



# Centre for International and Defence Policy (CIDP)

JULY 2021

SPECIAL POLICY REPORT

## CHANGING THE CANADIAN ARMED FORCES' CULTURE THROUGH TRAINING

*Hannah Hollander, Stéphanie von Hlatky, Bibora Imre-Millei, Queen's University*

While Operation HONOUR raised awareness about sexual misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF), it was unsuccessful in bringing about the kind of culture change that is required to eradicate sexual misconduct in the CAF. It also missed an opportunity to adopt an inclusive and intersectional lens when tackling sexual misconduct, to account for rank, race, age, element, trade, gender, and sexual identity, etc.

The follow-on to Operation HONOUR should leverage the current training system, as it provides career-long entry points for culture change. The CAF prepares for operations through training, exercises, and certifications. Soldiers, sailors, and aviators practice until the training becomes instinctive so that even in difficult, complex environments, with high stress levels and sleep deprivation, they will perform in a way that is consistent with their training. Their “actions-on” become muscle memory. CAF members are also conditioned to learn through this process, which includes theoretical lessons, repeated practice, and finally thorough evaluation with pass-fail criteria.

The way the CAF implemented Operation HONOUR training was significantly different from how it trains for “regular” operations. A majority of the Operation HONOUR training was conducted through unit-level briefings and DND online courses. While these briefings and courses contained valuable information, they did not facilitate engagement and were not conducive to retention of the material, nor how to

equip members to respond to ethical dilemmas, in a variety of (high stress) scenarios. CAF members must learn, practice, and be tested on their responses to ethical dilemmas to prepare them to handle these situations even when managing stressors and subject to impaired decision-making (sleep deprivation, operational fatigue, PTSD, or being under the influence of alcohol or cannabis).

The current challenge for the CAF is to bring about change by developing respectful, empathetic, and inclusive servicemembers, a goal that can only go so far with a top-down approach. To lead transformation from the ground up, the CAF should leverage its current training system to instill core competencies and skills, such as emotional intelligence and empathy. Attitudes, character, and the climate leaders set should be developed, valued, and assessed more systematically.

### **Recommendations:**

We recommend that the CAF implement training for a range of ethical issues, including preventing and responding to sexual misconduct, at all phases of training and at all career levels. We propose this be done by injecting ethical dilemma training scenarios into regular training lessons and assessments (see example at the bottom of p. 2). This training could be implemented in three phases:



SCHOOL OF  
POLICY STUDIES



Centre for International and Defence Policy  
Robert Sutherland Hall, Suite 403  
(613) 533-2381 | cidp@queensu.ca



# Centre for International and Defence Policy (CIDP)

JULY 2021

SPECIAL POLICY REPORT

1. **In class lessons:** CAF members, especially those that are new to the Forces, must first be introduced to the concepts of ethical leadership, understand the CAF's policies on sexual misconduct, racism, and other unethical behaviour, and be told that they will be assessed on how they handle these issues.
2. **Practice:** Members need to have opportunities to practice responding to ethical dilemmas alongside other duty requirements to ensure that they have room to make mistakes and receive guidance on how they can and should respond differently in the future.
3. **Assessment:** Members should undergo a final evaluation in which their response to the ethical dilemma is one of the sections of the larger rubric for the overall training assessment. The weighting and pass-fail nature of this assessment could vary by course/training phase.
  - a. Potential Criteria for Assessment
    - i. Empathetic, and competent support was given to the complainant
    - ii. Proper reporting procedures were followed
    - iii. Solutions considered discretion and healthy team dynamics
  - b. Guiding questions for After Action Report (AAR) conversations<sup>1</sup>
    - i. What did you do to foster a sense of safety and belonging in your team?
      - ii. What actions did you take to include everyone when you were mining for the best ideas?
      - iii. How did you resolve conflict in the team?
      - iv. Who displayed moral courage today and what did that look like?
      - v. Define exemplary leadership based on the health of the team after the mission is successfully accomplished.

This approach to training prioritizes attitudinal and affective competencies. If new guidance is not clearly linked to core competencies and skills that will empower CAF members to be agents of change, then we can expect more uneven implementation and suboptimal outcomes.

### **Example: BMOQ Ethical Dilemma & Sexual Misconduct Training**

You are the Section Commander and have just finished giving orders. Before conducting rehearsals, one of your section members asks to speak to you on the side and says that their fire team partner (FTP) has repeatedly made unwanted advances including remarks about their body, touching their leg and shoulders, and suggested that the two should go for drinks when they return from the field. The section member has tried asking their FTP to stop and is uncomfortable working with their FTP but does not want to submit a formal complaint at the time. While you must still carry out your section's mission soon, you now also have to respond to this issue. What are your required responses to the situation, and how will you handle this issue amongst your team?

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/two-weeks-since-one-hardest-chapters-my-life-made-schamuhn-cd-cec/>