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CORE COMPETENCIES FOR THE
ROYAL NEW ZEALAND AIR FORCE

by

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Abstract

The US Air Force has developed core competencies which can be shown to be a product of vision and mission, and strategic context and policy guidance. This paper will investigate whether the USAF core competencies can be used by the Royal New Zealand Air Force. Firstly it examines the process by which the USAF developed its core competencies. It considers the mission, vision and policy direction that the USAF follows. Those factors are broken down into their basic elements and then recombined to form the core competencies. The similarities and differences of the USAF and the RNZAF are then discussed and it is concluded that the specific USAF core competencies are not transferable to the RNZAF. The process of core competency development is however transferable and is thus applied to the RNZAF. Policy guidance for the RNZAF is examined, as is its vision and mission. The same process that the paper identified as the USAF's path to its core competencies is then applied to the RNZAF case. Five core competencies are the result. They are Precision Attack, Directed Air Mobility, Long Range Maritime Patrol, Interoperability, and Effective and Efficient Sortie Generation.

Chapter 1

Introduction

This paper sets out to develop core competencies for the Royal New Zealand Air Force. The experience of the US Air Force in developing its core competencies forms the basis for this analysis. It is not the aim of the paper to simply copy the substance of the USAF core competencies or the rationale for having them, but to develop a particular set that apply to, and are useful for, the RNZAF. It is the process that will be investigated, and applied between the services.

The formulation of USAF core competencies occurred concurrently with the publishing of Carl Builder's *The Icarus Syndrome*. That book claimed that the Air Force was suffering an institutional crisis due to a loss of vision and the abandonment of its original air power theory.¹ He suggested new vision and mission statements which were partly reflected in the updated vision and mission of the Air Force. The paper then reviews the policy guidance that the Air Force has received from government and joint staff level. The claim is made that when the "heart and soul," i.e. vision and mission, are linked to the strategic context provided by policy guidance, then core competencies are the result. The actual USAF core competencies are then reviewed in light of this claim to show how that process works.

There are similarities between the USAF and the RNZAF that make the development of core competencies transferable. Builder's institutional health problems are evident in both services, and both work within a similar political context. The strategic context of the two nations, however, is quite different and so the actual set of core competencies will be different, even if the process to develop them is similar.

The policy guidance given to the RNZAF is examined, as is its vision and mission. A set of five core competencies is then derived by combining these aspects in the same manner used by the USAF. The core competencies suggested for the RNZAF are Precision Attack, Directed Air Mobility, Long Range Maritime Patrol, Interoperability, and Effective and Efficient Sortie Generation.

Notes

¹ Carl H. Builder, *The Icarus Syndrome: The Role of Air Power Theory in the Evolution and Fate of the U.S. Air Force* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1996), xvii.

Chapter 2

Developing the USAF Core Competencies

Once unified under a theory of air power, the Air Force had, in the space of little more than a decade, become a collection of object- and process-oriented factions under the management of the airplane pilots and operators. The time for fateful action – of commission or omission – had arrived.

—Carl Builder

Core Competencies: A Product of Renewed Vision

Carl Builder's *Icarus Syndrome* claims that the US Air Force suffered from something of an institutional health crisis in the late 1980s / early 1990s. He goes on to suggest that a new vision and mission for the Air Force is the first step to be taken in its recovery.¹ Once a good vision and mission statement is adopted, such things as roles, functions and core competencies can readily be deduced. If it is accepted for the purposes of this paper that there was indeed such a crisis in the Air Force, then the formulation of a vision and mission statement is one path towards developing core competencies.

The major symptom of ill health that Builder uncovered was an attitude of careerism, or “stove-piping” among mid-career officers which was viewed by senior leaders as a loss of the professionalism of arms. He attributed this symptom to an abandonment of the original air power doctrine.

The senior leadership has failed to keep the heart – the mission of air power—alive and vibrant by keeping it at the forefront of all its actions. And without that mission, the members of the Air Force have had nothing to commit themselves to except their own careers or specialities.²

That original air power doctrine was the driving force for military use of the air, and ultimately for an independent air force. It was visionary in nature and served as a rallying point for airmen. They committed themselves to the institution that was built around the original doctrine. Once the vision was abandoned, airmen were left defending the means (flying aircraft), rather than the ends (the mission of air power), and the symptom of careerism was the result. The claims of institutional ill-health at the time must also be considered in context. Congress was reducing defense spending and the Air Force was down-sizing (including forced redundancies), so maybe Builder's claims were overstated. Whatever the cause, a close look at the vision and mission of the Air Force was required.

A clear idea of the vision and mission of any organization is essential, certainly within the organization and possibly outside the organization. Effective institutional vision must be inspirational, relevant and realistic, clear and distinctive, and pervasive and stable, widely shared and understood.³ Former Air Force Chief of Staff General Merrill McPeak described vision as “our most hoped-for future state.”⁴ The early vision of air pioneers was that command of the air necessarily meant total victory.⁵ That was both an effective institutional vision and a most hoped-for state. The most recent vision statement for the Air Force, “Air Force people building the world's most respected air and space force...global power and reach for America,” probably meets these tests too, although Builder would disagree.⁶ In the intervening period, when it was shown that air power alone would not guarantee victory, the lack of clear vision contributed to the

institutional malaise that existed. Mission too is important. If vision is the high ideal to aim at, then mission is the practical essence of how to get there. The two go hand in hand and together encapsulate where the organization is going.

A clear vision and mission will give rise almost unconsciously to core competencies. Core competencies are the things that the organization must be good at so that it can do its mission on the way to reaching its vision. Core competencies have been described as “the Service’s...essential contribution to the overall effectiveness of DOD,”⁷ and as “one means of expressing our unique form of military power.”⁸ In essence they are those essential, but not necessarily service-unique, capabilities that a service contributes towards the national strategic objectives. The USAF vision of global power and reach coupled to its mission of control and exploitation of air and space, lead directly to requirements such as global attack and global mobility. The vision and mission should be entirely consistent with national objectives; core competencies are the logical adjunct to the mission and vision as situated by the national objectives.

This chapter so far has summarized the symptoms and causes of the poor institutional health claimed to exist in the US Air Force in the late 80s / early 90s. The causes have been attributed to a lack of clear mission and vision. Core competencies start to formulate once vision and mission are clearly articulated; they can be refined when the strategic context is considered.

US Policy Direction

Vision and mission set the tone for core competencies, but policy guidance from the government is required to set them within the strategic context. In the US the President issues the National Security Strategy (NSS) which the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of

Staff (CJCS) converts into a National Military Strategy (NMS). The CJCS has also produced Joint Vision 2010, from which the Department of the Air Force has developed its vision document and laid out its core competencies.

The NSS sets out broad policy guidelines that help to situate possible core competencies. It discusses the “imperative of engagement,”⁹ which directly implies the requirement for armed forces to operate outside of the US. The imperative of engagement is described in global terms, and so a global presence or deployment capability is required. The NSS also reserves the right to use unilateral, decisive military action.¹⁰ Thus the military must be capable of offensive action. The requirement to win two overlapping major theater wars (MTW) further focuses military effort.¹¹ Given the fiscal constraints that exist, a two MTW scenario would require extensive transportation capability. Emphasis is placed on using technology and information superiority to gain military advantage throughout the NSS. This must also be used by the armed forces to guide their structure and capabilities. The NSS provides broad guidance to the military about how to structure its forces, and what capabilities to emphasize. This will shape the development of core competencies.

The CJCS has published two documents to give more detailed guidance to the individual services. The *National Military Strategy* is directly subordinate to the NSS, and *Joint Vision 2010* conveys his vision for the future to the services. The NMS introduces four strategic concepts for all services that will eventually contribute to core competencies.¹² Strategic Agility translates the imperative of engagement into a military capability, which implies the requirement for rapid global transportation of easily deployed forces. The concept of Overseas Presence reinforces the imperative of

engagement and demands global mobility. The third, Power Projection, requires the ability to attack even in the absence of overseas presence. Finally, Decisive Force implies the ability to use force in a massive and precise manner. *Joint Vision 2010* emphasizes future rather than current capabilities. It describes four operational concepts: Dominant Maneuver, Precision Engagement, Full-dimensional Protection, and Focused Logistics.¹³ Individual services need core competencies that relate to, or lead to, these concepts.

Policy direction for the Air Force is contained in presidential level directives such as the *National Security Strategy*. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff focuses that direction with his *National Military Strategy*, and charts a vision with *Joint Vision 2010*. Core competencies can be developed from here by combining the previously discussed vision and mission with the policy direction. The next chapter considers the elements of the vision, mission, and policy direction and uses those elements to derive the USAF core competencies.

Notes

¹ Carl H. Builder, *The Icarus Syndrome: The Role of Air Power Theory in the Evolution and Fate of the U.S. Air Force* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1996), 209.

² *Ibid.*, xvii.

³ *Ibid.*, 276.

⁴ Merrill A. McPeak, *Selected Works 1990-1994* (Maxwell AFB: Air University Press, 1995), 143.

⁵ Giulio Douhet, *The Command of the Air*, trans. Dino Ferrari (Washington, D.C.: Office of Air Force History, 1983), 28.

⁶ Builder, 287.

⁷ Commission on Roles and Missions of the Armed Forces, *Directions for Defense: report of the Commission on Roles and Missions of the Armed Forces* (Washington, D.C.: The Commission, 1995), 2-20.

⁸ Gen. Ronald R. Fogleman, "Strategic Vision and Core Competencies," *Defense Issues*, vol. 11, no. 96 (1996), 2.

Notes

⁹ *A National Security Strategy for a New Century* (Washington, D.C.: The White House, May 1997), 2.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹² Department of Defense, *National Military Strategy of the United States of America: Shape, Respond, Prepare Now: a Military Strategy for a New Era* (Washington, D.C.: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1997), 19.

¹³ Department of Defense, *Joint Vision 2010* (Washington, D.C.: Joint Chiefs of Staff, n.d.), 13-16.

Chapter 3

The USAF Core Competencies

...we have developed core competencies to provide insight into the specific capabilities that the US Air Force must bring to activities across the range of military operations.

—General Michael E. Ryan
Chief of Staff, USAF, 1997

The USAF core competencies are a direct product of its vision, mission and policy direction. Those factors can be reduced to their basic elements; combining the basic elements will give the core competencies. The previous chapter discussed vision, mission and several policy documents in detail and so it will suffice here to identify the basic elements of each. The process of combining those elements into core competencies will then be described.

The Air Force vision can be reduced to two basic elements. They are global power and global reach.¹ In a similar fashion, the basic elements of the Air Force mission are *control* of air and space, and *exploitation* of air and space.² Several important elements of the *National Security Strategy* have been previously identified; there is an imperative of engagement, US security interests are global in scope, the right to use military force either collectively or unilaterally is reserved, and there is a requirement to cope with two MTW's simultaneously. Two further elements arise; the US will pursue technological and informational superiority,³ and it will maintain its nuclear deterrent.⁴ The four

strategic concepts of the NMS, and the four operational concepts of *Joint Vision 2010* have already been identified. One further underlying concept from *Joint Vision 2010*, that of information superiority, will also be used.⁵ These elements from all factors are listed in the following table.

Table 1. Derivation of Core Competencies.

Mission						
Control of air & space	X			X	X	
Exploitation of air & space		X	X	X	X	
Vision						
Global Power		X				
Global Reach			X			
NSS						
Imperative of Engagement			X			
Global in scope		X	X			
Collective/unilateral action		X				
2 MTW			X			
Technology/information superiority				X	X	
Nuclear deterrent		X				
NMS						
Strategic Agility			X			
Overseas Presence			X			
Power Projection			X	X		
Decisive Force		X				
JV 2010						
Dominant Maneuver		X	X			
Precision Engagement				X		
Full Dimensional Protection	X					
Focused Logistics						X
Information Superiority					X	
Core Competency	Air and Space Superiority	Global Attack	Rapid Global Mobility	Precision Engagement	Information Superiority	Agile Combat Support

Table 1 is designed to show that combining the elements of mission, vision and policy will lead to core competencies. Picking out elements with one theme will lead to one core competency; combining elements of a different theme will lead to another. The table works from the elements to the core competencies; it is not merely a breakdown of

the given core competencies into elements. The same process used by the USAF to derive its core competencies should be transferable to the RNZAF.

Two examples from Table 1 of combining elements into core competencies are considered. The Air Force mission requires the *control* of air and space. One of the operational concepts from *Joint Vision 2010* is full dimensional protection. Control of air and space put another way is air and space superiority. The Air Force can contribute to full dimensional protection by achieving and maintaining air superiority. Space superiority will also enhance that protection. The Air Force's special contribution to meeting the requirements of these two elements can succinctly be described as air and space superiority.

The derivation of global attack can also be seen in Table 1. The mission has the Air Force *exploiting* air and space, i.e., using the medium for military purposes. The vision uses the term global power, and the NSS emphasizes that US interests are global in scope. The NSS goes on to provide for the use of military offensive action if required, including the nuclear option. The use of decisive force is one of the strategic concepts in the NMS. The Air Force has a unique capability to use maneuver to carry out offensive action – part of *Joint Vision 2010*'s dominant maneuver. Combining these elements from an Air Force perspective has the Air Force maneuvering on a global scale, attacking targets from air and space – global attack. Combining the elements of mission, vision and policy along other themes will produce the remaining core competencies.

Mission, vision and policy lead to core competencies. Those factors can be broken down into their basic elements. Combining elements with similar themes results in core competencies. The core competencies are one way of describing the Air Force's special

contribution to the national objectives. The USAF example is given; the process at least should be transferable to the RNZAF.

Notes

¹ Department of the Air Force, *Global Engagement: A Vision for the 21st Century Air Force* (Washington D.C.: Department of the Air Force, n.d.), inside front cover.

² Ibid.

³ *A National Security Strategy for a New Century* (Washington, D.C.: The White House, May 1997), 13.

⁴ Ibid., 9.

⁵ Department of Defense, *Joint Vision 2010* (Washington, D.C.: Joint Chiefs of Staff, n.d.), 10.

Chapter 4

Will the USAF Core Competencies Work for the RNZAF?

There are several similarities between the USAF and the RNZAF experiences of the late 1980s and early 1990s which suggest that the path taken by the USAF to develop core competencies could be equally beneficial to the RNZAF. Furthermore, the two services exist within similar political contexts. For example both services are controlled by civilian-led democratic governments. However there are also significant differences, particularly one of scale. It would seem immediately clear that the RNZAF has no need for global attack for example, and so the actual core competencies will be different.

The RNZAF in the late 1980s / early 1990s was dealing with a reducing budget, decreasing experience of its personnel and widespread change in attitude towards service careers. At the same time, the “vision thing” was gaining momentum. Decreasing budgets were forcing a cutback in operational activities and simultaneously chipping away at some of the perceived benefits of service life (e.g. service housing, leave provisions). The traditional attitudes of working for one company for life were changing in the general labor force and this was reflected in the services. The Air Force became to many people simply another a job rather than a special career of service. The careerism that Builder described in the USAF situation was alive and well in the RNZAF. The process of defining a vision for many organizations in New Zealand, including the

RNZAF, was becoming popular. The RNZAF thus found itself in a very similar position to the USAF. It was trying to deal with careerism, it was faced with decreasing budgets, and it was formulating a new vision.

Along with recent experience, the two services share political and structural context. This suggests that the concept of core competencies can be equally applied to both. New Zealand is a civilian led democratic state. The armed forces of both countries serve their respective civilian masters, even if the particular mechanism of civilian control differs. The RNZAF is one of three services within the NZ Defence Force. Like the USAF, it must have capabilities that support the other services' requirements. Service personnel of both countries are volunteers; they must be attracted rather than compelled to serve, and then they must be retained.

The particular USAF core competencies are not completely applicable to the RNZAF despite the service similarities. For example the RNZAF has no global attack capability nor does it require one to support New Zealand government policy. Rapid global mobility is also beyond the scope of RNZAF operations. A simple copying of the core competencies is not sufficient.

The particular core competencies of the USAF are not directly applicable to the RNZAF, yet both services operate within a similar political and structural context and have faced similar institutional health problems. The process used in developing core competencies is transferable even if the product is not. The previous chapter described how the USAF derived their core competencies from vision, mission and government policy. The next chapter will apply the same process to the RNZAF context resulting in a set of core competencies for that service.

Chapter 5

NZ Defence Policy

This statement of defence policy sets out my Government's commitment to an internationalist approach to New Zealand's foreign and defence policies rather than a purely regional outlook.

—Rt. Hon. J.B. Bolger, Prime Minister

The New Zealand Government gives regular, detailed direction to its defence force about policy. This chapter will review the implications of the latest two policy papers: *The Defence of New Zealand 1991 (DONZ91)* and *The Shape of New Zealand's Defence 1997*. The papers lay out the strategic situation, describe New Zealand's security interests, and comment on force structure. The message of DONZ91 is self-reliance in partnership. The paper discusses New Zealand's local, regional and global security interests, from which a defence strategy is deduced. *The Shape...* reemphasizes the policy framework of the earlier policy paper, but is more specific about particular force elements. These two papers form the context within which the development of core competencies for the RNZAF must be conducted.

DONZ91

New Zealand's local security interests include the fundamental responsibility of any sovereign nation – the protection of territory and sovereignty.¹ As there is no perceived direct threat to New Zealand, external policy must aim to prevent such a threat arising.

The protection of New Zealand's very large Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) is a second but very important local security interest. The requirement for EEZ monitoring and protection will significantly shape the force. The New Zealand economy relies heavily on international trade, the vast majority of which is transported by sea. The protection of sea lines of communication widens New Zealand's local security interests to the regional and global scale.

New Zealand is interested in the security of the Asia/Pacific region for economic reasons, for constitutional reasons, and because of treaty obligations. DONZ91 describes its economic security interests in this area, "We share the interest of other trading nations in ensuring the free passage of shipping through the major trade routes and choke points, and a *shared interest is a shared responsibility* (emphasis added)."² This statement indicates the government's internationalist policy, particularly in the region through which nearly all of its exports and imports are shipped. New Zealand also has constitutional obligations that make it responsible for the defence of several small Pacific Island nations. Specific defence capabilities to meet these obligations such as maritime surveillance and disaster relief are mentioned in DONZ91.³ New Zealand is party to several treaties that further demonstrate her resolve to be engaged in the region. The Canberra Pact 1944, forms the basis of close and enduring defence relations with Australia. ANZUS (1951), which is still in force despite a US/NZ rift, links Australia, New Zealand and the United States. The Five Power Defence Agreement 1971 (FPDA), between New Zealand, Australia, United Kingdom, Singapore and Malaysia is a security cooperation arrangement for the area around Singapore and Malaysia. New Zealand's security interests do not end at the regional level but extend to the international arena.

DONZ91 characterizes New Zealand's effort to be recognized as a good international citizen.⁴ New Zealand is interested in world stability and peace for economical reasons because of its very high dependence on overseas trade. It is also a supporter of democracy, human rights and arms control. New Zealand has been a strong and consistent supporter of United Nations and multinational peacekeeping operations and coalitions. Thus, the government is declaring its intention to contribute to world peace, and the defence force must be in a position to support that policy.

The defence strategy recommended in DONZ91 is "self-reliance in partnership."⁵ This strategy is an attempt to match the large scope of New Zealand's security interests with its limited resources. New Zealand should aim to be self reliant in dealing with small scale contingencies that occur internally or in the South Pacific region. It must, however, rely on mutual interests with other nations, i.e. partnership, when it wishes to be involved in larger operations (either in scale or distance). This government policy gives clear direction as to the types of capabilities that the defence forces should have. They must be capable of small scale operations alone, and also be able to contribute meaningfully to collective action.

DONZ91 sets out New Zealand's security interests at the local, regional and global levels. It then articulates a defence strategy of self-reliance in partnership. The paper has set the strategic level context for the development of core competencies. The successor to DONZ91 will now be reviewed to refine the strategic context.

The Shape of New Zealand's Defence 1997

The 1997 Defence White Paper is called The Shape of New Zealand's Defence, and it updates the previous defence assessment DONZ91. *The Shape...* builds on the material

from DONZ91. It uses the same basic policy framework but then develops specific military capabilities required of the defence force.

The Shape... opens by reiterating the policy framework from DONZ91. It sums it up rather succinctly as containing three elements which guide defence efforts:

1. defending New Zealand against low-levels threats such as incursions into our Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and terrorism
2. contributing to regional security which includes maintaining our key defence relationships with Australia and our Five Power Defence Arrangements (FPDA) partners - Australia, United Kingdom, Malaysia and Singapore
3. being a good international citizen by playing our part in global collective security efforts, particularly peacekeeping.⁶

The overall policy of the government is therefore unchanged. This is an important feature of defence planning. Defence planning needs to be long term, and stable, so that the appropriate force structure and capabilities can be generated. Once confidence is gained that government policy will remain consistent then developing core competencies becomes simpler, with radical changes unlikely to be necessary. Having restated the policy framework, the paper then expands security requirements into five broad regions, summarized as follows.

1. New Zealand and its environs. Deal with low level security challenges, assist the civil authorities, and preserve a base from which to expand the armed forces if required.
2. South Pacific. Maintain stability, provide assistance to civil powers and meet constitutional security obligations.
3. Australia. Maintain capabilities that are compatible with the Australian Defence Force and make an effective contribution to the combined defence of Australia and New Zealand.
4. The Asia Pacific Region. Meet FPDA commitments, and provide capabilities for regional security that are both credible and compatible.
5. Globally. Maintain a capability that can contribute to collective security, peacekeeping and humanitarian operations.⁷

Refining the defence policy into specific areas of interest (however broad) helps to focus force structure and capabilities.

The Shape... derives a set of generic military capabilities that are required to meet the above security requirements. The four generic capabilities that relate specifically to air force operations are:

1. Maritime Air Patrol. A maritime air patrol capability with the range and endurance to patrol New Zealand's EEZ, and a suite of sensors to detect, locate, identify and track unarmed or lightly armed surface vessels in peacetime, and warships should a more serious threat emerge. Also required is an ability to deal with sub-surface targets that would be part of a more serious threat.
2. Air Combat Force. We require an air combat capability to deal with surface threats and be capable of providing air support for both ground and naval forces. It must be capable of operating as part of a larger force, either in support of New Zealand naval and land forces, or as part of a combined air force as a New Zealand contribution to collective defence.
3. Air Transport. New Zealand needs an air transport capability that can undertake tactical roles within New Zealand and the South Pacific, and support forces committed to regional and global security efforts. It must be capable of strategic airlift to deploy and re-supply forces given the long distances which may be involved.
4. Helicopters. A vertical lift capability is required to provide tactical lift for land forces. It is also needed to provide assistance to the civil authorities for such tasks as search and rescue.⁸

This list effectively describes the roles that the RNZAF will need to fulfil to meet the government policy requirements. It will be useful in developing a set of core competencies as it sets very particular requirements of the force.

In summary, the latest two defence policy papers published by the New Zealand government give detailed direction on the strategic situation in which the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) must operate. They outline in some detail the force structure and capabilities required. New Zealand's security interests are described at the local, regional and global level. The NZDF must be able to operate at each of these levels, either alone (self-reliance) or as part of a larger combined force (partnership). The second paper goes further and details roles for the individual services. Together, these papers set out the government's policy for defence and as such provide the strategic context within which

to develop core competencies. The USAF combined government policy with mission and vision to develop its core competencies. The next chapter will consider RNZAF mission and vision in light of New Zealand's defence policy.

Notes

¹ New Zealand Government, *The Defence of New Zealand 1991: A Policy Paper* (Wellington: Government Printer, 1991), 31.

² Ibid., 33.

³ Ibid., 33.

⁴ Ibid., 36.

⁵ Ibid., 52.

⁶ New Zealand Government, *The Shape of New Zealand's Defence: A White Paper* (Wellington: Government Printer, 1997), ch. 1.

⁷ Ibid., ch. 3.

⁸ Ibid., ch. 7.

Chapter 6

RNZAF Mission and Vision

We will develop our levels of expertise and capability to maintain a modern and technologically advanced Air Force.

—Air Vice Marshal Carey Adamson
Chief of Air Staff, RNZAF, 1997

The RNZAF mission and vision are a combination of government policy and other external factors. The NZ Defence Force mission is consistent with the findings of the two recent defence policy papers. The RNZAF mission in turn supports the NZDF mission but focuses on the use of airpower by airmen. The RNZAF vision is indeed visionary, charting a course for the future. Together the mission and vision form the heart of the Air Force, highlighting those ‘special’ aspects that, when placed into the strategic context provided, will transform into core competencies.

NZDF Mission

The NZDF mission is derived from and consistent with the policy framework stated in the latest two defence policy papers.

The primary purpose of the NZDF is to protect the sovereignty and advance the well being of New Zealand by maintaining a level of armed forces sufficient to deal with small contingencies affecting New Zealand and its region, and capable of contributing to collective efforts where our wider interests are involved.¹

The mission addresses the local (...protect the sovereignty...), regional (...and its region...), and global (...wider interests...) security interests that the government wishes to pursue. The mission also encapsulates the government's preferred defence strategy of self-reliance in partnership. This NZDF mission originally gave rise to the following RNZAF mission: "To maintain a well equipped, professional and effective air force that is capable of conducting air operations and contributing to the achievement of the NZDF's mission."² This mission statement falls short of what a mission statement could be. It is very general and really has little to do with the Air Force. If "air force" was changed to "army" and "air operations" to "ground operations" then the mission statement would equally apply to the Army. It could even be applied to any business organization that supports its head office mission by changing one or two words. In response to these criticisms a new mission has been formed.

RNZAF Mission

The new RNZAF mission describes what the Air Force does that's unique, why it does it, and who it is: "To carry out military air operations, in defence of New Zealand's strategic interests, with professionalism, integrity and teamwork."³ The unique activity of the RNZAF that the mission describes is "military air operations." This immediately places a two part focus on potential core competencies. The RNZAF carries out *air* operations, not land or sea (or space) operations. Secondly, it is specifically interested in *military* air operations. Thus the RNZAF is unique from the other services, and it is unique from other air operators. The old mission referred to air operations in the general sense; the addition of the adjective *military* has narrowed the mission significantly, without removing any of its application.

The *why* of the RNZAF is contained within its mission—“...defence of New Zealand’s strategic interests....”⁴ This explanation is a vast improvement on “...contributing to the achievement of the NZDF’s mission.”⁵ That original clause immediately raises the question of what is the NZDF mission. Rather than guess that it is probably related to the protection of New Zealand’s strategic interest, the new mission states it explicitly. This part of the mission links back to the findings of the defence policy papers which is the proper place for the government to define its strategic interests.

The third part of the mission describes what sort of people are needed to fulfil the mission—those that show “...professionalism, integrity and teamwork.” This is an important motivator of personnel to achieve the ideals described. It also sets a standard by which they can measure themselves, or others. Core competencies need to somehow reflect the type of people that contribute to the unique military capabilities that the RNZAF provides.

RNZAF Vision

The Air Force vision focuses on the future. It is indeed akin to General McPeak’s description of vision as “our most hoped-for future state.”⁶ The vision is put by the RNZAF Chief of Air Staff as follows: “Our vision is of a military aviation oriented, high technology and forward looking Service of highly skilled personnel.”⁷ The vision will help in developing core competencies because it focuses on what the Air Force should be like in the future. Like the mission, it emphasizes *military* aviation. The implied criticism is that the Air Force of today is not enough oriented towards military aviation. Perhaps this is a reflection of the problems of careerism. Within the set of core

competencies there should be one (or several) that steer the Air Force towards military air operations.

The vision highlights the need for high technology and a forward looking perspective. This is an important guide to the future development of the Service in fiscally constrained times. With money short, one option is to draw back from expensive modernization. The vision gives the opposite direction. The final clause of the vision, "...highly skilled personnel," directs the Air Force towards high standards of personnel. As was the case with equipment the direction is important in seeing where the Air Force should develop in times of limited resources.

The RNZAF mission describes the who, what and why of the Air Force. The CAS' vision sets goals for the future. Together they form the heart of the Air Force. They link to government policy through the NZDF mission. That policy gives the strategic guidance which shapes the mission and vision into what will eventually become core competencies.

Notes

¹ Royal New Zealand Air Force, *Royal New Zealand Air Force: Strategic Plan FY 1996/97* (Wellington: RNZAF News, 1996), 6.

² Ibid., 7.

³ Royal New Zealand Air Force, *Vision for the Future* (Wellington: RNZAF Public Relations Office, 1997), 3.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ RNZAF, *Strategic Plan*, 6.

⁶ Merrill A. McPeak, *Selected Works 1990-1994* (Maxwell AFB: Air University Press, 1995), 143.

⁷ RNZAF, *Vision for the Future*, 2.

Chapter 7

The RNZAF Core Competencies

This paper suggests five core competencies for the RNZAF. They have been derived from the strategic context and force structure directed by government policy, and from the RNZAF mission and vision. The five core competencies are Precision Attack, Directed Air Mobility, Long Range Maritime Patrol, Interoperability, and Effective and Efficient Sortie Generation. Each of them will be discussed in turn, noting how they were derived and what they mean.

Precision Attack

Both of the defence policy papers and the RNZAF mission require the defence of the sovereignty and territory of New Zealand. Neither rule out the use of offensive action; in fact *The Shape...* specifies the requirement for “...an air combat capability to deal with surface threats....”¹ The government requires forces to be self-reliant when dealing with small scale contingencies. Small scale contingencies will possibly require an offensive air capability. Such a capability is consistent with the mission and vision, both of which emphasize the military aspect of air operations. The vision also seeks the use of high technology. This technology is now available to achieve a high level of precision from the attack capability. Government policy is to support collective action and offer New Zealand forces to join in coalition operations. To be credible and useful in any coalition,

RNZAF combat aircraft must have a precision attack capability. Hence, Precision Attack should be a core competency of the RNZAF.

Precision Attack is the capability to attack precision targets, both land and sea, from the air. The RNZAF already has a limited precision attack capability. This core competency can be further developed by pursuing the technological advances that are giving rise to more and better precision munitions.

Directed Air Mobility

The Shape... drives the requirement for air mobility in several ways. Firstly it requires a generic military capability of vertical lift to provide tactical lift for land forces and for civil assistance tasks. Secondly, it reflects the regional and global nature of New Zealand's security interests by requiring an air transport capability that provides tactical support around the South Pacific and strategic support (deployment and resupply) elsewhere.² The air transport fleet is admittedly small and so the concept of global mobility is somewhat of an overstatement. Thirdly, air mobility is required to meet the aim of self-reliance for small scale contingencies within the South Pacific, and to support any New Zealand forces that deploy for collective action or peacekeeping. Vision and mission again emphasize *military* air operations and so a core competency of simply Air Mobility is insufficient. The term Directed Air Mobility is used to account for the direction of air transport resources into tactical operations which is quite distinct from the air mobility that an airline could provide. It also allows for the small size of the RNZAF air transport capability. Air transport operations will be specifically (if not individually) tasked.

Directed Air Mobility is the air transport of personnel and equipment as directed to support NZDF operations. The scope is very wide, from the helicopter-bearing of infantry during a ground attack or carrying hay to feed some of New Zealand's 50 million sheep during a civil emergency, through tactical transport in the South Pacific, to strategic deployment resupply of ground forces involved in peacekeeping or collective action operations on the other side of the globe.

Long Range Maritime Patrol

Both defence policy papers acknowledge New Zealand's unique geographic situation. The country is surrounded by large oceans over which any potential aggressor must cross, and over which New Zealand's international trade must be transported. Thus observation and protection of the sea lines of communication around New Zealand is an important security interest. *The Shape...* requires the generic military capability of maritime air patrol equipped with both surface and sub-surface sensors.³ Observation of surface shipping could be undertaken from space but New Zealand has no capability in that arena. Alternatively, it could be a naval task but this is largely impractical given the large ocean area around New Zealand. Sub-surface detection will be a joint responsibility of air and naval forces. The RNZAF, unlike the USAF, operates all military aircraft in New Zealand and so the requirement for maritime observation can only be met by the RNZAF. *Long Range* Maritime Patrol is chosen as the core competency to emphasize that the distances involved are large.

Long Range Maritime Patrol is the surveillance and prosecution of surface and sub-surface shipping within New Zealand's area of interest. The scope of targets ranges from warships and submarines, through fishing and commercial vessels, to search and rescue

targets. In line with the vision of increased use of technology, the RNZAF is currently modernizing its fleet of long range maritime patrol aircraft.

Interoperability

The concept of self-reliance in partnership is a catch cry of both defence policy papers reviewed. “Partnership” means cooperating with like-minded countries in the pursuit of wider security interests such as the maintenance of international law and order, and freedom of the seas.⁴ The ability to operate effectively alongside forces of other nations requires interoperability. The RNZAF mission seeks professionalism in its personnel and that is one prerequisite for international cooperation and interoperability. The pursuit of technological advances in accordance with the vision will enable interoperability with the most likely coalition partners, Australia, United Kingdom, United States. Interoperability is a critical requirement for the Air Force if it is to meet its mission, vision and government directed tasks.

Interoperability is defined in *The Shape...* as a level of standardization where “forces can provide services to, and accept services from, each other.”⁵ The RNZAF must improve in this regard through professional development of its personnel by exposing them to international situations, and through pursuing technological compatibility (not equivalence) with likely coalition partners.

Effective and Efficient Sortie Generation

This core competency enables all the others. The defence policy papers require the NZDF to be self-reliant in many circumstances. Thus the RNZAF must have the aircraft available to carry out its assigned tasks, and the generation of those sorties must be from

within the wider Air Force, i.e. effective sortie generation. The process of generating aircraft sorties must also be as efficient as possible due to limited resources. Inefficiencies will use up valuable resources and will eventually impact on the effectiveness of sortie generation. Efficient sortie generation may involve contracting out some support functions, e.g. some engineering, base support, some logistic functions. However effective and efficient sortie generation will be the primary core competency of the majority of service personnel. The Air Force mission (professionalism and teamwork) and the vision (highly skilled personnel) all contribute to this core competency.

Notes

¹ New Zealand Government, *The Shape of New Zealand's Defence: A White Paper* (Wellington, 1997), ch. 7.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., ch. 1.

⁵ Ibid., ch. 4.

Chapter 8

Conclusions

This paper has set about to construct core competencies for the Royal New Zealand Air Force. The five core competencies derived by the paper are Precision Attack, Directed Air Mobility, Long Range Maritime Patrol, Interoperability, and Effective and Efficient Sortie Generation. Together these core competencies describe particular capabilities that the RNZAF brings to the table to support national objectives. They not only describe things that the Air Force *is* good at, but what it *should* be good at.

The core competencies were developed by observing the USAF experience in developing its core competencies. In that case vision and mission were linked to strategic context. These factors were broken down into basic elements and recombined to form the core competencies. The process, but not the product, of developing core competencies was found to be transferable between countries. Therefore the New Zealand strategic context was examined to determine the policy direction that the RNZAF operates within. RNZAF vision and mission were also investigated. Combining the elements of vision, mission and policy direction for the RNZAF yielded a set of core competencies that apply to that service.

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