of the Military Police Complaints Commission, in its March 2015 news release.

The news release went on to note that the Commission made "specific recommendations to deal with these deficiencies but the Military Police has either rejected or failed to respond to all but a few. It has directly rejected recommendations based on the Commission's assessment that the Military Police does not have adequate experience in Sudden Death investigations to justify having MP members acting as lead investigators."

The MPCC report included a litany of the many errors and failures of the National Investigation Service that call into question its investigative competence. The Commission made 39 findings and 46 recommendations, including:

- Active supervision of CFNIS investigations;
- More clarity on the release of suicide notes from the scene of a suicide or discovered during a "sudden death investigation";
- Improved procedures and policies to ensure families receive "meaningful and substantive information" about the results of the investigation that answer the families' questions.
- Sudden death investigations should be done by experienced federal, provincial or municipal police investigators;
- MP investigators should seek temporary placements with civilian police forces to improve their skills through increased field experience;
- Property seized as part of an investigation should be immediately returned to families when evidentiary needs are over.

In an unprecedented action, Canadian Forces Provost Marshal Colonel Rob Delaney initially blocked the Commission from citing, attaching or publicly releasing the Notice of Action with the final report, but public attention caused that decision to be overturned when the media got wind of it.

Following release of the MPCC report, Delaney acknowledged the relative inexperience within the NIS investigations, particularly those involving sudden death. "Since 2008, however," Delaney elaborated, "the CFNIS has investigated over 175 sudden deaths [natural causes, accidents, suicides, and combat related] and has gained considerable experience in this regard."

Does the Canadian Armed Forces Need Military Police for investigations?

As instructive as Cpl Langridge's case study may be, it is one of very few MP investigations that have come to public attention.

It is difficult to establish a track record for the performance of the CF Military Police branch and its subsidiary, the CF National Investigation Service. People who are accused of wrongdoing and investigated but not charged are frequently unwilling to discuss their circumstances in public for a variety of understandable reasons, perhaps from simple embarrassment to the wish to put these traumatic experiences behind them. The Military Police Complaints Commission investigate only matters that are brought to their attention, and only since its establishment in 1999.

At first blush, the arrests and prosecutions by the Ontario Provincial Police of Colonel Russell Williams in 2009 and Navy Lieutenant Jeffrey Delisle by the RCMP in 2012 strongly suggests an investigative branch of the Military Police is completely unnecessary.

The Canadian military is not particularly large, nor is it crime-ridden – the vast majority are selfless, patriotic and honest. So, why is there a need for more than 1300 Military Police, which equates to one MP for about every 52 regular force military members, while the Canadian average is one police officer for every 500 people?

During the Second World War, there was one Canadian Provost Corps (CPC), army military police, for every 100 soldiers, and following the war the ratio doubled to one Provost for every 200 soldiers.

The Military Police operates two major facilities: its training institute at the Canadian Forces Military Police Academy in CFB Borden; and the Canadian Forces Service Prison and Detention Barracks at CFB Edmonton – known sarcastically as “Club Ed”.

Until the Judge Advocate General's June 2015 announcement that incarceration may finally be removed from the scale of punishments for summary trials, the CF Service Prison and Detention Barracks could house detainees for a maximum of 30 days. However, it remains the facility for service prisoners to a maximum of “two years less a day”.

Through an access to information request, *FrontLine* was advised that over the



PHOTO: CPL ANGELA ABBEY, CFSTG IMAGERY, CFB BORDEN

Master Corporal Daniel Blais, a Canadian Forces Military Police Officer from CFB Borden, demonstrates how to conduct a vehicle search during the training of the Base Auxiliary Security Force (BASF). Other training included C-7 handling, arrest, handling of arrested persons, road blocks, and manning of entrance points and searching for destructive devices.

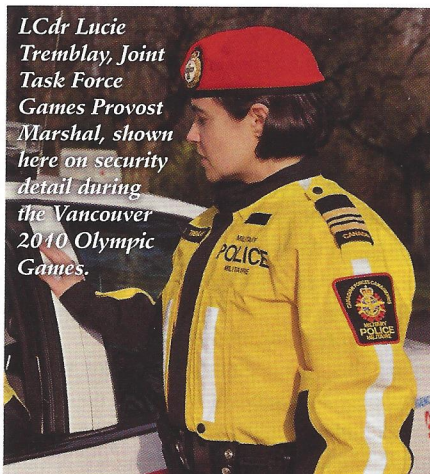


PHOTO: SGT PAZ QUILLÉ, CF COMBAT CAMERA

LCdr Lucie Tremblay, Joint Task Force Games Provost Marshal, shown here on security detail during the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Games.

six-year period from 2009 to 2014, the average number of detainees at the Service Prison and Detention Barracks was 30 per year, with an average sentence of 33 days per year. During the same period, there was an average of 3 prisoners per year, with an average sentence of 156 days. This costs the Canadian taxpayer slightly more than \$2 million per year.

Responses to several other access to information requests and CF Military Police Academy business plans show anticipated training and staff and equipment expenses for the fiscal year 2015-16 are \$835,913 for regular force training; \$1,146,283 for summer reserve training; and \$368,615 for support staff and training materials, for a total of \$2,350,811.

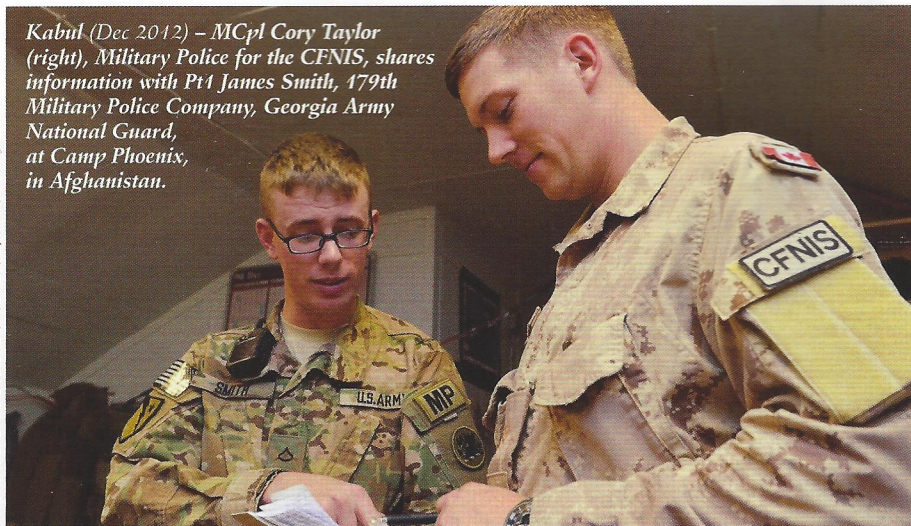
According to the 2014-2015 edition of DND's Cost Factors Manual, the Military

Police payroll costs Canadian taxpayers \$88.3 million, and their civilian support staff cost an additional \$3.2 million. There are other costs to the public purse associated with the Canadian military's security organization, including federal government contributions to the Employee Benefit Plans, which include “the sum of all government contributions for the Canadian Armed Forces Superannuation Act (CFSA), the Canada Pension Plan (CPP), Employment Insurance (EI) and the Supplementary Death Benefit (SDB). The sum of these values is estimated by multiplying all the Standard Object 01 Personnel expenditures (Pay and Allowances) for a particular pay group by 20%.”

This boosts the annual military and civilian personnel related costs for the Military Police to almost \$110 million. Infrastructure, operations and training are additional. In fact, the CF Military Police Academy is nearing completion of a \$54 million reconstruction program.

Debate among Canadian defence and security specialists suggests Canada should look at contracting or seconding the RCMP to do all police investigations within the defence department. This would mark a return of the RCMP and the Canadian Military Police to their joint wartime role when the Canadian Army's military police were called the Canadian Provost Corps. CPC responsibilities were restricted to custody of prisoners of war, dealing with stragglers, and vehicle management on roadways within the combat zone.

Kabul (Dec 2012) – MCpl Cory Taylor (right), Military Police for the CFNIS, shares information with Pt1 James Smith, 179th Military Police Company, Georgia Army National Guard, at Camp Phoenix, in Afghanistan.



Heavier, investigative police work was normally done by RCMP who were seconded or transferred to the Canadian Army.

The RCMP is Canada's national police force with proven expertise and experience in all aspects of police work. This includes investigations into activities involving the criminal, forensic, narcotics and controlled substances and unexpected death investigations, as well as provincial legislation and, sometimes, municipal bylaws.

Contracting or seconding the RCMP for investigations would negate the need for the Canadian Forces Military Police Academy, as the RCMP receive their initial training in Saskatchewan at the force's Depot in Regina, allowing savings of \$2,538,502, according to budgeting and business plans obtained under access to information.

If the Canadian Forces were to change its incarceration practices and use federal penitentiaries for serious criminal infrac-

tions and dispense with detention for minor offenses, the Canadian Forces Service Prison and Detention Barracks could close, with a further \$2 million in savings.

The conversion of regular force Military Police to reserve status, to be activated only in overseas deployments and in wartime for their traditional responsibilities (custody of prisoners of war; control of refugees and stragglers), as well as movement control of military vehicles near and on the battlefield, would provide even more savings. The average reservist is employed for 37½ days per year at the daily pay rate for his/her rank.

If the MP organization were simply converted to reserve status, with no change in personnel statistics and using the figures in DND's Cost Factors Manual, the annual cost for Military Police, including total payroll, employee benefits and pay in lieu of leave, would be approximately \$10.1 million. The Defence department would save

approximately \$100 million per year, plus the \$4.5 million from closing the CF Military Police Academy and the CF Service Prison and Detention Barracks.

Some funds from these savings will be passed on to the RCMP and the Canadian Corps of Commissionaires in compensation for a moderate expansion of their responsibilities.

The possibility of significant savings and improved policing that could come from converting the Military Police to a reserve organization, expanding the RCMP to police the personnel, activities and operations in the Canadian Forces, and closing redundant infrastructure deserves serious consideration. However, the study of the potential savings and operational impact should not be conducted by an internal DND or federal government agency as internal studies frequently have a track record of reinforcing the status quo.

Such a study should instead be handed to a team of knowledgeable and experienced people who are recognized authorities in Canadian defence and security affairs, military law and military policing. This team must exclude those who harbour internalized biases, vested interests, and what I would describe as an almost primal drive to preserve the legacy that caused the inappropriate, insensitive and inexplicable actions that followed the passing of Cpl Stuart Langridge.

Many of the women and men of our armed services find themselves on deployments in far-away lands in environments that are uncomfortable and lack everyday amenities that Canadians take for granted. Frequently, their duties place them in harm's way in defence of Canada and Canada's values. Some have died on the battlefields of Afghanistan and Iraq, and others return to their homes and families with life-altering injuries, many of which are not visible to the onlooker.

Our sailors, soldiers, air force personnel and civilian support staff deserve better than a Military Police organization that has repeatedly demonstrated unprofessional conduct, incompetence and pettiness in its operations and investigations. **FLD**

Tim Dunne is FrontLine's Atlantic Canada correspondent. In his 37 years as a member of the Canadian Armed Forces, he served in Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina, Croatia, Egypt, Israel, Italy, Kosovo, former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia, North Africa, and Turkey.



May 2015 – Cpl Jonathan Parent, a Military Police officer from the 5 Military Police platoon, directs a convoy during Exercise MAPLE RESOLVE 1501 at Garrison Wainwright.