



Train Like We Fight

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Sophie's Story

Sophie conducted ab-initio training through the tri-service Australian Defence Force Academy (ADFA). For those unfamiliar with the ADFA environment, it is a microcosm of the wider Australian Defence Force (ADF), however—as with many Defence training institutions—it has its own nuances and idiosyncrasies. There are many positives to training at ADFA, but also some negative aspects.

The camaraderie that is built through living and working with your division and squadron mates forms lasting relationships. These connections form the basis of a wide network of support across all three services that you can tap into throughout your career. In addition to getting a degree, ADFA provides a unique opportunity to live with your sister services and experience a little bit of each throughout your time there. As a RAAFie, sometimes these aren't our favourite activities; long pack marches are not so great, but field insertion by Black Hawk helicopter is pretty cool. These opportunities aren't readily available to the wider Air Force and help to build skills and understanding of the services that you otherwise wouldn't get.

It is this tri-service environment that necessitates that ADFA has to strike a balance in ensuring each service is provided with trainees ready for their roles. This focus can sometimes shift to the largest cohort at ADFA—the Army trainees—meaning these objectives at times are not met for RAAF and Navy members; though, this does provide a realistic view of how joint warfighting and training often occurs.

The So What

The Air Force will never again fight a war in isolation; our sister services will always have a part to play in any conflict and integration is the key to ensuring a successful outcome. Despite this, ADF 'joint' exercises are not quite as integrated as they probably could and should be. I think one of our biggest hindrances to integrated training is a lack of knowledge from the other services on what our role is and vice versa. Just as ADFA was purposely designed to deliver a tri-service experience with the positives outweighing the negatives, it shouldn't stop there. Joint training needs to happen at all ranks and it continually needs to be improved upon and updated. After having a read through Chief of the Defence Force (CDF) Directive 01-2021 - Joint Collective Training Within the ADF, it seems like collective training shouldn't only be conducted when people come together for exercises. Rather, it should be a natural state of being. Have you heard of the saying: *Train the way you fight?*

The Why

It is fundamentally important for both officers and enlisted personnel to operate their day to day business in a Joint mindset. The better we know the capabilities that the other services provide, the simpler it is for us to understand their why and call upon them when required. On the flip side, part of this education piece should

also be about ensuring our own Air Force character is understood by the Army and Navy, so that what they do and excel in balances our own capabilities.

As Aviators, if we have a greater understanding of our Navy and Army counterparts and the way that they operate at a higher strategic level, the easier it would be for us to understand why decisions are being made in the Joint space. Knowing the differences and the intricacies of the Army and Navy is fundamental to how Aviators think strategically; and the approach to our own day to day work—especially if we had a Joint way of conducting business—would reflect this.

Having all three services with the same foundational knowledge, skills and understanding would mean greater integration across the board and a mutual understanding when we come together in a “one team” approach.

The How

So how would Air Force begin to shift in such a direction? Well, the good news is we’ve already taken that first step! The AFSTRAT highlights the need for a greater Joint focus, which enables everyone—Commanders through to the newest recruit—to start looking into those possibilities. And we have a plethora of them to look at in order to ensure proper Joint integration to support air power and national strategy. Let’s focus on one example: intelligence.

Going back to Sophie’s story, it’s fantastic that ADFA allows each service a bit of an insight into each other (even if it’s heavily Army focused) at a general service level. Below this level, each service has intelligence-related mustering(s) in both the enlisted and officer ranks. Imagine if we had intelligence officers and enlisted analysts that fall under the same umbrella not only training together from the get-go, but with a few embedded in other service units to provide that cross-service understanding and facilitation? Now, we aren’t advocating for a completely Joint corps of Intelligence professionals—each service has its own needs, outcomes, and niche responsibilities to be considered—but why can’t Army imagery analysts post to an Air Force unit as the norm or vice versa? Why can’t our intelligence practitioners complete their training as a Joint program rather than single service? Why must we wait until there is a major exercise or deployment conducted before we begin that Joint integration? Intelligence is of course, just one example: imagine the possibilities if we widen the aperture across other musterings, corps and rates?

Taking that leap into opening up ourselves and the way we conduct our duties to outside influence and scrutiny will make us stronger as a single service and better able to step up and fulfil our role in the joint domain.

The Payoff

There are specialisations where joint training and units just make sense. For roles identified as suitable for a joint focus, implementation of these ideas would have an overwhelmingly positive impact.

In the training space, combining training methods and resources into a joint structure would not only produce efficiency (time, cost and quality) and networking for students, but also for instructors. The ability to compare notes between Army, Navy and Air Force would have a positive impact on curriculum, student openness to the Joint Force environment and an awareness of platforms, capability and output throughout the ADF.

In the tactical space, the opportunity to be posted to positions within another service would have added advantages as well. The challenge and exposure created would provide familiarity with tri-service operations, and generate growth and excellence that may have previously gone unrecognised.

Finally, the integration of these ideas will aid the refinement of processes and conduct in each service: fundamentally, the presence of differing experience and perspective is necessary for driving innovation.

The payoff? We will train the way we fight, giving Aviators a tactical familiarity and edge within the Joint Force.

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