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Reflections of a Liaison Officer

by James McKay

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Introduction

This article is a reflection on a recent experience as the Canadian Joint Operations Command (CJOC) Liaison Officer to U.S. European Command. Liaison officer positions are relatively rare and are generally perceived as either a reward for a long career, or as an easy task for a senior officer between more important positions in Canada. These views, however, do not take into account the reality of the situation where, in a number of cases, the liaison officer is the face of the Canadian Armed Forces in those headquarters, and is operating with a significant degree of independence. In addition, they are often a senior commander's personal representative. They are important, as those positions represent the day-to-day workings of relationships between allies.

The article examines the duties of liaison officers to foreign military headquarters at the operational and strategic levels from an interpretative and normative perspective in order to offer some insights on the challenges and benefits associated with those positions. It starts with an examination of the military science literature with respect to liaison officers as it is printed in English, before moving on to a brief summary of a liaison officer's duties. This is followed by a discussion of the challenges experienced by the hosting headquarters, and then, a summary of challenges faced and proposed solutions to those challenges.

The Literature

There is surprisingly little discussion of liaison officers in military science literature, although some appears in work on alliances and coalitions and their maintenance during major conflicts. One example noted that during the 1991 Gulf War, the decision-making structure created to ensure both the Western and Arab sides of the coalition worked well together was supported by an increased number of liaison officers.[1] Another author argued that communications in a coalition setting relies upon relationships with officials from other nations, but ties it to professional military education.[2] Later in the same work, that author described liaison officers as a commander's "directed telescope" to assist in the command and control of forces, but again returned to the issue of professional military education of a potential pool of liaison officers, and tied it explicitly to the U.S. Army's Foreign Area Officer classification.[3] While this author has a great amount of respect for the professional, talented, and extremely well trained U.S. Army Foreign Area Officers, by no means should this be interpreted as advocacy for the creation of a similar officer classification within the Canadian Armed Forces, as its smaller size and scale makes such an idea unfeasible. Such literature suggests that liaison officers assist in the development and maintenance of interoperability. While the word 'interoperability' tends to lead many to think of technology, it also relates to procedures, and in that sense, liaison officers enable their forces and their hosts' forces to operate more efficiently and effectively together.[4] To borrow a phrase, "The antidote to the fog and friction of coalition warfare is not technology; it lies in trusted subordinates who can deal effectively with coalition counterparts."[5] Paul Mitchell, of the Canadian Forces College, described liaison officers in a work on network centric warfare somewhat like a sensor whose utility was governed by the political situation between two countries.[6] Mitchell later provided greater clarification on the idea by stating that liaison officers fulfil a vital function by ensuring that gaps in information about operations do not persist.[7] This is perhaps the most important function of a liaison officer, but the hardest one to achieve, given an ambiguous status where they are neither staff nor line, and the challenges posed to information sharing by myriad security regulations and the potential for varying interpretations.

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Yet the best and the simplest description of a liaison officer's functions were penned in two papers from Sweden. The authors of the papers used a concept from the business administration literature and argued that liaison officers were, in effect, 'boundary spanners' between two organizations. Combined with this insight was the idea that 'boundary spanners' fulfilled two simple functions; management of the flow of information between the two organizations, while simultaneously representing the interests of the organization that dispatched them.[8] They also argued that this was somewhat contradictory, as it put liaison officers in a position where they would have to make decisions about how and when to share specific elements of information they gather to both their own organization and their hosts independently, and also maintain a modicum of distance from their hosts in order to inoculate their own organization from the effects of any fighting between the two organizations.[9] Their ideas, although corroborated largely from Swedish sources in the context of peace support operations, are applicable across a wide range of contexts in which liaison officers may find themselves. The term 'boundary spanner' is a useful description, but it does not translate well into a military context. There are two fundamental questions: what are liaison officers, and what are their functions?

What is a Liaison Officer?

Liaison officers are a form of trusted guest sent from their own headquarters to another to represent the dispatching commander's interests. Their status is not always well understood by all involved, and this can include the liaison officers

DND photo RP004-2016-0009-342 by Corporal Guillaume Gagnon themselves. I was fortunate in that both CJOC and my predecessor provided me with an excellent handover, and despite the jet lag, I understood the issues, but it took me some time to fully understand my duties and how I could add value. *That's the first challenge*. Despite the best efforts of one's predecessors to maintain continuity, you learn most about your duties by trying to carry them out over time. There is little- to-no formal training, unlike that for serving as a commander or staff officer. Liaison officers are neither embedded nor exchange personnel in staff billets. Their chain of command rests with the formation that dispatched them, and they are expected to provide two types of information over time back to Ottawa. The first is atmospherics, a form of 'catch-all' term that describes the hosts' impressions of the situation of the day and/or Canadian efforts. The second is information directly affecting Canadian operations, such as current situations, future activities and timelines, and issues that require attention. Generally speaking, this means a series of reports, replies to Requests for Information (RFIs), and conversations with Canadian staff to clarify reporting.

Some Challenges

For the hosts, the presence of a foreign liaison officer comes with both costs and benefits. Their challenge, experienced by all headquarters that host foreign liaison officers, is to make the benefits of hosting liaison officers outweigh the costs of doing so. The hosting headquarters has to consider what it is that they want from a liaison officer. In the main, this is information about what the liaison officer's country is doing in the area of operations, and the ability to reach out to allies and partners, should a crisis develop. Thus, there are benefits to be had for the hosts, but the problem of scale makes this more complicated. The size and scale of Canadian activities are modest compared to those of the Americans, which means that providing that information is relatively easy and quick. Some, but not all, of one's hosts might perceive that the benefits are not all that significant as a result. Hosts also need to consider how to organize and interact with their foreign liaison officers. This means command and control, battle rhythm, and office space. For the last ten weeks of my deployment, I temporarily covered both U.S. European Command and U.S. Africa Command. This created the opportunity to compare approaches between the two headquarters. In both cases, the foreign liaison officers were hosted by the Plans branches, but they adopted different methods of organization and interaction with foreign liaison officers. In one case, the approach was centralized where foreign liaison officers were grouped together physically and organizationally in a form of staff directorate under a U.S. O-6 (Colonel or Captain [Navy]), who had a small staff to assist him. In that headquarters, they also had a series of meetings/engagements organized by the staff director on a monthly rhythm, and any other meetings were organized through the country's contact officer. In the other case, the approach was done differently, and it was more 'free-form.' The foreign liaison officers nominally belonged to one of the plans staff directorates, but they worked most closely with an Assistant Chief of Staff for liaison officers and the host staffs most affected by their country. Office allocations were based upon *availability*, as opposed to *centralization*. The rhythm for meetings in this approach was weekly. Both approaches had merits. And yet, it seemed that in both cases, the two headquarters were working towards ways of getting a better return on investment from their efforts with the foreign liaison officers, and they had reached different conclusions about how to do so.

Neither of them, however, could get around the issue of security. Without delving into the details of physical security and its measures, this represents a form of cost associated with interaction. Our American ally takes security extremely seriously. This meant that depending upon the level of sensitivity associated with the staff in question, access could be controlled tightly. A number of areas are designated "NOFORN" zones. This means that either foreigners simply do not get in, or get in only under escort, and/or all occupants are advised by a security system of the foreigner's presence. As a result, one only sought to interact with those elements of the staff if it was absolutely necessary. This represents a 'double-edged sword.' While it maintains security, it can mean that some staffs are isolated from the liaison officers, and as a result, may not consider opportunities to obtain benefits. Information sharing is also governed by security. The sensitivity of the information dictates the means by which it can be shared (secure or unclassified). This translates into a set of handling instructions for any and all information, and identifies what and with whom that information can be shared. While getting access to the unclassified system is relatively easy and quick, obtaining access to the U.S. secure system can take much longer. I was fortunate in that I had one in days, and the other took weeks. The latter allowed me to communicate effectively with my hosts quickly.

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Simply having access did not mean, however, that I had much to communicate. While the staffs in Ottawa were good at pushing what was necessary, I needed the full picture. I did not have direct access to Canadian secure systems until much later, although there was a means of doing so in an emergency. Our systems tend to operate on centralized repositories of information that all users can access as required. Not having this system at first meant that I needed to persuade colleagues in Ottawa to send me material. In the main, they were willing to do so, but this meant a delay in responses to questions from my hosts and my colleagues back in Ottawa devoting some of their time to pushing the information. This presented another challenge; my ability to demonstrate net benefit to my hosts relied upon answering questions or providing information about Canadian operations, activities, and/or perspectives. In some ways, liaison work can resemble bargaining, where the liaison officer has to provide sufficient benefit (through information sharing and responding to crises) to override the costs of hosting over time. On a couple of occasions, one could see glimpses of that calculation occurring within the hosting headquarters. In one example, there was a deliberate decision made to grant foreign liaison officers greater access to the daily update briefs, which meant that the staffs supporting those briefs had to do additional work to enable this. The opportunity was provided for the foreign liaison officers to brief, but initially, as a group, we

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did not provide much information. This was rectified by a request to ensure that the foreign liaison officer briefings occurred each time through a schedule by country. I ended up briefing twice. In one case, it was a summary of the relatively modest Canadian military activities in the area of operations. This meant that the following month, I would have to provide another briefing, and had to ponder what could be briefed that would be of value to my hosts. I marveled at my foreign liaison officer colleagues' abilities to provide informative and valuable briefings, but then again, their efforts in that area of operations were larger in scale and more varied in nature than our own. Fortunately, the second briefing occurred the day after the 2015 federal election. When one considers the time zones, it meant that I was briefing on election results a few short hours after the polls closed in British Columbia and the Yukon. In another example, in an open forum, a subordinate publicly questioned his superior about information-sharing with foreign countries, suggesting that some were far less forthcoming with information and that the U.S. ought to withhold more. The superior's response was masterful; he responded simply, "We're leading the effort." Both examples hint at concerns in some quarters that the U.S. might not have been getting net benefits out of the relationships with other countries.

Possible Solutions

One of the ways to show value was to seek to get involved in the work of the headquarters, but this comes with some drawbacks. Mitchell noted that if liaison officers behave like embedded personnel, this is a quick way to demonstrate 'value' to the hosts.[10] While I believe that this is true, there are some risks. Canadian participation in planning efforts can lead to the expectation that Canada is going to make contributions. Put in other terms, if Canada is not contributing, participation in planning can convey a false impression and ultimately harm relationships between countries. *Behaving* as an embedded or exchange officer consistently will encourage one's hosts to treat the liaison officer like they *are* an exchange officer, i.e. part of a staff directorate. The ability of the liaison officer to represent their commander to their peers in the host headquarters may degrade as a result. While participation can elicit greater information, there is a potential trade-off in terms of representation. As a result, the adoption of such roles should be more opportunistic and limited in time and scope than persistent. In addition, if liaison officers start to take on the role of staff officers as opposed to acting as the interlocutor between the Canadian and the host staff, they can become a bottleneck.

The ability to share information in a timely manner rests upon a foundation of strong relationships. This, however, takes time, and for that reason, liaison officer assignments should be longer term (2-3 years) whenever conditions permit.[11] I was the third of three officers deployed on a task over a period of 18 months as part of Operation *Reassurance* in 2014-2015. This ended with my deployment as another officer was posted in and accredited to both U.S. European Command and U.S. Africa Command. The task approach was an expedient measure, and it represents an exception to the norm. The reason for having longer terms as liaison officers is that it takes *weeks* if not *months* to establish enough rapport with ones' hosts that they see the benefits of a foreign liaison officer and become willing to share information. For *many*, although certainly *not all*, this is counterintuitive, due to the nature of security regulations. It is not a natural act, and

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some may fear, quietly, that this will come back to haunt them. Part of earning trust is being judicious with what is provided, so that hosts learn that honouring the liaison officer's requests do not lead to falling into trouble with their superiors and security staffs. Strong relationships also mean that single issues or problems do not interrupt that flow of information in both directions. One of the more difficult tasks for a liaison officer is dealing with reporting of a negative tone or nature about the hosts, and it does not need to be something the liaison officer communicated themselves. Criticism of allies' plans and actions, from any Canadian source, can arrive back to one's hosts very quickly, due to the interconnected nature of Canada and its allies. In such cases, liaison officers should be the bearers of that criticism to the hosts, as opposed to the staff elsewhere. Hosts are far more likely to appreciate professional candour directly from the liaison officer *in situ* than a faceless individual in a foreign capital. Put in other terms, negative comments made in Ottawa that reach the other capital often lead to negative feedback to hosts, which can erode trust. So, how do liaison officers build relationships? It's a function of time and of never passing up opportunities to learn about and work with the staff in the headquarters. This is not just the liaison officer having positive relations with key staff among their hosts, but rather, the sum of all relationships, personal credibility, and the demonstration of net benefit.

Learning about the hosts was important. The structures of American military activities differ from Canadian structures. Due to our scale, we have a greater degree of centralization of specific activities, such as security cooperation (provision of training to foreign military personnel, equipment donations, etc.) Such activities are either governed by the Policy staff or CJOC, depending upon their nature. In the U.S., these activities are controlled by the combatant commands, but are guided by the Pentagon through a combination of delegations of authorities, policy constraints and restraints, and resources. What this means for liaison personnel is a need to understand the structures at work and their Canadian equivalents in the event that direct communications need to be established between the two. With respect to our major allies, in most cases, our structures are smaller and more centralized. This *also* cuts both ways. On the one hand, it means that our contributions overseas could be perceived as modest due to their scale. On the other hand, it is more likely that the liaison officer has more contacts and a greater understanding of projects and functions within the Canadian structures.

This leads back to the key function of a liaison officer, which is to manage the flow of information between Canada and the hosts. In the main, this comes in the form of Requests for Information (RFIs) from one to the other and vice-versa. A tracking system is crucial to success; not only does this help avoid RFIs getting lost, a liaison officer should be prepared to share the requests with the Canadian side, as it is all too easy for RFIs to be ignored, or for them to surprise others. One such surprise was that, despite being a CJOC LO, other staffs sought information directly, meaning that there was the risk of blindsiding key personnel at CJOC. This meant that, in some ways, I was caught in the middle, which presented another challenge. On one hand, I needed to keep CJOC in the loop, and on the other, I did not want to employ the excuse of process and slow down decision-making in Ottawa. As time went on, I came to use both the 'CC function,' (i.e., more than one addressee), as well as a rollup of the source, nature and replies to RFIs as part of weekly reporting. It was not until the end of my time that I learned how valuable those two solutions were for the chain of command. Basic staff etiquette is vital for RFI management. If someone is asking for information, it is for a *reason*, and this means that there is a timeline involved. This is as simple as acknowledging the request and providing an estimate of how long it will take to satisfy it. This also is a polite way to indicating to the originator of the RFI that unless it is truly urgent, it takes time to find, request and process/translate the information from host terminology to Canadian terminology, or vice versa. Maintaining strong relationships with the hosts means a liaison officer cannot simply march into another's office and make requests without longer-term consequences. The implication here is that the gathering of information takes time and the comment is more about the liaison officer managing the expectations of their colleagues and superiors back in Ottawa. As a final point, whatever information is provided ought to be accurate, relevant, and brief. The longer it is, the more likely it is that the recipients will not have the time to read it fully and/or digest the most relevant information.

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The management of communication means is vital. Outgoing liaison officers must have a clear understanding of the PACE (Primary/Alternate/Contingency/Emergency) plans for both unclassified and secure systems, voice and data, as well as the relevant contact information for personnel in Canada. If there are any gaps, especially in terms of the national secure systems, these ought to be addressed as a matter of priority. Canada's allies tend to communicate most often by secure systems, and without having a means of doing so, the liaison officer's effectiveness is much reduced. Mitchell eloquently described the information environment in which liaison officers must operate:

> Strategic or national domains permit information sharing within a nation's borders and thus tend to be highly secure, rigidly configured networks that permit little or no access for external partners. Allied or bilateral domains permit a certain degree of sharing between national domains, based as they are on pre-established information-exchange agreements. Many are permanently established networks that 'tunnel' into each other, permitting the exchange of e-mail and sometimes web browsing.[12]

Naturally, an important dimension of this function consists of handling information appropriately in accordance with the regulations set by both Canada and one's hosts. Mishandling of information provided by hosts will wreck relationships and greatly reduce one's effectiveness at representing the interests of the Canadian Armed Forces.

Depending upon the location, the liaison officer may be several time zones away from Ottawa. It is all too easy to send e-mail 24 hours a day, but many of the staff in Ottawa that interact with liaison officers hold Blackberries, meaning routine e-mails arriving in the early hours Eastern Time are an irritant at best. The habit of drafting and saving routine messages until an appropriate time reduces this inefficiency.

Sending reports back to Ottawa is one of the more important functions for a liaison officer. My predecessor provided a superb handover, and fortunately for me, this included his distribution list for reporting. It included key staff in CJOC, the Strategic Joint Staff, Canadian Defence Attachés, and the Canadian Army. Despite the jet lag and my inexperience in the position, it was clear that reporting was about developing a network. What this meant over time was that the list of recipients grew and during posting season, would change. I maintained a tracking system to manage the additions and deletions of personnel over time to make sure that reporting was shared and consistent across the network. Taking my cue from my predecessors, I also sought to include other Canadian liaison officers working in other headquarters as it allowed for cross-cueing and the identification of perspectives from different countries, headquarters and developing a richer picture for the dispatching headquarters. In terms of how to report, the key points are accuracy, relevance and brevity. This meant a short slide deck and if further clarification was needed, that would be followed with a concise e-mail. What to report was uncomfortably simple. It was a summary of what happened over the past week, a forecast of future activities and opportunities, and cues for decisions or actions if required. Of course, this meant reporting both on atmospherics and things that affected Canadian operations or activities. Should something sensitive or negative need to be sent, it is best sent via Canadian secure means with as limited a distribution as possible. This helps avoid the aforementioned criticism issue.

Liaison officers ought to get to know their colleagues from other countries. In order to avoid providing a lengthy list of countries represented, I will offer three categories: 'Five Eye,' NATO members and 'partners.' 'Five Eye' countries (Canada/US/UK/Australia/New Zealand) are those allies that have entered into an agreement to enable information-sharing. Due to this agreement, the procedures to share information are relatively smooth and the national communications systems enable this easily. Next category is the NATO members. The procedures are in place, and there are significant efforts to make this sharing as easy as within the 'Five Eye' community, but it is harder to share by this means because the number of potential recipients increases immensely. The last category are the 'partners.' This is a 'catch-all' term for non-NATO allies from outside the area of operations and non-NATO members within the area of operations. Each of these requires specific handling to avoid disclosing information that ought not to be disclosed. The overall implication is that the presence of foreign liaison officers from different categories means that host staffs have to consider the audience relative to the classification and degree to which the information therein could be released. This imposes a greater cost on the hosts. Regardless of their would-be status, the other foreign liaison officers are a valuable source of information and vetting them in advance makes them more amenable to sudden requests when they do come in. In response to a short notice RFI, I reached out to my colleagues and to their great credit, they provided a lot of information very quickly that was summarized and relayed back to Ottawa. Our hosts took note of the exchange and later used it as a means of demonstrating benefits to other directorates within the headquarters. On a related issue, I began to learn which of my Canadian colleagues in other headquarters were cross-cueing what they could share within the limits of security with their hosts when my foreign liaison officer colleagues reported receiving copies of my reports from their own headquarters.

DND photo RP006-2016-0032-006 by Corporal Jay Ekin

Canadian and Romanian liaison officers during Operation *Reassurance*, 29 October 2016

Liaison officers may find themselves on the leading edge of operations, that is, supporting the planning effort to stage an operation, and the early efforts at execution. This occurred during my time, and there were three lessons that fell out of it. The first was the degree of involvement. At the start of my deployment, I was involved directly, as was my predecessor, with the Strategic Joint Staff as they worked on the direction to CJOC to execute an international operation. Once that was finalized, and CJOC was directed to execute the operation, my involvement in the matter began to *change* and *reduce* as the point of effort went from *planning* to *executing* tasks that enabled the deployment of the Task Force. There was a form of handover of the issue to the staffs from CJOC and the Task Force, and my role became one of tracking the progression of integration. This brings me to the second lesson. Integration of forces, even between close allies, is harder than one might expect, and it can be affected by a range of factors. This includes policy *constraints* and *restraints*, logistical arrangements, funding mechanisms, resources, and host nation support issues. Any of these elements can impede integration, and as a result, even theatre-strategic level liaison officers end up trying to understand the situation at the tactical level from a distance. This provides the third lesson. Supporting the force once deployed meant two things. The first was to respond to their RFIs as quickly as possible. If they were asking for something, it was because they needed it to carry out a task. The second was to avoid contacting them directly for RFIs whenever practicable. Deployed forces are sufficiently occupied carrying out the mission and do not need the additional burden of a stream of requests from a liaison officer in a far-flung headquarters. My hosts, however, were interested in ensuring the integration of forces on a common mission went well, and they sought the Canadian perspective on those issues. This was an opportunity to provide them with a net benefit.

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Incoming liaison officers, particularly those dealing with plans or operations functions associated with international operations, ought to exhaust every effort to ensure that they spend time with a Political Advisor prior to deployment. The intent of doing so is to develop a reasonable understanding of Status-of-Force Agreements, Technical Agreements and requests from one's hosts for force contributions from Canada. Even a passing knowledge will enable the liaison officer to deal with these issues in a timely and effective manner, as liaison officers are often working at the planning of international operations. These issues, if not handled appropriately, can impose delays on the conduct of operations and/or jeopardize relationships with allies and partners.

The last element of this reflection is advice on how to cope with the independence of being one of the only Canadians in the organization. There are two parts to this: one, to your hosts, you are the face of the Canadian Armed Forces; and two, it is possible to develop a sense of under-utilization as you can find yourself with

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gaps in the frequency with which you are being consulted. Being the face of the Canadian Armed Forces may mean your hosts will ask you a range of questions for which you are less than prepared. Simple staff etiquette helps here, where you acknowledge the query, clarify the requirement(s), and then send it back to Canada to see if the appropriate expertise can be harnessed to provide an answer. Bear in mind, however, that the Canadian ability to provide answers is constrained by scale relative to some of our allies. Put in simpler terms, a single American combatant command has approximately 2,000 people relative to roughly 400 assigned to CJOC. If we focus upon specific disciplines or issues, an ally may have a full directorate handling an issue that is handled by a single section or desk in Canada. Being the 'one of' also makes you hypersensitive to visits by Canadian personnel, particularly those that come unannounced. Unannounced visits can convey the message to hosts that we are not coordinating our own organization well but unfortunately this can happen.[13] The hosting of visits is, however, one of the important duties of a liaison officer that consumes time depending upon the administration required for a visit, i.e. security requirements, scheduling, briefing books, and so on. Visits are equally important from the perspective of the dispatching organization, as it provides them with an opportunity to monitor the liaison officer's activities directly, and to verify the accuracy of the liaison officer's reporting on issues and atmospherics. Visits are an excellent antidote to the issue of under-utilization.

One of the more common experiences perceived by a number of liaison officers is when they do not often interact with the organization that dispatched them, and then feel that they are not given much direction and/or feel that reporting may be an exercise in unnecessary work. It is important not to confuse a lack of replies or follow-on questions to reporting with a lack of interest. The dispatching organizations tend to be in Ottawa and are subject to the daily rhythm of the capital, meaning that the dispatching staffs are busy addressing issues and in order of priority, and if they do not signal a reply, it is very likely that the report was read and acted upon without the knowledge of the liaison officer. In short, they are busy dealing with a range of issues and inputs, and therefore do not always have the time to respond. Put another way, you will certainly know it if you are on the path of the main effort and decry the aggressive timelines for reporting tasks. Liaison work comes with ebbs and flows of tasks, hence the perception by many that it is not as arduous as many other tasks. The question becomes how to gainfully use those ebbs. These are the opportunities to deepen understanding of the hosts' organizations and activities through deliberate reading programs, engagements with key leaders and staffs, and production of reports for the dispatching headquarters. In effect, if one is not spanning the boundaries in the immediate sense due to a reduced activity level, one can set the conditions for doing so at a later time. And yet, it can lead to self-questioning about the amount of value being added.

What I discovered towards the end of the task was that the self-questioning was unwarranted and value was indeed being added. The greatest degree of value came primarily through two sets of actions, namely, by providing feedback to my hosts with respect to how Canadian and American forces were working together in a combined effort, i.e., what was going well and where were the points of friction, and also through the simple act of reporting back to CJOC on a weekly basis on both atmospherics and issues directly affecting Canadian operations.

DND photo IS2013-5165-03 by Master Corporal David Singleton-Browne

Conclusion

This reflection was intended to provide insights and advice on how to function effectively as a liaison officer without disclosing any significant details from recent personal experience. The most important insights, from my perspective, were:

1. Build solid relationships with your hosts and other foreign liaison officers.
2. Liaison officers are 'boundary spanners' and end up reporting on host perspectives to the home headquarters and representing home headquarters' perspectives to their hosts.
3. The maintenance of security of information, including appropriate handling, is a vital task.
4. The need to develop an understanding of Technical Agreements and Status-of-Forces agreements and other aspects of international operations handled by policy advisors (POLADs).
5. The value of timely and accurate reporting cannot be underestimated.

It is hoped that this will be of assistance to future liaison officers serving in similar positions in the future.

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NOTES

1. Patricia Weitsman, "Wartime Alliances versus Coalition Warfare: How Institutional Structure Matters in the Multilateral Prosecution of Wars,"in *Strategic Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 4 (Summer 2010), p. 120.
2. Major General Robert Scales, U.S. Army (Retired). "Trust, not Technology, Sustains Coalitions," in *Parameters*, Vol. 28 (Winter 1998/99), pp. 190-191.
3. *Ibid.,* pp. 193-195.
4. For an example of this type of focus, see: Martin Westphal and Thomas Lang, "Conducting Operations in a Mission Partner Environment," in *Joint Force Quarterly*, Vol. 74 (2014), pp. 44-49. The thrust of the article is primarily technological; suggesting the American preference for national communications systems has to be overcome in order to operate with a wide range of allies and partners. In the article, the use of liaison officers is discussed once on page 45, and somewhat negatively at that.
5. Scales, p. 198. This author contends that this statement is equally applicable to alliances.
6. Paul Mitchell, *Network Centric Warfare: Coalition operations in the age of US military primacy*, Adelphi Paper 385, (London: IISS, 2006), pp. 60-61. He was referring to the fact that during the 2002-2003 timeframe, the degree of information sharing by staff in the United States Central Command reduced as the Government of Canada delayed making a decision on potential contributions to operations in Iraq.
7. *Ibid.,* p. 65.
8. Aida Alvinius, "The Inadequacy of Bureaucratic Organizations: Organizational Adaptation through Boundary Spanning in a Civil-Military Context," in *Res Militaris*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (Autumn 2012), p. 3.
9. Aida Alvinius, Camilla Kylin, and Gerry Larsson, "Standing on both sides: The Process of Collaboration/Liaison in Civil-Military Contexts." Paper delivered at the 1st Conference of the International Society of Military Sciences, Amsterdam, 25-26 November 2009, p. 3, accessed at <http://www.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2%3A581653&dswid=9336>, 10 November 2015.
10. Mitchell, pp. 65-66.
11. A Chief of Review Services study of the Exchange and Liaison Program dating from 2006 indicated that the mean term of service for a liaison officer was 39 months. See: Chief of Review Services, *Exchange of CF Outside Canada (OUTCAN) Exchange and Liaison Programs*, 1258-67-2 (CRS), (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 2006), p. 3.
12. Mitchell, p. 55.
13. To the best of my knowledge, this occurred once in another headquarters.