



Territorial Battalion Group by John McLearn

This paper covers the creation, role and tasks of the territorial battalion group (TBG).

The TBG as a concept initially appeared in the Conservative party platform for the 2006 election. The group was subject to a famous (infamous) Liberal party ad that attacked the idea of Canadian soldiers “in our streets,” an ad which went over very poorly at that time. The intent of the concept was to have ten to twelve battalion¹ size organizations across the country to support civil authorities in the event of a domestic natural emergency. These battalions would be drawn from the Reserve Force and equipped for response and support tasks. In 2016, it is very likely that the TBG concept will likely be included in the Liberal Government Defence Review and therefore is subject to change.

Shortly after the federal elections on 1 September 2006, the Director General Land Reserve published the planning document for the establishment of the TBG. This was followed quickly by the Director Land Support Planning issuing the TBG Initiating Directive on 24 October 2006. The Army was at this point in a state of transition from peacetime operations to fighting a war in Afghanistan which required a review of resources and of what was actually required of the Army in these new circumstances. The Director of Land Force Development published a Land Force Domestic Operations Planning Guidance dated 13 September 2008 which provided roles for the Reserve in domestic operations. Also published was the Master Implementation Plan (MIP) Force 2013 on 31 August 2010. The Chief of Land Staff, later Commander of the Canadian Army (CA), Lieutenant-General Peter Devlin followed this up and issued further guidance in his Force 2013 Planning Guidance on 13 September 2010. This required a review of the current support program to the main ‘Army first response’ organization, the Immediate Response Unit (IRU), as this would continue to be the first responder from the Army despite the creation of Reserve Force TBG. The MIP for the formal establishment of the TBG was issued on 7 May 2012. There were other documents created by Land Force Areas² and their subordinate Reserve brigades,³ however, most of these documents were based on the MIP and depended on local conditions and resources.

All this development was part of overall transformation of the Canadian Army into an integrated force that utilizes the particular capabilities of the Regular and Reserve Forces in a single entity. The use of the Reserve Force was based on three factors. First was the geographic spread of Reserve units throughout the nation. Second, as the Reserves were already in place, there were potentially costs savings. And lastly the use of Reserves as the primary responders allowed better use of resources within the geographic area.

The actual implementation story was somewhat different as several Land Force Areas “jumped the gun” and started work on the TBG concept almost immediately in fall of 2006. This was not a surprise as often Reserve units needed to combine to provide sufficient numbers to create viable tactical organizations for major exercises or for domestic responses such as SwissAir 111 in the Atlantic or the ice storms in Quebec and Eastern Ontario. This initiative to create the groups merely formalized something that in fact already existed and was used in exercises such as the SOUTHBOUND TROOPER series in the Atlantic Area and the TRILLIUM series in the Central Area (Ontario).

The question now becomes what is a TBG and what is its role? The MIP is still relevant and covers most aspects of the creation and development of the TBG. Any conversation about the TBG must also include discussion on the role of the IRU in domestic operations.

The IRU is based on a Regular Force unit(s) that upon receipt of a warning order ‘force generates’ and employs CA assets under a Land Component Commander (LCC) under a regional joint task force headquarters. Canadian Joint Operations Command (CJOC) allocates forces for a particular operation. In order to do this, CJOC acquires suitable forces from the major force generators: the Royal Canadian Navy, the CA and the Royal Canadian Air Force. These forces are normally attached to a joint task force headquarters within the affected region for employment in the operation. For a major operation, subordinate component commanders such as a LCC can be appointed. The IRU is the first military organization on the scene of an incident if military assistance has been requested. The forces operate to support government whether federal, provincial or municipal.

The TBG Implementation Directive stated that the TBG would consist of a headquarters of about 35 persons, between two and four ‘Domestic Response Companies⁴’ (each being approximately 100 to 120 persons) and a support element (approximately 100 persons). Individual Reserve units within a brigade are tasked to provide a portion of the organization. Some specialists such as medical and legal support would have to be requested from their parent organization such as a Health Services Group or Regional Judge Advocate General’s office. These types of attachments are requested as necessary for a particular operation’s needs. The TBG’s final strength can be between 450 and 700 personnel.

The TBG’s job in domestic operations is to either replace or augment the IRU. This is especially important if the domestic operation is going to take a prolonged period. In such cases, the TBG can be either a separate organization or placed under command of the IRU. Just a single company could be deployed as well. Personnel involved in an operation are placed on ‘class C’ or full time service for the duration of the operation.

The TBG is ‘all arms,’ it can have infantry, armoured reconnaissance, artillery, signals, intelligence, logistics, public affairs, influence activities, and depending on the situation, legal officers and liaison officers and personnel from the local authorities, all under a headquarters element. Depending on the situation, sometimes only a portion of the organization is used. Small elements come from specific units and are usually of one military occupation, however the Direct Response Company can have multiple occupations in its composition. The personnel, vehicles and equipment are provided by the parent Reserve units, as the TBG headquarters

consists only of a small planning and command staff on a day-to-day basis and is sometimes as few as three fulltime persons.

Personnel remain with their parent unit for normal annual training, however, depending on the nature of the TBG's tasks they may also receive training specific for the need of the operation. An example would be training in chain saw operation and safety.

In summary, the TBG is a battalion size organization made up of soldiers of varying occupations in formed bodies of company size. The TBG provides a measure of flexible back up and augmentation to Regular Force organizations when needed in a domestic operation. The Canadian Armed Forces cannot fail in a domestic operation, particularly when lives are at stake. The TBG provides another layer of capability to ensure the necessary resources are available.

Note:

1. A battalion is a military unit. The use of the term 'battalion' varies by nationality and branch of service. Typically a battalion consists of 300 to 800 soldiers and is divided into a number of companies. A battalion is typically commanded by a lieutenant-colonel. In some countries, of which Canada is one, the word 'battalion' is associated with the infantry. Wikipedia; <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battalion>, accessed 26 January 2016
2. The Canadian Army was divided into geographic land force areas. That organization echelon has been replaced by divisions. A division has two or more brigades.
3. A brigade is a major tactical military formation that is typically composed of three to six battalions plus supporting elements. Wikipedia; <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brigade>, accessed 26 January 2016
4. A company is a military unit, typically consisting of 80–250 soldiers and usually commanded by a major or a captain. Most companies are formed of three to six platoons. Wikipedia; [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Company \(military unit\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Company_(military_unit)), accessed 26 January 2016

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