



The Challenge of the Seamless Force

The Role of Informal Networks in the Battlespace

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Overview

- Background
- The research program
- The role of informal networks
- Summary and implications
- Discussion



Background

- The ‘Seamless Force’
- The aim of the research project
- Issues become integral to concept development and thereby ADF/ADO structures, training, education initiatives



The research program

- Third deliverable of the project
- 82 personnel returned from Middle East
- Stratified across ranks, Services, gender

Sample

Summary PivotTable (completed interviews)

Count of Gender	Servic ▼		Gend ▼		Army Total	Navy		Navy Total	RAAF		RAAF Total	Civ		Civ Total	Total
	Army	F	M	F		M	F		M	F					
Rank equiv. ▼	M	F				M	F		M	F		M			
1 (BRIG / CDRE / ACDRE)	1		1		1	1		1							2
2 (COL / CAPT / GPCAPT)	1		1		1	1		1	5	1	6	1	1		9
3 (LTCOL / CMDR / WGCDR)	6		6	1	7	6	1	7	3	1	4				17
4 (MAJ / LCDR / SQNLDR)	6	2	8	1	2	1	1	2	5		5				15
5 (CAPT / LEUT / FLTLT)	5	1	6	1	2	1	1	2	5	2	7				15
6 (LT / SBLT / FLGOFF)	2	1	3						2	1	3				6
8 (WO1 / WO / WOFF)	3		3	1	1	1		1							4
9 (WO2 / CPO / FSGT)	3		3	1	1	1		1							4
10 (SGT / PO / SGT)		1	1	1	1	1		1	3		3				5
11 (CPL / LS / CPL)									2	1	3				3
12 (PTE / AB / LAC)				1	1		1	1	1		1				2
Total	27	5	32	13	4	17	26	6	32	1	1	1	1	82	



Focus areas

- Pre-deployment preparation & training
- Duties whilst deployed
- Decision-making processes
- C2 arrangements
- Interdependence
- Information gathering
- Information sharing
- Communication flows
- Skills and competencies
- Lessons learned



Informal networks underpinning...

1. C2 arrangements & processes
2. Military/Service culture
3. Relationships and trust
4. Information sharing
5. Uncertainty reduction
6. Morale



Command & control

- Convoluted and confusing.
- Service-specific: some duplication
- Emergence of ‘informal’ C2 processes.

We are sufficiently small that you can in fact ignore certain chains of command and just ring up CDF or just go here or go there and you will still get the outcome that you are trying to achieve. You might annoy a hell of a lot of people on the way, but you can afford to do it.



Military/Service culture

- Strong ‘in-group’ identity characterised effective cooperation.
- Informal networks provided knowledge of other military/Service cultures - highly valuable.
- ‘Clashes’ of culture associated with a lack of cooperation.

I did see that where new tradesmen were brought in to replace other tradesmen who finished their tours, and that is where I saw some interesting clashes, and once again, just between different cultures of bringing in other Service personnel...bringing in Air Force personnel to replace Army personnel and vice versa, and people just have different expectations on what is required.



Relationships & trust

- Service/national boundaries sometime barriers.
- Strong personal relationships & trust underpinned collaboration.
- Essential for access to knowledge, information and other resources.

...because I'd built those relationships...he would bend over backwards to make sure that we got what we needed and I guess that sort of became my role in many regards.

It was basically good business...to keep up good relationships with the Americans. We took it as an opportunity to draw on their mass of knowledge and experience...So, to work with these guys and to take on as much information as you could, was invaluable.



Information sharing

- Not a direct consequence of existing IT links.
- Face to face sharing of information preferred.
- Informal social linkages define preferred channels.

Sometimes I was really nervous about [sharing information] and I was generally quite cagey, I suppose. But again, my idea was firstly to get to know them. But, I did not have much time. They would ask me questions and I would often defer to a senior officer. “Sorry, I can’t answer that, you know”. Shunt it off to someone else who can make the decision.



Uncertainty

- The operational environment
- Military capabilities
- Role uncertainty

I knew who my boss was. I knew the type of organisation that I was working for. But I didn't know where I was working in that organisation, who I was reporting to, what my specific skills required, or whatever else.



Morale

- Inextricably linked to nature of work performed (boredom & routine)

The last month and a half, yeah about six weeks, was groundhog day...I'd read all the books in the Headquarters...And even the Australian Headquarters tried to vary their routine, although that was harder for them because they were stuck in the compound doing the same job every day.

- Contact with family a double-edged sword.
- Good peer relations buffer against low morale

I think probably the one thing that you could always rely on, and would be there for you, would be the rest of the people in the contingent.



Implications

- Team work

...you need a team that is going to be coherent under stress...a dream team, and you never get one of those, but if I had the chance to pick the dream people I would pick people that worked well together.

- Joint and Coalition training

The whole working in the Joint environment, we need to do a lot more of that. And I think that starts at the training; we need to re-align and we need to align our Service communications, skillsets and training.

Visibility or knowledge of what the other Services' skillsets are and how they operate. And what - what backgrounds, I suppose, each of them have. Or if you are an Army guy, to have knowledge of what the naval assets are. Same with the Air Force and vice versa, so all around tri-Service type knowledge.

- Operational experience



The way ahead

- Increasing the sample size and continuing capturing perspectives from the Middle East
- Small-scale simulation to test these findings (eg based on the game of ‘Go’)



Discussion and questions