

Another Transformation or Real Innovation? The CAF's Command Evolution to the new Canadian Joint Forces Command

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Abstract

This paper examines the structure and execution of command, defined as “the authority vested in an individual of the armed forces for the direction, coordination and control of military forces”¹ of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF). Over the past several decades, the CAF has repeatedly adjusted its command architecture to respond to changing operational demands, fiscal pressures, technological developments, and allied commitments. From the decentralized, environment-based structures that persisted until 2006 to the recent establishment of the Canadian Joint Forces Command (CJFC) to centralize the force generation of certain support trades, these changes reflect an ongoing effort to improve unity of command, operational responsiveness, and strategic coherence.

The paper identifies persistent challenges in aligning authority, responsibility, and force generation across the institution. While CJOC enhanced unity of command and improved operational coordination, it did not eliminate reliance on decentralized force generation or address ongoing strain within support trades. The establishment of CJFC represents a further attempt to centralize the development, integration, and sustainment of joint capabilities; however, its effectiveness remains constrained by distributed authority, dependence on external personnel systems, and institutional fragmentation.

Framing the Challenge - Introduction

The effectiveness of military operations is fundamentally tied to the structure and execution of command. Command is defined as “the authority vested in an individual of the armed forces for the direction, coordination and control of military forces”.² Over the past several decades, the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) has gradually reshaped its command structure, (i.e., the way it is organized and led) to better reflect the realities of operations, budget fluctuations, technology shifts and allied responsibilities. From the decentralized environmental command structures that characterized the pre-2006 era (representing the last major change to command structures given post-9/11 focus on counter-terrorism) to the most recent establishment of the Canadian Joint Forces Command (CJFC) to respond to the great power competition environment of today, the CAF has repeatedly adapted its command architecture in an effort to improve unity of command, operational responsiveness, and strategic coherence.

¹ Department of National Defence, *B-GL-300-003/FP-000 Command* (Kingston, ON: Land Force Command, July 21, 1996), 1-2

² AAP-6, NATO Terminology Bank Record 14848, p. 29. Found at https://www.coemed.org/files/stanags/05_AAP/AAP-06_2019_EF.pdf

In 2006, the establishment of the Canadian Expeditionary Force Command (CEFCOM), Canadian Operational Support Command (CANOSCOM), Canada Command (CANCOM), and Canadian Special Operations Forces Command (CANSOFCOM) coined the “dotcoms” aimed to enable a more integrated and flexible approach to managing domestic, international, and special operations. Fast forward six years later and Canadian Joint Operations Command (CJOC) was stood up in 2012 to consolidate these previously separate operational commands into a single unified headquarters, streamlining command and control while improving coordination and responsiveness across the CAF. In 2025, Canadian Joint Forces Command (CJFC) was created and understood not simply as another structural adjustment, but as an effort to advance joint capability development. By integrating planning and force generation functions, CJFC seeks to develop capabilities that are inherently joint, aligning land, maritime, air, cyber, and space elements from the outset. Yet, this shift prompts critical examination as to whether CJFC represents a meaningful departure from previous command models (and especially CANOSCOM established nearly 20 years before), or merely another iteration within a broader pattern of institutional transformation that decentralizes and centralizes commands.

This paper first examines the evolution of CAF command structures since 2006, establishing the historical and institutional context necessary to understand both past and current approaches to command. It outlines how these structures have adapted to increasingly complex, joint operational demands, setting the conditions that led to the creation of the CJFC and clarifying its intended role. It then critically assesses the effectiveness of contemporary command frameworks, focusing on CJFC’s strengths and likely limitations. Finally, it evaluates the uncertainties and emerging challenges shaping the future of CJFC and CAF command. Through this analysis, the paper addresses the central question: was CJFC a genuine innovation in command and control, or simply another step in an ongoing process of organizational change? Ultimately, this paper argues that the CAF has oscillated between **decentralization (functional specialization)** and **centralization (integration and unity of command)** in response to operational pressures and institutional inefficiencies. Ultimately, I argue that before 2006, the Canadian Armed Forces operated under a decentralized, service-based structure in which organizations carried dual roles, creating persistent tension between competing responsibilities. In 2006, following reforms associated with the “dotcom” reorganization, the structure shifted toward functional separation. This reduced the earlier role tension but introduced a greater burden in terms of coordination across distinct functions. By 2012, with the establishment of the Canadian Joint Operations Command (CJOC), the system moved toward centralization. This change emphasized unity of command and improved operational responsiveness. In 2025, the creation of the Canadian Joint Force Command (CJFC) is intended to integrate capability development, thereby addressing fragmentation at the upstream stages of force design and planning but time will tell if this is the case.

This paper is divided into five parts. Part one reviews the command landscape of the CAF. Part two unpacks the evolution of command from the dot.com to CJFC. Part three deconstructs the CAF Command Structure with special attention to the command structure, roles and relationships, Part four assesses the efficacy of these evolutions and Part five concludes with some questions for the future evolution of CJFS.

Part 1: Command Landscape of the CAF - Background and Overview

In military organizations the importance of command structures (i.e. how personnel are organized in different functions and roles) cannot be overstated; this structure matters because it connects high-level government decisions to what happens on the ground, at sea or in the air, ensuring that the military operates as one, coordinated force rather than as separate, disconnected units. While organizational change is both common and often necessary to respond to evolving operational demands and threat analyses, excessive or poorly aligned restructuring can generate uncertainty, disrupt continuity, and create inefficiencies that undermine the CAF's effectiveness. This raises an important question: how has the CAF balanced the need for adaptation to the nature of warfare with the requirement for stability and predictability for personnel and government? To answer this, it is first necessary to understand the historical development of CAF command arrangements and the context in which they have evolved.

The structure of command within the CAF has undergone significant and repeated transformation over the past two decades, reflecting an ongoing effort to balance operational effectiveness, institutional efficiency, and the demands of increasingly complex missions. Understanding the current command environment and recent developments, such as the creation of CJFC, requires a clear appreciation of how CAF command is organized and the key drivers that have shaped its evolution.

The challenges to the CAF organization structure prompting reform can be traced to the 1990s, often described as the “decade of darkness”³ during which significant budget reductions to the CAF budget, sustained UN operational commitments, and the CAF institutional fallout from the Somalia Affair (in which members of the CAF tortured and murdered a Somali teenager) eroded the CAF's capabilities, morale, and credibility.⁴ These pressures exposed deep structural and professional deficiencies within the CAF, ultimately creating the conditions that necessitated the comprehensive reforms and command restructuring in the mid-2000s.

The CAF, however, lacked a coherent long-term strategy and relied on reactive, ad hoc approaches to reform.⁵ In this context, many institutional decisions were shaped by the assumption that future operations would be largely conventional in nature, even as the CAF was increasingly engaged in peace support and stability operations in places such as the Balkans. These support and stability missions required different capabilities, including civil-military

³ Casson, Rick (Chair). Standing House of Commons Committee on National Defence (NDDN). February 2008, 39th Parliament, 2nd Session. “Supplementary Opinion of the Conservative Party of Canada”. <https://www.ourcommons.ca/documentviewer/en/39-2/NDDN/report-2/page-54>

⁴ Government of Canada, *Dishonoured Legacy: The Lessons of the Somalia Affair—Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Deployment of Canadian Forces to Somalia* (Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 1997), ES-1 and Jeffrey F. Collins, “Reviving and Revising the Canada First Defence Strategy,” Atlantic Institute for Market Studies, last accessed May 26, 2026, <https://www.aims.ca/op-ed/reviving-and-revising-the-canada-first-defense-strategy/>.

⁵Michael K. Jeffrey, *Inside Canadian Forces Transformation: Institutional Leadership as a Catalyst for Change* (Kingston, ON: Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2009), 8-10.

coordination, intelligence integration, and adaptable logistics, that were not well supported by existing structures. As a result, many reforms during the 1990s were reactive (i.e. they were focused on addressing immediate crises or restoring credibility) rather than being part of a coherent, long-term strategy to develop integrated, flexible, and joint capabilities (bringing together the Army, Navy and Air Force otherwise known as the environments or services) aligned with the evolving operational environment. The different environments tended to operate separately in their domains (land, sea or air), with little emphasis on working together as a unified force. This approach placed more importance on what each service could contribute individually instead of building strong, integrated capabilities across the entire CAF. Over time, this led to shortfalls in critical areas such as command and control (or the exercise of authority and direction by a commander over assigned, allocated and attached forces in the accomplishment of a mission – See Annex A for definitions) and logistical support.⁶

These challenges intensified in the early 2000s, particularly following the attacks of 9/11 and the subsequent focus on counterterrorism and expeditionary operations now with NATO more often than the UN. Liberal Prime Minister Paul Martin (2003-2006) directed the CAF to play a leading role in the government's future foreign policy entitled *A Role of Pride and Influence in the World* which had commerce, diplomacy, development and defence chapters.⁷ He aimed to ensure the CAF could conduct sustained joint expeditionary operations in complex security environments influenced by terrorism and state fragility.⁸

Growing operational demands drove the need for command transformation.⁹ Sustained combat operations in Afghanistan placed significant tension on the CAF's existing command structure which gave authority to the separate Environmental Chiefs of Staff to be both force employers (who direct personnel in missions) and force generators (who recruit and train future sailors, soldiers and aviators). These dual roles created tensions for the chain of command and highlighted limitations in coordination, operational responsiveness, and the effective integration of joint capabilities (i.e. incorporating personnel from the different services to operate together). These pressures reinforced the need for a reorganization of command structures to better support ongoing and future operations. This reorganization separated the roles of force generation and force employment. Force generators would provide to the force employers trained personnel ready to conduct operations. This separation of functions, allowed for more coordinated and joint approaches to missions that better suited the post-9/11 threat environment where mission success depended on the close integration of land, air, special operations, logistics, and coalition partners together. To achieve these joint missions, attention could not be pulled away from the conduct of operations to also recruit and train personnel. Instead, the focus of force employers was to organize the right personnel to conduct the operations.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Government of Canada. A role of pride and influence in the world - overview: Canada's international policy statement, 2005. <https://publications.gc.ca/site/eng/9.687242/publication.html>

⁸ Michael K. Jeffrey, *Inside Canadian Forces Transformation: Institutional Leadership as a Catalyst for Change* (Kingston, ON: Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2009), Ibid.,22.

⁹ Ibid., 24-27.

Reorganizing command structures to manage growing operational demands through the separation or reintegration of operational and support functions were repeated by the CAF and by other western militaries.

In late 2025 studies¹⁰ identified persistent gaps in the generation, development, and integration of joint capabilities within the CAF. These challenges were evident across multiple domains, where responsibilities for key enabling functions, such as intelligence integration, digital networks, and logistics modernization, remained fragmented across organizations leading to duplication, and inconsistent prioritization. As a result, capability development was often uncoordinated, leading to duplication, inconsistent prioritization, and misalignment between operational requirements and available capabilities.

As the CAF becomes increasingly engaged in both domestic operations, such as disaster response due to climate change, as well as expeditionary missions abroad, the need for coordinated, joint responses has become more pronounced. These demands require greater integration of capabilities, flexibility, and responsiveness, reinforcing the importance of command structures that can effectively coordinate resources and operations across the force and with allied partners.

The transition in the CAF's command structure from the dotcoms, to CJOC, and now to CJFC, reflects the need to adapt to an increasingly complex security environment. Unlike the post-9/11 era, which was dominated by expeditionary and counterinsurgency operations, today's environment is characterized by near-peer competition, grey-zone conflict, and multi-domain threats. These conditions require greater integration of capabilities, faster decision-making, and more deliberate long-term planning, helping to explain the rationale behind the establishment of CJFC.

Part 2: From the Dotcoms to CJFC: An Analysis of Transformation - Evolution of Command Structure

The evolution of command within the CAF reflects an ongoing effort to balance the demands of force generation, operational command, and institutional efficiency. The CAF's default response seems to be a cycle of decentralization and centralization of functions within commands. Since the early 2000s, this evolution has been characterized by repeated attempts to separate and then reintegrate these functions in response to operational pressures and perceived structural shortcomings.

Prior to 2006, the Environmental Chiefs of Staff, who were Lieutenant Generals (LGen) /Vice Admirals (VAdm) in charge of their respective environments (Chief of the Land Staff, Chief of the Air Staff and Chief of the Maritime Staff) were responsible for both force generation and force employment. This meant that they were responsible for organizing, training and equipping

¹⁰ Stuart Beare, "Championing the Joint Force: A Job for the Public and Our Political Leaders – Not Just the Military Professionals Alone," *Canadian Global Affairs Institute*, Policy Papers, November 2015, 5-6 and see Greg Maddison and Margaret Purdy, *Joint Capabilities in the Canadian Armed Forces: Report Prepared for General Jonathan Vance* (Ottawa: Canadian Armed Forces, July 2019), 2-4.

personnel as well as to command personnel to achieve specific mission objectives during operations.

2006 - Creation of the Dotcoms

In 2006,¹¹ a significant transformation created four new Commands: Canadian Expeditionary Force Command (CEFCOM), Canadian Operational Support Command (CANOSCOM), Canada Command (CANCOM), and Canadian Special Operations Forces Command (CANSOFCOM), (often referred to as the “dot.coms,” reflecting the naming style of late-1990s internet companies). Under this model, the environmental commanders became force generators, while the new commands assumed roles as force employers with CANSOFCOM maintaining both roles.¹² This restructure was driven by the combined pressures of a high operational tempo, particularly in Afghanistan, strategic policy direction from Prime Minister Martin’s 2005 Foreign Policy Statement (defence chapter), and structural deficiencies in the existing system, which lacked unified operational commands and relied on ad hoc arrangements.¹³ This structure formalized the separation between force generation and force employment and redefined how the CAF organized and conducted domestic, expeditionary, and support operations.

Two key factors drove the 2006 transformation of the command structure within the CAF. First, the existing model, which concentrated both force generation and operational command under the Environmental Chiefs of Staff, was becoming increasingly strained by the demands of sustained, joint operations. Second, the newly elected Prime Minister, Paul Martin, sought to position Canada to play a more active and influential role in global affairs.¹⁴ Together, these pressures highlighted the need for a more integrated and responsive CAF command structure.

In February of 2005 General Rick Hillier was appointed CDS and began planning a new structure for the CAF.¹⁵ To guide the development of a new CAF structure, the CDS formed the Canadian Forces Transformation Team, led by, Major-General Natynczyk as Chief of Transformation. (He would later serve as the CDS from 2008 to 2012.¹⁶) This team was tasked to seek ways “to move the Forces from a service-centric, machine age, Cold War baseline to one

¹¹ After 9/11, a binational committee recommended a number of changes to homeland defence and NORAD. The result was a Canada-wide review of the security architecture in Canada including the creation of Public Safety Canada as well as a wider review of the nexus between development, defence and diplomacy by Prime Minister Martin. The CAF commitment to the Article 5 NATO commitment to defend the United States against Al Qaeda and the Taliban prompted a refocus of how the CAF was structured. See Chapter 3 in https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2023/mdn-dnd/D2-254-1-2009-eng.pdf

¹² Department of National Defence, “Canadian Forces Transformation: New Operational Command and Control Structure,” *DefenceTalk*, May 15, 2012, <https://www.defencetalk.com/canadian-forces-transformation-new-operational-command-and-control-structure->.

¹³ Daniel Gosselin and Craig Stone, “From Minister Hellyer to General Hillier: Understanding the Fundamental Differences Between the Unification of the Canadian Forces and Its Present Transformation,” *Canadian Military Journal* (Winter 2006): 9.

¹⁴ Michael K. Jeffrey, *Inside Canadian Forces Transformation: Institutional Leadership as a Catalyst for Change* (Kingston, ON: Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2009), 22.

¹⁵ Jeffrey, *Inside Canadian Forces Transformation*, 26.

¹⁶ Ibid.

focused on being able to understand, to be capable in, and to be relevant to the security and defence challenges of the day, and those to come.”¹⁷

With the push from the CDS and the post 9/11 environment, the CAF’s new command structure was born. Canadian Expeditionary Force Command (CEFCOM), Canadian Operational Support Command (CANOSCOM), Canada Command (CANCOM), and Canadian Special Operations Forces Command (CANSOFCOM) were created to focus the CAF’s command structure on specific areas of operations. The dot.coms were dedicated, unified and high-readiness commands for domestic, international, special and support operations. These commands replaced a fragmented, element specific approach with a more integrated, joint structure designed to better handle the complex security challenges.

The dot.coms consisted of four separate commands each with distinctive roles and responsibilities outlined in Table 1.

Table 1 – Dot.coms Responsibilities 2006-2012

Name of the Command	Rank of Commander	Force Employer or Force Generator	Mandate
CEFCOM	LGen	Force Employer	International Operations
CANCOM	LGen	Force Employer	Continental Defence
CANOSCOM	MGen	Force Generator/ Force Employer	Special Forces operations that respond to terrorism and threats
CANSOFCOM	Col/ MGen	Force Generator/ Force Employer	Combat support for domestic and international operations.

CEFCOM was tasked with the strategic oversight and execution of all international operations, except for those of CANSOFCOM.¹⁸ CEFCOM enabled the integration of force elements across the full spectrum of conflict, from humanitarian assistance to high-intensity international combat operations. It was the operational command to support humanitarian, peace support or combat operations internationally. CEFCOM, a Force Employer, used resources generated from the three environmental commands: Army, Navy and Air Force.

CANCOM was the primary authority for continental defence, overseeing critical mandates such as sovereignty patrols, national security coordination, and search and rescue operations.¹⁹ CANCOM provided force protection support to events such as the 2010 Vancouver Olympics, the G7 and G20 summits when held within Canada. CANCOM, as Force Employer, used resources generated from the three environmental commands: Army, Navy and Air Force. To cover all regions within Canada, this command included six geographically defined Joint Task Forces (JTFs) and three search and rescue regions (SRRs).

¹⁷ Beare, “Championing the Joint Force,” 5.

¹⁸ Jeffrey, *Inside Canadian Forces Transformation*, 30.

¹⁹ Ibid., 29.

CANSOFCOM, which remains today, is responsible for all special forces operations that respond to terrorism and threats to Canadians and Canadian interests in Canada and around the world. CANSOFCOM's primary mission in 2006 was counterterrorism which involved conducting rigorous and specialized training and working with local law enforcement to ensure a cohesive and rapid response to protect Canadian against terrorist activity. CANSOFCOM, is both a force employer and a force generator.²⁰

CANOSCOM (a force generator) served as the provider of comprehensive combat support across domestic and international operations comprised of a multidisciplinary staff including logistics, engineering, land equipment maintenance, communications and information systems, health services and military police, totalling approximately 1100 personnel. The command managed the planning and execution of delivering operational support for theatre activation, sustainment and termination of all CAF operations whether in Canada or overseas.²¹ CANOSCOM provided support to both CEFCOM and CANCOM. CANOSCOM had control over the 16 units and formations listed in Table 2. (See Annex B for organizational charts for CJFC (Figure 1), CANOSCOM (Figure 2) and CJOC (Figure 3))

Table 2 - CANOSCOM subunits (2006-2012)

Unit	Sub-units	Mandate
Canadian Materiel Support Group (CMSG)	7 Canadian Forces Supply Depot (Edmonton) 25 Canadian Forces Supply Depot (Montreal) CF Ammunition Depot Bedford CF Ammunition Depot Dundurn CF Ammunition Depot Rocky Point CF Ammunition Depot Detachment Angus	provides provision, maintenance, and lifecycle management of equipment and materiel
Canadian Forces Joint Signal Regiment	No sub-units	provides deployable communications and information systems (CIS) support
Operational Support Engineer Group	1 Engineer Support Unit	provides specialized engineering, infrastructure, and technical support to CAF operations

²⁰ Ibid., 30.

²¹ Ibid., 31.

Unit	Sub-units	Mandate
Canadian Forces Joint Support Group (CFJSG)	CFJSG HQ 3 Canadian Support Unit 4 Canadian Forces Movement Control Unit Canadian Forces Postal Unit	provides operational support and sustainment services to CAF operations
Operational Support Military Police Group	Canadian Forces Protective Services Unit (CFPSU)	provides deployable military police capabilities to support CAF operations, including law enforcement, detainee handling, and operational policing.

Although CANOSCOM had approximately 1,100 support trade personnel within the command, these resources were largely dedicated to enabling deployment activities, specifically the mounting and redeployment phases, rather than sustaining deployed rotations. Consequently, many, if not most, support personnel were needed to be force generated from the environmental commands (Army, Navy and Air Force), intensifying the systemic pressures associated with limited depth and high demand in support occupations. This construct posed inherent challenges, as many, if not most, support trades were sourced as individual augmentees rather than deploying as part of a formed unit (i.e. an Army Battalion), reflecting a broader structural limitation within the CAF's force generation system: the absence of a centralized model for generating and sustaining support trades. More broadly, this decentralized construct complicated not only the generation of personnel for operations, but also the clear development, management, and capacity planning required to meet future operational demands.

Under the dot.coms, responsibilities for domestic operations, expeditionary missions, and operational support were distributed across separate commands. While this model clarified functional roles and helped manage a high operational tempo, it also imposed significant coordination demands and revealed inefficiencies related to overlapping responsibilities and slower decision-making. For example, during a deployment to Afghanistan, if CEFCOM had accelerated timelines or increased force requirements without synchronizing with CANOSCOM, troops could have arrived without the necessary equipment or sustainment. This illustrates that even when both organizations are effective, success depends on continuous coordination to align operational intent with logistical capability. CEFCOM and CANOSCOM had different roles, one plans and directs operations, while the other delivers the logistics and support needed to execute them, coordination had to be deliberate, not assumed.

2012 – Creation of CJOC

In 2012, the CAF went through another major restructuring aimed at becoming more efficient and effective, while aligning its organization to meet future demands.²² This shift was largely driven by a transformation team established at the request of the now Conservative Minister of National Defence (MND) Peter MacKay and led by LGen Leslie (former Commander of the Army). The team's mandate reflected its "explicit goal ... to identify areas where we could reduce overhead and improve efficiency and effectiveness, to allow reinvestment from within for future operational capability despite constrained resources."²³ With limited resources and growing demands "some amongst many that include the Arctic, more part time reservists, cyber, special forces, and sailors going to sea"²⁴ there was a clear need for the CAF to become "more agile, more deployable, more ready to respond,"²⁵ while making better use of the resources already available. This led to a closer look at how the CAF was structured and identifying where changes could make operations smoother and more practical.²⁶ There was a real need to "reduce the tail of today while investing in the teeth of tomorrow."²⁷ The *Report on Transformation 2011* put forward several recommendations to improve how the CAF operated, including a key proposal to consolidate existing operational commands into a single joint command structure.²⁸ Mainly as a result of these recommendations, CJOC was established, amalgamating CEFCON, CANCOM and CANOSCOM into a single command structure, to create a more balanced system and enhance both efficiency and effectiveness.

In the same transformation report, recommendations were made to establish a Strategic Joint Staff (SJS) to strengthen joint integration at the strategic level.²⁹ During this same transition period, the SJS was created to serve as the central strategic advisory and coordination staff for the CDS. Its primary purpose was to provide unified, joint military advice by bringing together strategic-level planning, analysis, and coordination that had previously been dispersed across National Defence Headquarters. A key part of SJS's intended role was to improve strategic integration of joint enablers, such as logistics, sustainment, readiness, and force posture that crossed all elements (Army, Navy and Air Force).³⁰ Its creation aimed to improve coherence and oversight of joint capabilities by bringing dispersed functions together under a single strategic staff supporting the CDS. While SJS did not own or manage these capabilities, it ensured they

²² Department of National Defence, *Report on Transformation 2011*, Canada.ca, accessed May 16, 2026, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/reports-publications/report-transformation-2011.html>, "Forward."

²³ Department of National Defence, *Report on Transformation 2011*, "Executive Summary."

²⁴ Ibid., "Forward."

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid., chap. 5, "Synthesis of Cross-Cutting Transformational Themes & Key Recommendations"

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Department of National Defence, "Strategic Joint Staff."

were considered holistically at the strategic level, providing the CDS with unified analysis and advice on how best to employ the CAF across competing domestic and international priorities.³¹

With the creation of CJOC the number of force employers decreased to three: CJOC, CANSOFCOM and NORAD. The Army, Navy and Airforce remained force generators and supporting commands to CJOC.³² CANSOFCOM remained its own force generator and employer.

CJOC is responsible for conducting CAF operations at home, and abroad and it directs these operations from their earliest planning stages through to mission closeout and ensures that national strategic goals are achieved.³³ Under its original 2012 mandate, CJOC comprised of six standing regional Joint Task Force Headquarters (which remained largely the same as when located within CANCOM) located across Canada³⁴ (See Annex B, Figure 3 for organizational chart). These regional Joint Task Force Headquarters deliver operational command and control for CAF activities across domestic regions.³⁵ The size of the responsible region varies by situational geography; this means that some regional Joint Task Force's have very large spans of control. For example, Joint Task Force North is responsible for all of Canada's Arctic which represents 40% of Canada's landmass.

As well, CJOC assumed command of a Canada-wide network of operational support units that had previously been subordinate to CANOSCOM. These units were structured to enable the activation, initial sustainment, and termination of all CAF operations across both domestic and international theatres. For example, operations, such as domestic disaster response or expeditionary deployments require significant logistics support across activation (mounting forces, movement, initial provisioning), sustainment (ongoing supply), and redeployment (reconstitution, equipment recovery). While CJOC commanded the operational support units

³¹ Department of National Defence, "Strategic Overview of Canadian Armed Forces Operations and Activities," Canada.ca, last modified September 9, 2025, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/reports-publications/proactive-disclosure/welcome-package-minister-national-defence/canadian-armed-forces/strategic-overview-canadian-armed-forces-operations-activities.html>.

³² Department of National Defence, "Canadian Joint Operations Command," Government of Canada, last modified April 2, 2025, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/organizational-structure/canadian-joint-operations-command.html> and Department of National Defence, "Strategic Joint Staff," Canada.ca, last accessed March 16, 2026, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/organizational-structure/strategic-joint-staff.html>.

³³ Department of National Defence, "Canadian Joint Operations Command," Government of Canada, last modified April 2, 2025, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/organizational-structure/canadian-joint-operations-command.html>

³⁴ Joint Task Force North, Yellow Knife, Northwest Territories responsible for all Canadian territories north of the 60th parallel; Joint Task Force Pacific CFB Esquimalt, British Columbia responsible for British Columbia, its coastlines and the Pacific maritime approaches; Joint Task Force West, CFB Edmonton, Alberta responsible for Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba; Joint Task Force Central Toronto, Ontario responsible for Ontario; Joint Task Force East Montreal, Quebec, responsible for Quebec; Joint Task Force Atlantic CFB Halifax, Nova Scotia responsible for New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador, and the adjacent maritime region.

³⁵ Department of National Defence, "Regional Task Force," Canada.ca, last modified January 1, 2019, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/operations/military-operations/conduct/regional-task-force.html>.

enabling these functions, most support personnel were still generated by the environments. As a result, CJOC lacked a centralized pool of support trades for ongoing sustainment of operations and relied instead on coordination across the Army, RCAF, and Navy to generate the required capability, reflecting the same structural challenge faced by CANOSCOM. This decentralized model not only complicated force generation, but also hindered the CAF's ability to systematically develop, train, and sustain support trades in anticipation of future operational requirements.

CJOC relies on specialized elemental headquarters to plan, coordinate, and control different parts of a mission on its behalf. While the Commander of CJOC remains the overall commander of operations, the Commander must delegate control to subunits given the number of missions both at home and abroad. Modern missions are too complex for one headquarters to manage every detail, therefore, CJOC uses component commanders - experts in air, maritime, and land operations - who focus on their specific domains while staying aligned with the CJOC commander's intent. CJOC is assisted by the: Joint Force Air Component Commander, based in Winnipeg (who is also the Commander of 1 CAD), the Maritime Component Commanders, located in Esquimalt and Halifax (and who are also the Commanders of Joint Task Force Pacific and Atlantic respectively) and the land component equivalent in the CAF is tied to the Canadian Army's divisional structure, rather than a standing Joint Task Force like the maritime commanders. The Commander of 1st Canadian Division (1 Cdn Div in Kingston ON) is particularly important, as 1 Cdn Div HQ is the CAF's high-readiness joint headquarters and is often assigned as the core land component or joint task force HQ for expeditionary operations.³⁶

2025 Creation of CJFC

The most recent command evolution occurred with the establishment of the Canadian Joint Forces Command (CJFC) on 25 November 2025, intended to assume responsibility for force generation for initially a select group of support trades (logistics, health services and military police), to include development, sustainment and management of joint capabilities, doctrine and force development. CJOC, headed by LGen/VAdm, is at the same level as the environmental commanders and CANSOFCOM.

As a new command, CJFC's role and areas of responsibility within the CAF are not yet fully implemented or widely understood. On the surface, it may be interpreted as a potential successor to aspects of the former CANOSCOM; a mechanism to strengthen the development and integration of joint capabilities. It may also be part of a broader institutional response to perceived gaps in capability development. Accordingly, clarity is still needed on what CJFC will deliver that is distinct, and how it will add value within the existing command structure.

CJFC does not "own" trades in the same way that the environments do, but it centralizes key support and enabling capabilities, such as logistics, health services, and elements of engineering and communications, under a single command to improve integration and effectiveness across the CAF. As well, the CJFC integrates several specialized organizations under one command: the

³⁶ Department of National Defence, "Canadian Joint Operations Command."

Chief of Combat Systems Integration, the Canadian Joint Warfare Centre, the Canadian Forces Health Services Group, the Chief of Joint Logistics, and the Joint Information and Intelligence Fusion Centre, referenced in Table 3 below. These units previously had different parent command units meaning coordination for support to operations from these joint enablers needed to be coordinated and requested from a force employer (such as CJOC) to multiple different force generators (such as the RCAF) but now the CJFC will be the sole force generator for these capacities.

Joint capabilities refer to military functions and resources that span multiple domains, including land, sea, air, cyber, and space, and are employed collectively across the CAF. These include areas such as logistics, health services, intelligence, joint doctrine, and force development.³⁷ While some occupations lend themselves to joint force generation, others remain inherently environment specific. Roles that require deep specialization tied to particular platforms or operating domains must continue to be force generated within their respective environmental services. Conversely, occupations like logistics are designed to operate across domains, providing scalable support regardless of environment, and are therefore more compatible with joint force generation structures.

CAF members assigned to CJFC retain their environmental identity and wear the uniform of the Army, Navy or Air Force, but are employed in a fully joint capacity. The CJFC provides centralized leadership and integration of force development, force management, force generation, and force sustainment for joint capabilities across the CAF irrespective of the environmental origin of those members.

Multiple studies³⁸ have recommended a centralized approach for joint capabilities to improve coherence, accountability, and innovation. The CJFC brings together people, systems, and expertise from across the CAF to build and manage the joint capabilities needed to protect Canada and support our allies. Just as the Army, Navy, and Air Force develop and manage their respective capabilities, the creation of CJFC should ensure the same standard for joint capabilities across the CAF.³⁹ The CJFC's main role is to provide clear, centralized leadership and well-defined authority for joint capabilities and "will foster a culture of integration and agility, keeping [...] joint capabilities coherent, accountable, and ready to support Canada's defence objectives."⁴⁰

CJFC's role is to generate and prepare forces, not employ them. In other words, bringing these different support functions under CJFC restricts its function to organize, coordinate and maintain joint capabilities across the CAF rather than running operations in the field. This means that the

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Beare, "Championing the Joint Force," 5–6 and Maddison and Purdy, *Joint Capabilities in the Canadian Armed Forces*, 2–4.

³⁹ Department of National Defence, "Canadian Joint Forces Command," Canada.ca, last modified December 4, 2025, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/organizational-structure/canadian-joint-forces-command.html>.

⁴⁰ Department of National Defence. "Canadian Joint Forces Command (CJFC): A New CAF Command." Last modified December 4, 2025. <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/news/2025/12/canadian-joint-forces-command.html>

CAF now has five force generators: the three services, CANSOFCOM and now CJFC and three force employers: NORAD, CJOC and CANSOFCOM.

Table 3 lists the units that will fall under CJFC, their mandate and to which command these units used to fall.

Table 3 – CJFC Subunits

Unit	Mandate	Old Parent unit
Chief of Combat Systems Integration	CCSI operates within the seams of the Joint environment across the CAF and DND, concentrating on Joint Integration; Digital Transformation; and Operational Sustainment Modernization (OSM). CCSI is a unique, purpose designed and enabling organization which connects initiatives, identifies barriers and reinforces success. ⁴¹	Vice Chief of Defence (VCDS)
Canadian Joint Warfare Centre	finding ways to operate as a Joint Force to face the ever-evolving operational environment by implementing best practices, novel concepts and accelerate the adoption of available and emerging technology and tools. ⁴²	Canadian Joint Operations Command (CJOC)
Canadian Forces Health Services Group	provides health services across Canada and overseas to Canadian military personnel and to any other populations as directed by the Minister of National Defence. ⁴³	Military Personnel Command (MilPersCom)
Chief of Joint Logistics	to coordinate support across the CAF and ensure balance between operational effectiveness and strategic resource management. Liaison between CAF and	Strategic Joint Staff (SJS)

⁴¹ Department of National Defence. “Chief of Joint Capabilities Integration (CJCI).” Defence365 SharePoint. Last accessed May March 16, 2026. <https://018gc.sharepoint.com/sites/000-002-158/SitePages/CJCI.aspx>.

⁴² Department of National Defence. “Canadian Joint Warfare Centre.” *Canada.ca*. Last modified September 8, 2025. <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/organizational-structure/canadian-joint-operations-command/canadian-joint-warfare-centre.html>.

⁴³ Department of National Defence. “Canadian Forces Health Services Group Welcomes New Commander and Surgeon General.” *Canada.ca*. last accessed April 21, 2026. <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/news/2023/>.

Unit	Mandate	Old Parent unit
	ADM (Mat) for the Defense Supply Chain. ⁴⁴	
Joint Information and Intelligence Fusion Centre	exercises Operational Authority (OA) over the integrated command and control information system (C2IS) to ensure that C2 capabilities meet the needs of leaders & operators in SJS, CJOC, and the CAF. ⁴⁵	Strategic Joint Staff (SJS)

Part 3: Deconstructing CAF Command Structure: Critical Analysis of Structure, Roles and Relationships

Prior to the establishment of the dot.coms, domestic and international operations were carried directly by the three environmental services (Navy, Army, Air Force). The North American ice storm of 1998 and the September 11, 2001, attacks demonstrated the need for a more efficient and coherent organization to coordinate military resources with civil authorities and allies. In each case, the requirement for rapid, large-scale coordination across multiple agencies exposed limitations in existing command structures, particularly in terms of integration, responsiveness, and unity of effort. The primary strength of the dot.com structure was its ability to focus on specific functions and distinct sets of operational tasks. This framework enabled leadership to cultivate domain expertise, fostering a comprehensive understanding of the specific geographic and technical requirements within their respective areas.

The creation of the dot.coms deliberately separated operational command from force generation, allowing the Environmental Chiefs of Staff to refocus on preparing forces, while dedicated operational commands assumed responsibility for employing them. Despite its advantages, the dot.com structure introduced a certain functional division, often complicating the coordination required for multi-domain operations. Additionally, relying on a single command, CANOSCOM, to provide operational support to three separate commands, CEFCOM, CANCOM and CANSOFCOM, created strain on CANOSCOM's ability to properly support operational demand. Compounding this strain was the struggle the force generators faced to supply sufficient personnel of all types for multiple operations occurring at the same time both domestically and overseas.⁴⁶ The demands of force employment during the Afghanistan mission exceeded what the CAF's force generation system could sustainably support. Afghanistan was Canada's largest and most prolonged deployment since WWII which required a continuous provision of trained

⁴⁴ Department of National Defence, "DGS Strategic," National Defence Intranet, last accessed April 17, 2026, <https://intranet.mil.ca/en/organizations/sjs/dgs-strategic.page>

⁴⁵ Department of National Defence, "Joint Information and Intelligence Fusion Centre," Defence365 SharePoint, last accessed April 17, 2025, <https://018gc.sharepoint.com/sites/000-001-637/SitePages/Home.aspx>.

⁴⁶ Department of National Defence, *Evaluation of Canadian Armed Forces Operations* (Ottawa: ADM (Review Services), November 2017), <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/reports-publications/audit-evaluation/evaluation-canadian-armed-forces-operations.html>.

personnel over more than a decade.⁴⁷ The challenge was not merely a shortage of personnel, but an inability to sustainably generate, train, deploy, and recover personnel at the rate required by continuous operations.⁴⁸ CAF policies on decompression and reintegration further highlighted that personnel could not be immediately regenerated for subsequent deployments, reinforcing the structural tension between force employment demands and sustainable force generation.⁴⁹

Under the CAF's 2021 Managed Readiness Plan,⁵⁰ it was practical for the environmental commands to generate operational forces (i.e., infantry, aircrew, and naval personnel) rather than many support trades (such as communications and logistics) for enduring operations such as Afghanistan. Combat arms' units were structured and resourced to rotate through the readiness cycle as formed units, progressing collectively through training, validation, and deployment phases. This unit-based model aligned well with doctrinal readiness constructs and facilitated predictable personnel availability within the prescribed period that military personnel spend at home base between deployments, allowing for recovery, retraining, and reconstitution before redeploying.

In contrast, many support occupations, particularly within logistics and other enabling trades, were characterized by smaller force structures, higher levels of specialization, and persistent institutional as well as operational demands. As a result, they were frequently force generated as individual augmentees or small detachments ("one-offs") rather than as formed units. This placed additional strain on force generators as personnel had to be sourced individually and placed in already established units while still respecting readiness requirements, training standards, and prescribed recovery periods at home base between deployments.⁵¹

Support trades like logistics operate within a hybrid model that combines environmental identity with centralized professional training. Officers develop within their environment (Army, Navy, Air Force) while receiving common, centralized logistics training, ensuring a shared professional foundation that is later adapted to domain-specific needs. As a result, while environments are responsible for force generation, they do not own trade training. For example, the Army generates land forces with embedded logistics officers, but centralized institutions train those officers; the Army instead determines how logistics capabilities are employed in support of land operations. The same principle applies across all environments.

⁴⁷ House of Commons of Canada, *Honouring Canada's Legacy in Afghanistan: Responding to the Humanitarian Crisis and Helping People Reach Safety*, 44th Parl., 1st sess. (Ottawa: House of Commons, 2023). [Committee Report No. 1 - AFGH \(44-1\) - House of Commons of Canada](#)

⁴⁸ Department of National Defence, *Evaluation of Ready Joint and Combined Forces* (Ottawa: DND, 2023), 4.

⁴⁹ Department of National Defence and Canadian Armed Forces Ombudsman, "From Tents to Sheets: An Analysis of the CF Experience with Third Location Decompression after Deployment—Appendices," last modified April 9, 2002, <https://www.canada.ca/en/ombudsman-national-defence-forces/reports-news-statistics/investigative-reports/third-location-decompression/appendices.html>. Appendix 2.

⁵⁰ Department of National Defence. "Ready Forces." *Canada.ca*. Last modified June 11, 2021. <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/reports-publications/departmental-plans/departmental-plan-2021-22/planned-results/ready-forces.html>

⁵¹ Department of National Defence. *CDS/DM Directive for CAF Force Posture and Readiness (FP&R) 2024–2025*. *Canada.ca*. Last modified March 12, 2025. <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/reports-publications/cds-dm-directive-force-posture-readiness-2024-2025.html>

The differing force generation models for operational and support⁵² trades created not only challenges in personnel availability, but also in how support capabilities were coordinated and employed across the institution.

The CAF's approach to managing support capabilities through a dedicated command, i.e., CANOSCOM, was intended to centralize and coordinate support across operations. However, this structure required extensive cross-command coordination, which frequently resulted in misaligned objectives and operational disconnects.⁵³ Support trades like logistics, intelligence, medical, signals, etc. were more difficult to force generate although both operational and support trades were subject to the same doctrinal force generation/ force employment constructs, the limited depth and fragmented employment model of support trades made sustaining enduring commitments significantly more challenging.

Although CEFCOM could support larger operations through its planning processes over extended periods, as demonstrated during the mission in Afghanistan, force generation for these sustained operations remained the responsibility of the environments (Army, Navy, and Air Force). This sustained demand was difficult to maintain over time and, in some cases, came at the expense of other commitments, including domestic readiness and the ability to support concurrent operations. For example, the requirement to generate successive rotations for Afghanistan placed sustained strain on the Canadian Army, limiting its capacity to respond to other contingencies and domestic tasks. The duration of the mission generated continual stress across personnel and units, reflecting the demands of a prolonged expeditionary commitment.⁵⁴ More broadly, CAF analysis shows that operational demands have at times exceeded force generation capacity, such that while individual missions could be met, the CAF was unable to sustain concurrent operations at the level directed by policy.⁵⁵

Adding to this complexity was the fact that the commanders of these four commands were not all the same rank. In an organization where rank structure is influential for both setting both operational and resource priorities, this had implications. Mismatched rank among command leaders can create imbalances in influence, particularly in organizations like the CAF for which rank signals authority in decision-making forums. Senior-ranked commanders are more likely to shape operational priorities and secure resources, potentially disadvantaging lower-ranked counterparts even when their mandates are equally significant.

Prior to the 2012 reorganization, the CAF command structure was complex and inefficient, requiring the CDS to consult multiple commanders across seven separate commands. This wide

⁵² Operational trades are those occupations directly engaged in the conduct of military operations and mission execution, while support trades provide the administrative, logistical, technical, and sustainment functions required to enable and maintain those operations. Together, they form an integrated system in which operational effectiveness depends on both the execution (operational trades) and sustainment (support trades) of military capability.

⁵³ Department of National Defence, *Evaluation of Canadian Armed Forces Operations*.

⁵⁴ Sean M. Maloney, *The Canadian Army in Afghanistan* (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 2022).

⁵⁵ Department of National Defence, *Ready Forces Integrated Strategic Analysis* (Ottawa: DND, 2023), last modified February 19, 2025, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/reports-publications/audit-evaluation/ready-forces-integrated-strategic-analysis.html>.

span of control, combined with increasing operational demands at home (particularly climate-related disasters) and abroad (notably NATO and counterterrorism missions), exposed weaknesses in unity of command and support integration. In response, the CAF restructured its command system in 2012 by merging CANCOM, CEFCON, and CANOSCOM into the Canadian Joint Operations Command (CJOC), while retaining CANSOFCOM as a separate entity. CJOC was then assigned responsibility for most domestic and expeditionary operations, excluding those under CANSOFCOM and NORAD.⁵⁶

While this network provided CJOC with a flexible and responsive operational support capability, it was deliberately lean in scale and oriented toward enabling and coordinating support rather than sustaining long-duration operations independently. As a result, prolonged or resource-intensive operations continued to rely heavily on force generators to provide the depth of personnel required for enduring operational sustainment. Department of National Defence.⁵⁷

The primary advantage of CJOC lies in the consolidation of authority under a single commander, effectively bridging the gap between domestic and international theaters. This means the Commander of CJOC can decide to prioritise resources and support of both domestic and international operations. This is a key factor in distributing resources efficiently. Following the establishment of CJOC, operational support functions were integrated directly into the joint operational planning process through embedded sustainment and logistics staff within CJOC headquarters. This structure enabled operational plans to be developed with sustainment considerations incorporated from the outset, aligning force employment with available support capabilities. The consolidation of operational command and support coordination under CJOC improved unity of effort and reduced the friction that had previously arisen from separate commands competing for limited resources.

Conversely, the consolidation of three major commands into one large command created a massive organization facing significant information overload. As CJOC managed everything from domestic disaster relief to high-intensity overseas combat, its leadership faced an immense span of control regarding both planning and sustaining missions. The Director General Operations (DG Ops), one of four directors directly under the commander of CJOC, is responsible for all missions: from small enduring missions to overseas international missions, to continental missions within Canada, save NORAD and CANSOFCOM missions.

In a scenario where the CAF is simultaneously responding to major flooding in Manitoba for example (Op LENTUS) and sustaining a NATO mission in Latvia (Op REASSURANCE), both operations place competing demands on the same finite pool of resources, including personnel, airlift, Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR), logistics, and command attention. This overlap necessitates centralized coordination through CJOC to prioritize and allocate capabilities across domestic and expeditionary commitments. In parallel, the SJS advises the CDS on strategic priorities, risk trade-offs, and the implications of reallocating resources,

⁵⁶ Department of National Defence. *Evaluation of Functional Responsibilities in Support of CF Transformation*. Ottawa: Chief Review Services, December 2006.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

ensuring that CJOC’s operational decisions remain aligned with government intent and Canada’s international obligations.

Although the CJFC was formally established in November 2025 to provide centralized leadership for joint capabilities, the need for such an organization had been identified several years earlier. In 2019, LGen (retired) Stuart Beare noted the importance of a policy paper entitled “Championing the Joint Force: a Job for the Public and our Political Leaders – Not Just Military Professionals Alone.”⁵⁸ While CJOC provided unified command over joint operations, there remained no clear senior authority responsible for advocating on behalf of joint and support capabilities that span the three environments. These included responsibilities related to career development, training, and deployment opportunities. In another study requested by the CDS in 2018, entitled “Joint Capabilities in the Canadian Armed Forces” it was identified that “there is a compelling requirement for a more robust leadership model for CAF joint capabilities in view of their critical importance to future warfighting...”⁵⁹

This 2018 analysis also identified a requirement for a more robust leadership model for joint capabilities, highlighting their growing importance in modern operations. Prior to 2025, joint capability representation at the senior level was limited, with a Brigadier-General (BGen)/Commodore acting as the principal advisor. This created a disparity when compared with Major-General (MGen)/Rear-Admiral (RAdm) and LGen/VAdm level leadership representing environmental commands, potentially limiting the influence of joint capabilities in senior decision-making processes.⁶⁰

This new structure represents the shift from separate operational focuses to integrated joint capability leadership. The Dot.com focused on geographic and functional specialization and were organized by distinct roles (i.e., international operations, domestic operations, special operations and support to operations). The creation of CJOC eliminated those distinct roles by combining all operations, domestic and international, into a single entity. With the creation of CJFC, the final stage of capability integration comes into effect. It provides a centralized leadership structure that manages the shared joint capabilities. Where CANOSCOM was primarily a logistics and support provider, CJFC is an integrative and developmental command. CJFC’s mandate is to ensure the Joint Force is mission-ready before a mission even begins by generating capable joint capacities.⁶¹ Table 4 outlines key difference between CANOSCOM and CJFC.

Table 4 – Comparison of CANOSCOM to CJFC

⁵⁸ Beare, “Championing the Joint Force,” 6.

⁵⁹ Maddison and Purdy, Joint Capabilities in the Canadian Armed Forces, 2.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 16.

⁶¹ Department of National Defence, “Canadian Joint Forces Command,” Backgrounder.

Aspect	CANOSCOM	CJFC
Commander	MGen	LGen
Force Employer or Generator	Force Employer	Force Generator
Primary Purpose	Execute operational support for active domestic and international missions	Provide institutional leadership and stewardship of joint capabilities
Nature of Organization	Operational command	Institutional / capability command
Focus	Supporting current missions	Preparing the CAF to support future and ongoing missions
Type of Work	Tactical and operational execution of support	Strategic–institutional development, integration, and sustainment
Key Activities	Logistics, engineering, communications, health services, military police, movement control for deployed operations	Force development, force generation, sustainment, and modernization of joint enablers
Command of Units	Directly commanded support units (i.e., CF Joint Support Group, Joint Signal Regiment)	Does not command deployed support units
Accountability Model	Accountable for delivery of support to specific operations	Accountable for the long-term health and readiness of joint capabilities

Some hesitation may exist among joint enablers based on the perception that CJFC will replicate the role envisioned for the SJS or CANOSCOM. However, CJFC has a fundamentally different mandate from both CANOSCOM and the SJS. While CANOSCOM focused on executing support to active missions and SJS functions as a strategic advisory staff without command or capability ownership, CJFC is intended to provide centralized, long-term stewardship and integration of joint capabilities to prepare the CAF for future operations.

Part 4: Assessing Effectiveness: Limits, Risks and Outcomes – Critical Evaluation

The effectiveness of a model in which CANOSCOM and CJOC commanded operational support capabilities yet relied on the environmental commands to generate the personnel required to deliver them, remains open to question. While this construct enabled the coordination of support effects, it exposed a persistent disconnect between command authority and force generation capacity. The emergence of the CJFC construct raises further questions: to what extent is it intended to resolve this structural gap? In other words, will CJOC better integrate operational

command with the generation and sustainment of enabling capabilities and meaningfully reassign responsibility for the development and sustainment of support trades, or merely repackage existing accountabilities under a new construct? Responsibility for forecasting demand and building capacity in high-demand occupations has historically been diffused across Chief of Military Personnel (CMP), the environmental commands, and operational headquarters. If CJFC is intended to integrate joint capabilities while leaving force generation within the environments, it risks perpetuating the same limitations observed under CJOC and CANOSCOM. In the absence of a centralized model that aligns personnel development, training, and employment, it is questionable whether CJFC can substantially improve the CAF's ability to sustain support trades for enduring operations.

While the force generators that are the Army, Navy, Air Force, and the force employers that are CJOC, CANSOFCOM and NORAD remain, CJFC will lead, integrate, and deliver joint capabilities and strengthen institutional readiness by serving as a unified home for joint enablers. This means that there are now four force generators (which is important given attrition) but there remains still only one, main employer for domestic and international missions. On the one hand, the CJFC should strengthen accountability in the development, management, generation, and sustainment of joint capabilities across the institution allowing these capabilities to be used to their fullest capacity in support of operations. On the other, it doesn't address the span of control of the CJOC commander now being supported by four force generators. The concern is not the *intent* of CJFC—which is to improve efficiency and coherence—but about the risk that centralization, if not carefully balanced, can introduce new frictions, dilute accountability, and complicate established command relationships.

There are also structural and doctrinal policies that suggest that much like the force generation challenges associated with support trades, CJFC may inherit a system in which responsibility, authority, and accountability remain distributed rather than centralized. These structural and institutional challenges are further compounded by practical constraints that directly affect CJFC's ability to fulfill its mandate. Resource limitations and persistent personnel shortages, particularly within high-demand support trades, continue to constrain the pool of forces available for joint employment. As these personnel are still largely generated by the environmental commands, CJFC remains dependent on external force generation systems over which it has limited control, reducing its ability to predict and sustain capabilities over time. Moreover, the absence of a centralized authority responsible for the long-term development and training of support trades further limits CJFC's ability to shape the future force it requires. These personnel constraints are compounded by ongoing gaps in digital integration and technological interoperability across the environments, which introduce friction in command and control and complicate the effective integration of joint capabilities. Taken together, these factors suggest that while CJFC may improve the coordination of joint operations, its ability to fully deliver on its mandate is constrained by enduring structural, institutional, and capability limitations.

With these aspects in mind, CJFC risks being held accountable for the delivery of integrated joint effects without possessing the necessary authority, resources, or systemic alignment to ensure their consistent generation and sustainment.

The creation of CJFC does not involve the formation of new units, but rather the re-alignment of existing joint capability organizations under a structure intended to improve their development and management. The limited transfer of units from CJOC to CJFC, reinforces the distinction between the two commands.

CJOC remains the CAF's primary force employer responsible for the planning and execution of operations, while CJFC is not granted the authority to independently conduct operations. Instead, CJFC is responsible for the generation, integration, and sustainment of joint capabilities. This distinction reflects a continued separation between operational command and capability development within the CAF.

Additional hesitation may be more appropriately focused not on whether CJFC replicates the former CANOSCOM mandate, but on whether the CAF can effectively staff the command, particularly with personnel possessing sufficient joint experience. Doctrine and intent alone are insufficient if the organization lacks personnel with the requisite seniority, experience, and joint expertise.

While the eventual role, scope, and influence of the CJFC remains uncertain as it is only in its beginning stages of creation, the doctrine outlines an ambitious vision for centralized leadership of joint capabilities. It is not yet clear whether CJFC will develop into a decisive operational integrator or settle into a more limited coordinating function. This uncertainty raises important questions about CJFC's future effectiveness. Will the command be able to deliver the improved integration and employment of joint enablers required for multi-domain operations? Can centralized leadership of joint capabilities resolve inter-environmental pressures, particularly when joint priorities compete with environmental demands? Further, given that the CJFC will not exercise direct control over joint trade schools, which ensure occupational proficiency, standardization, and professional development, how will it ensure that training standards, curriculum, and force development outcomes remain aligned with joint capability requirements?

A key unresolved issue is how authority will be aligned between CJFC and the environmental commands in areas of shared accountability, such as air and missile defence, joint engineering, and communications and information systems. While CJFC is intended to integrate and manage joint capabilities, these functions remain closely tied to environmental expertise, resources, and force generation. This raises questions as to whether centralized oversight can be effectively exercised without creating tension between joint priorities and environmental responsibilities, or whether existing coordination challenges will persist under a new organizational framework.

How will the CAF minimize duplication of staff functions and establish clear decision-making authority during the transition to CJFC, particularly given the persistence of existing organizational and institutional boundaries?

The integration of health services within CJFC further illustrates the complexity of aligning command authority with professional oversight. While CJFC is responsible for managing health services as a joint capability, the CAF Surgeon General retains a separate role as the principal

medical advisor to the CDS and the MND.⁶² This creates a dual relationship in which medical capabilities are situated within a joint command structure, but professional authority and advisory responsibilities remain distinct. Although this construct preserves the independence of medical advice, it also introduces potential tension between operational priorities and clinical or public health considerations. As with support trades, this arrangement highlights a broader structural challenge within the CAF: the separation of command, capability management, and professional authority, which CJFC does not fully resolve. This is not the same for logistic trades as they lack an independent advocate with direct CDS advisory access.

The establishment of CJFC introduces several interrelated risk areas that collectively challenge its ability to fulfill its mandate. Structurally, authority remains distributed across the environmental commands, CMP, and functional authorities, creating ambiguity in ownership and decision-making despite the centralization of operational responsibilities. From a personnel perspective, CJFC remains dependent on a decentralized force generation system—particularly for support trades such as logistics, cyber, and intelligence specialists—limiting its ability to predict, generate, and sustain required capabilities over time. At the capability level, coordination challenges in areas such as drone warfare, intelligence fusion, cyber operations, and sustainment further expose these seams. For example, remotely piloted aircraft operations may involve RCAF-managed platforms, Army tactical employment, and joint-level integration under CJFC, creating potential friction in prioritization and control. Similarly, intelligence fusion requires the integration of data and analysis across multiple commands and systems that are not always interoperable, while cyber operations depend on capabilities and authorities distributed across several organizations. Sustainment functions face parallel challenges, as logistics and support trades must be sourced across the environments to enable joint operations. Finally, the transition to CJFC introduces additional risks, including duplication of staff functions, unclear decision rights, and ongoing legislative uncertainty. Taken together, these factors suggest that while CJFC may enhance coordination, it remains constrained by enduring structural, personnel, and institutional limitations—raising questions as to whether it resolves fragmentation or simply reorganizes it.

The analysis of CJFC suggests that, while the command represents a meaningful step toward greater joint integration, it does not fully resolve the underlying structural challenges that have historically constrained the CAF's ability to generate, sustain, and develop joint capabilities—particularly within support trades. By centralizing responsibility for integration without correspondingly centralizing authority over force generation, personnel development, and institutional governance, CJFC risks creating a mismatch between accountability and control. In practical terms, this means CJFC may be held responsible for delivering integrated operational effects while remaining dependent on external organizations—namely the environmental commands and CMP, for the personnel, training, and systems required to achieve them. As a result, many of the same issues observed under CJOC and CANOSCOM, fragmented ownership,

⁶² Department of National Defence. “Canadian Forces Health Services Group Welcomes New Commander and Surgeon General.” *Canada.ca*. Accessed April 21, 2026. <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/news/2023/>

reliance on individual augmentees, and coordination-intensive processes may persist under a new organizational structure rather than being fundamentally resolved.

The effectiveness of CJFC will depend on the CAF's ability to institutionalize joint career pathways, training pipelines, and professional military education frameworks that align with joint operational requirements. This would require closer integration between CJFC and CMP to ensure personnel systems are responsive to joint capability demands. Much will depend too on the final all domain operations strategy that CJOC is devising because it will define what "joint" means in future operations—and therefore what kinds of people, skills, and career structures CJFC must generate.

While CJFC may strengthen integration and coordination of enabling functions such as logistics, and communications, it also limits its direct influence on operational outcomes. As a result, its effectiveness will depend on how well it can shape capabilities that are ultimately employed by CJOC. Furthermore, as a newly established organization, many of its intended benefits, including improved readiness, interoperability, and decision-making, remain aspirational. It will take time to determine whether CJFC can translate its coordinating role into measurable improvements in operational effectiveness. This approach should support improved readiness, enhanced interoperability, timely decision-making, and greater operational effectiveness in an evolving security environment.⁶³

Despite skepticism that CJFC's creation simply adds another senior leadership position, its establishment reflects a recognized need to address longstanding coordination challenges within the CAF. It seeks to improve coherence, foster innovation, and strengthen interoperability across domains and with allies. However, the extent to which these intended benefits outweigh the risks of added complexity and potential overlap in command structures remains an open question, particularly in high-tempo or resource-constrained operational environments.⁶⁴

The proposed CJFC has the potential to address a long-standing gap in the integration of joint capabilities within the CAF, particularly given that it has been assigned clear authority to prioritize and coordinate capabilities across competing demands. What remains uncertain, however, is not its mandate, but whether it will be able to effectively execute it in practice. If CJFC is unable to translate this authority into tangible outcomes, particularly in an environment that includes defined existing organizations such as CJOC, the SJS, and the environmental commanders, it risks reinforcing a recurring pattern in CAF command evolution, where new structures are introduced without fully resolving underlying integration challenges.

Part 5: Conclusion: A Step Forward—With Outcomes Still Evolving

The evolution of the Canadian Armed Forces' command structure, from the functional specialization of the Dot.com, through the consolidation of operational authority under CJOC, to the establishment of the CJFC reflects a sustained effort to improve the integration and effectiveness of joint capabilities. Each reform has addressed specific coordination challenges,

⁶³ Department of National Defence, "Canadian Joint Forces Command," Backgrounder.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

enhanced unity of effort and strengthening the ability to manage increasingly complex domestic and expeditionary operations.

This analysis demonstrates that the CAF continues to operate within a system where authority, responsibility, and capability generation remain misaligned. While CJOC improved centralized operational control, it did not eliminate reliance on decentralized force generation or address the enduring strain on support trades. Similarly, although CJFC represents a meaningful step toward centralized stewardship of joint capabilities, it does not fundamentally resolve the fragmentation of authority across environmental commands, CMP, and functional authorities. As a result, CJFC risks inheriting many of the same limitations that constrained previous models, including distributed ownership, coordination-intensive processes, and dependence on external actors for personnel and training.

CAF command structures have evolved in response to an increasingly complex security environment, including the growing importance of cyber, space, and information domains. From the DOT.com model, which reflected the demands of the post-9/11 era, to CJOC's consolidation of operational command to address hybrid warfare, each reform has aimed to improve coordination and responsiveness. The establishment of CJFC continues this evolution by providing centralized leadership for the development, integration, and sustainment of joint capabilities, with the intent of enabling more effective multi-domain operations.

However, while CJFC aligns joint enablers such as logistics, health services, and joint force development more closely with operational demands, this analysis suggests that structural challenges persist. In particular, the continued separation between authority over capability development and responsibility for operational outcomes limits the extent to which CJFC can fully deliver integrated effects. As a result, CJFC may enhance coordination, but it does not fundamentally resolve the enduring challenges between force generation, capability management, and force employment within the CAF.

The evolution of the CAF's command structure over the past two decades reflects a transition from functional specialization to unified operational command and, more recently, to centralized management of joint capabilities. The DOT.com model, designed to separate force generation from force employment, created functional silos that made it difficult to coordinate capabilities across domestic, international, and support domains. Operational experience, particularly in Afghanistan, demonstrated that this separation limited effectiveness and underscored the need to integrate sustainment considerations more directly into operational planning.⁶⁵

The establishment of CJOC marked a significant step toward achieving unity of command by consolidating domestic, international, and support functions within a single organization. This improved the CAF's ability to execute operations; however, it also introduced new challenges,

⁶⁵ Coombs, Howard. "Afghanistan One Year Later: Canadian Strategic Lessons Identified and Not Learned." Canadian Global Affairs Institute, September 2022.
https://www.cgai.ca/afghanistan_one_year_later_canadian_strategic_lessons_identified_and_not_learned, 2.

including increased organizational complexity and the continued fragmentation of joint capabilities across the institution.⁶⁶

The creation of CJFC represents the next phase in this evolution, aimed at centralizing the development, integration, and sustainment of joint enablers while allowing CJOC to focus on mission execution.⁶⁷ While this structure has the potential to enhance long-term capability management and improve readiness, it does not fully resolve the underlying structural challenges related to the distribution of authority, responsibility, and force generation across the CAF. Although CJFC may strengthen coordination and integration, its ultimate effectiveness will depend on whether it can overcome these enduring institutional tensions. Until then, it represents an important step forward, but not a complete solution to longstanding challenges in joint capability employment and sustainment.

If the new ways of war are driven by data, the CAF's latest command evolution might better situate the CAF for modern threats by ensuring joint capabilities are developed with the future needs in mind via CJFC. Despite the shifting boxes on the organizational chart, the CAF's strategic objective remains unchanged: the defence of Canada and the fulfillment of its international obligations; what is changing is how the CAF achieves this, through new structures and approaches designed to better adapt, integrate, and respond to today's fast-paced, complex, and continually evolving threat environment.

As a result, CJFC represents not the resolution of these challenges, but the latest stage in the CAF's ongoing effort to reconcile the demands of integration with the realities of its institutional structure.

⁶⁶ Department of National Defence. *Joint Logistics Modernization Campaign Plan*. Canada.ca. last accessed March 16, 2026. <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/reports-publications/joint-logistics-modernization-campaign-plan.html>, 5-9.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

Definitions - Defence Terminology Bank ⁶⁸

Command (noun) - A unit, group of units, organization or area under the authority of a single individual. Record 23382

Command (verb) - the authority vested in an individual of the armed forces for the direction, coordination and control of military forces. NATO Terminology Bank Record 14848

Command & Control (C2) - The exercise of authority and direction by a commander over assigned, allocated and attached forces in the accomplishment of a mission. Record 5950

Control – The authority exercised by commanders over part of the activities of subordinate organizations, or other organizations not normally under their command, which encompasses the responsibility for implementing orders or directives.

Note: All or part of this authority may be transferred or delegated. Record 375

Force Development - A system of integrated and interdependent processes used to identify, conceptualize and implement necessary changes to existing force capabilities; or develop new force capabilities.

Note: FD processes are the following: manage the force of today, build the force of today, design the force of tomorrow and conceive the future force. Record 32172

Force Employer - An operational level commander responsible for force employment. Record 41472

Force Generator - A commander responsible for organizing, training and equipping forces for force employment. Record 41471 -

Joint Capabilities - are military functions and resources that are essential across all branches of the armed forces and enable operations in all five CAF domains: land, sea, air, cyber, space.

[Canadian Joint Forces Command \(CJFC\) - Canada.ca](http://Canada.ca)

Pan-domain - Across the operational environment as a unified whole. Note: Some of Canada's Allies have adopted similar terms "Multi-Domain" and "All-Domain". These terms have a common objective of achieving coherence across domains as a unified whole. [Pan-Domain](#)

[Command & Control \(PDC2\) Concept Paper - Canada.ca](#)

Support - Administrative and logistics aid provided to a formation, unit, other element or individual. Record 1361

⁶⁸ Department of National Defence, Defence Terminology Bank, last modified February 5, 2015, [Defence Terminology Bank](#) except where noted.

Annex A – Definitions

Supported Command - A command that receives forces or other support from another command and has primary responsibility for all aspects of an assigned task. Record 32319

Supporting Command - A command that provides forces or other support to another command. Record 32320

Figure 1 – Canadian Joint Forces Command (CJFC) Organizational Chart (2025)



Figure 2 – Canadian Operational Support Command (CANOSCOM) Organizational Chart (2006)

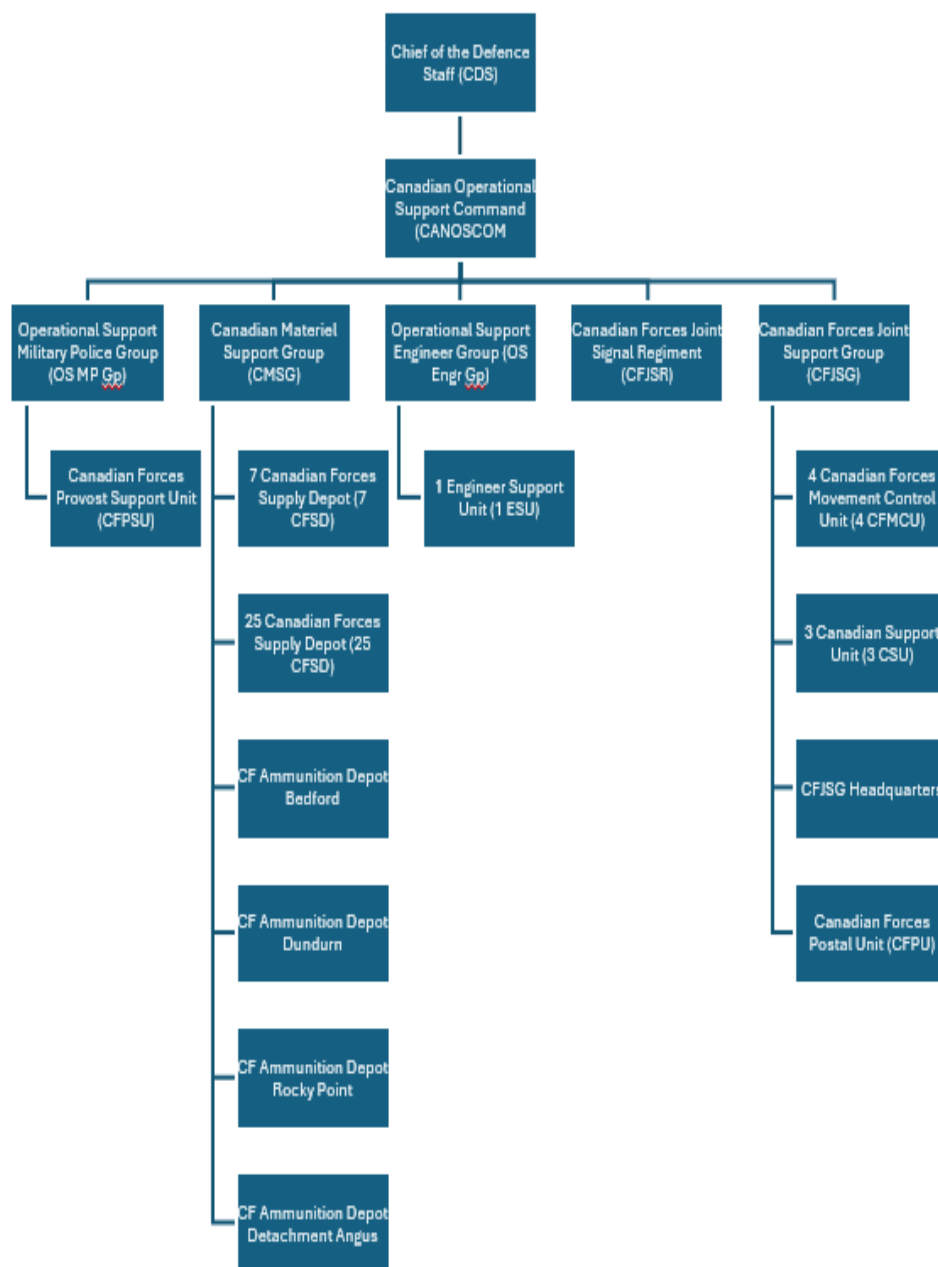
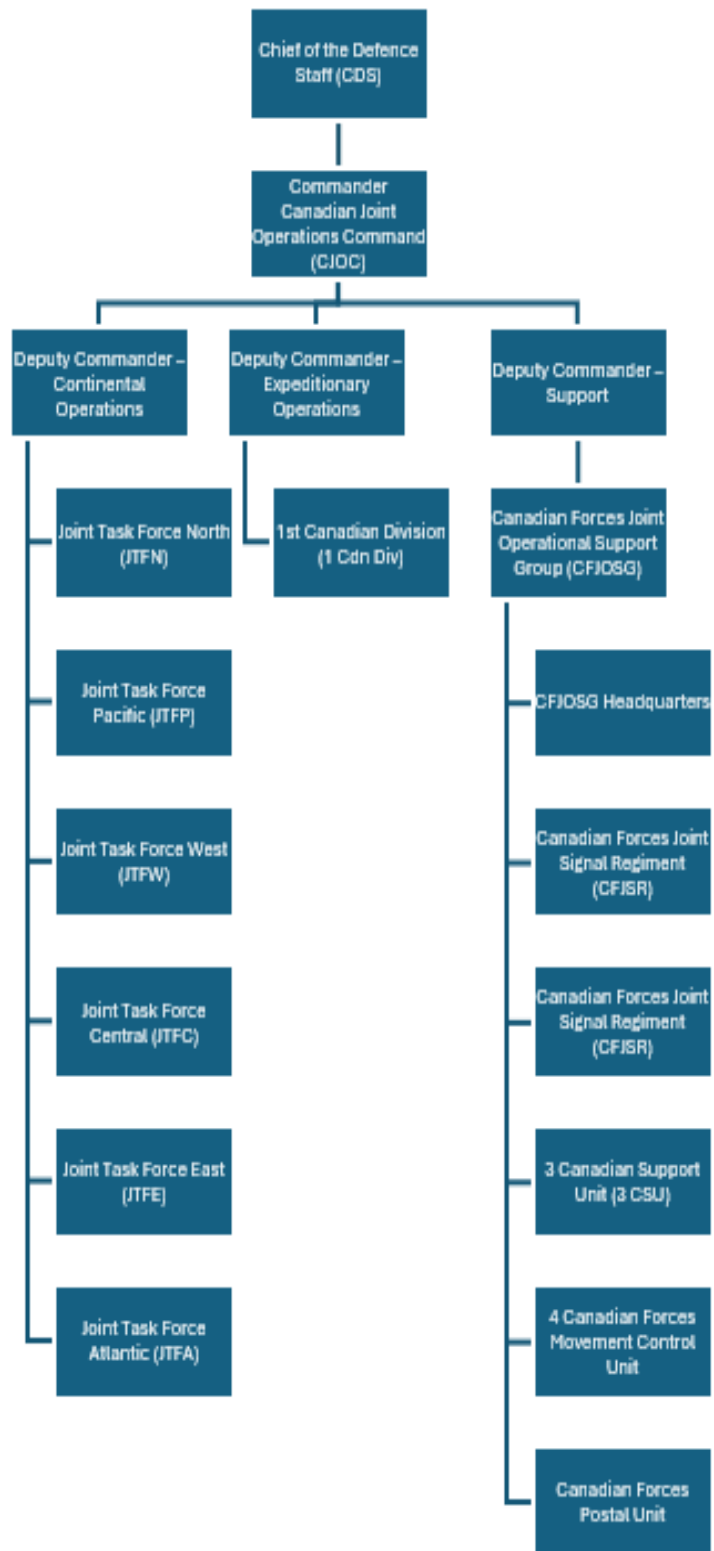


Figure 3 – Canadian Joint Operational Command (CJOC) Organizational Chart



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