

Rough Transcript
CWO Chris Tucker, Calgary Highlanders (24 June 2017)

Deployment(s): Composite Reserve Infantry Company, Bosnia

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Note: Quotations are not 100% verbatim

Timecode	Content
0:30	"The CRIC was the Composite Reserve Infantry Company. It was just an amalgamation of reservists to form a Reserve company within a Reg Force battle group. It was the first time they'd ever done anything like that since deploying to Korea, or maybe World War Two... I really couldn't tell you the historical significance on that. But to actually deploy to a theatre with a Reserve-led, Reserve company--it was a milestone really. It looked like that was an excellent opportunity and maybe a model for deployments in the future "
1:40	Initial reaction? "It's something that I'd been preaching for years ever since I'd been overseas in '92 and '94. I looked at it as an excellent opportunity to show what the reserves can do..." And he wanted to go overseas again. "The majority of the guys just wanted to get overseas. For the majority of them it was their first tour... It wouldn't have mattered to them if it was a CRIC or if they were one-of in a rifle company with a battalion. They just wanted to get overseas. That was it."
3:10	Family reaction to his third tour? "My folks have had an issue with it on every tour." His girlfriend (now wife) had been to Bosnia in the late 90s.
4:00	What was it like to be left at home when Darlene deployed to Bosnia? "You certainly get an appreciation for how difficult it is to maintain communications. It was 98, 99. We had phone, letters, the odd email." He received many letters and postcards, but was challenged to maintain her pace. She came to Alberta for her HLTA and he brought her back to Wainwright, where he was instructing. And then to Calgary. "I thought she got ripped off."
5:40	It was tough, because he's always wanted to deploy, but it was her turn. "I can't go overseas and not reciprocate." Later, he used it as leverage. "I hope she doesn't see this interview."
6:35	About 40 Highlanders volunteered for the CRIC. "We were the largest contributor to the CRIC for that tour."
7:10	They went to 1 PPCLI. "It was typical, normal. It was a period of time when the tempo was slowed down from what it was in the 90s. So, to see 200 reservists... [Phone rings. Interview stops.]
8:00	They went to 1 PPCLI and got there 2 April, shortly after regimental birthday (1 April). "...We were at a point in time in the Canadian

	<p>Armed Forces where we didn't have the same op tempo as we did in the 90s. Things had slowed down quite a bit. So there were a lot of guys that were anxious to get overseas. And when you're in battalion and you go see 200 reservists show up on a Monday morning to a muster parade-- there was a little bit of friction there in that respect." Administrative difficulties: "We just consumed all the resources in the battalion: when you've got two separate pay systems, and you've got two separate administration systems for a Class B reservist... So there were guys who weren't getting paid. I remember we were in the field and they paid us all by cash. In the field. While we're on exercise in Wainwright. We had to drive guys to banks all over the Wainwright area because they don't have a TD Canada Trust in Wainwright. So we had to drive to the nearest town that had it, had that bank... A ton of issues in terms of that... the administrative burden that we brought to the battalion." Soldiers in the battalion had to wait their turn for assistance.</p>
10:30	<p>Selection procedure? "I don't have the exact numbers but I'm just going to say there's 200 reservists for 124 positions. I may be wrong on those numbers but it's irrelevant. There was more reservists than there were positions. Because of that there was a very rigorous selection process: If you got hurt, you were gone. And so guys did things, they pushed themselves to the point of breaking, and they broke and they continued to go because they wanted to get overseas that bad. That was a very frustrating part of that whole process. And then consistently you've got people in leadership positions who were like, 'Well, you wouldn't be doing this if you just joined the Regular Force.' There was that attitude as well. I don't think that's the message we should be trying to get across. We're all infants. We all signed the dotted line. But to coin a phrase from someone else, we're a second-class citizen in our own army. And it certainly felt that way."</p>
12:20	<p>This selection was just for reservists: ranges up to company dry and live fire, digging in etc. He was the operations sergeant in company headquarters. One day, he heard the CSM getting jacked up by the CO and RSM, telling him he had too many soldiers and needed to make cuts. "It was an impossible position for the OC and CSM to be in." [Both were reservists] They evaluated every single soldier. "It wasn't the way to do business. Any reservist sent home and got out of the army, I don't blame them. It was not the way to build a cohesive company. When anyone fell out of a march, the reaction was 'there's my position'. Very cutthroat. How do you rebuild cohesion, trust, teamwork when you go through a process like that? It takes strong leadership and trust on the part of soldiers as well. We had to rebuild that. Once we formed the company, that was our main goal. To rebuild trust with soldiers and officers. I don't ever want to go through that process ever again. It's a bitter point for the guys who went through it."</p>

16:15	Were the criteria clear? He wasn't privy to that level of discussion.
17:05	What would have been better? Task units. Westies, form a platoon. LER, build a platoon. And show up with that platoon. "We were in such an austere mode in the CF at that time... " He relates a portion of a story about meeting Treasury Branch officials who visited them in Bosnia. "DND does not run the army. Treasury Board runs the army and holds the purse strings."
18:45	Task units, bringing in their leadership, teamwork and esprit de corps. Then build on it. There were multiple tours coming up, building another CRIC after them with 2 PPCLI. Or task Reserve brigades to provide sub-units or sub-sub-units. "No one wants to go that route. Everything's piecemeal."
20:45	Highlanders weren't called on to provide a platoon, per se.
21:05	It was a LAV battalion and the CRIC had no LAVs. A month before deploying to the field, CRIC platoon commanders produced their range instructions. "Three of the best officers I've worked with, produced fantastic product." Then, in Wainwright, at the coord conference, the platoon commanders (PPCLI?) were still working on theirs—the reservists had turned theirs in a month ago. "Two very different standards. All the ranges ran well."
23:20	When did CO 1 PPCLI have to drop a company? "I remember that day very well. We'd come out for muster parade in the morning and we'd heard the rumours that they were talking about axing a company, they were going to scale back the mission to two rifle companies. So we form up, we're out on parade, and the CO comes out and he's in front of the entire unit, including Delta Company [the CRIC] on the far flank. He goes: 'I have to cut a rifle company and it's unfair but I'm being forced to do it, but I can't cut Delta Company because I'm being forced to take these guys so I have to cut one of the other two companies.' That's when we found out that one of the Reg Force companies wasn't deploying overseas. And then things went really downhill from there in terms of morale and stuff like that in the company lines, in the battalion lines. As the leadership in the company, we were looking at each other. We couldn't believe he was saying this on the muster parade. And like that. That set the tone for pretty much that whole tour, right there... "
25:15	How did it play out at soldier level? Reserves were in Building 222, not in shacks with the rest of the battalion. Guys kept to themselves. "There was a lot of animosity towards Delta Company, and I don't blame them... I think there was a better way to break that news to the battalion than like that. And in that tone as well."
26:45	What was the tone? "It was an 'us and them' attitude for pretty much the entire tour. It was the task force or the battle group... and Delta Company." When there's a scarcity of resources, we tend to look in on ourselves. "It made for a very difficult time."
27:55	How was Delta different in terms of resources? It was in Iltises, which

	was fine because they provided more freedom of movement than LAV IIIs and Coyotes, considering narrow roads and small bridges. Delta could go places the others couldn't. He gives kudos to the mechanics who were phenomenal keeping the Iltises on the road, running 18 and sometimes 24 hours a day. The unit they replaced ... poured gravel into the fuel tanks. The mechanics had to pull the tanks and empty out the gravel from some. "Just ridiculous."
30:25	Did workup training build on previous Balkan tours? "Wouldn't say it did, but wouldn't say it didn't." They had to work on the G8 Summit at Kananaskis midway through their training. This caused them to reorientate at the halfway point. The pre-training was way too long. But they needed us for the G8. Everything they did was dismantled. It would have been better to train in a mechanized environment. Platoon commanders were Phase IV qualified (ie, mechanized operations), but majority of soldiers weren't.
33:20	Purpose of the mission? Be the force on the ground, visual deterrence. They accomplished that through patrolling on foot or in vehicles. Patrol numbers were closely tracked, day and night patrols. "What always shocked me was the number of patrols everyone else sent out. We'd be pushed out the teens and into the twenties, and they'd be conducting three or four patrols a week. They'd be concentrating on leadership training and running courses instead." Vehicles would return from one patrol, change crews, and go out again. They had two platoons in Bihac and a third doing gate duty in Banja Luka.
35:45	A double standard on the ground? "It felt like it. It was difficult on the ops side to build a plan and push it to the two patrol platoons. 'How do you expect us to get this number of patrols done? We don't have enough guys.' We were being leaned on by the battalion."
36:45	Accommodations? Top notch. Living in ISO trailers, gym, internet. They rebuilt the towers in the compound. It was quite good. "The Canadian cooks that we had there were great. The one complaint about the food was the juice. At the end of the tour guys were just like: 'I'm sick and tired of peach juice!' And the cook was like, 'What are you talking about? We never had peach juice!' I think that's the problem right there."
37:55	Otherwise, the guys made the most of it. "We did a great job, accomplishing the mission that was put forward to us. But the company never received the recognition it should have. There was a real us and them attitude between Delta and the rest of the battle group."
38:55	The company wasn't 100% reservist: the transport sergeant, quartermaster, and halfway through work up training—the sergeant major.
39:30	How was CSM replaced? They leaned on the CSM and leaned on him hard about selection. He made all the unpopular decisions. "He

	<p>basically did the dirty work for the QMSI at the time. He did everything he was told and asked to do, and when everything was said and done they fired him before the G8 Summit. I couldn't believe it. I was privy to a lot of conversations and meetings. He never complained. When he needed to voice his opinion he never did it in front of anyone else. He was always up-front and straight. And I couldn't believe they did that, firing him just before we deployed for the G8. I look at it as an attack on the NCOs in the company, personally."</p>
41:45	<p>How was this done? He was told on a Friday and they didn't see him after that. "I just remember seeing him in the parking lot. 'Yeah, I'm going home. They're replacing me with another MWO.' " Tucker threatened to quit, but MWO Kelly maintained a professional attitude, even in light of this, and talked Tucker out of it. "If everyone jumps ship, the CRIC will fail. And if the CRIC fails, they'll say 'I told you.'" If the CRIC failed, it would be justification for saying the Reserve couldn't deploy as a sub-unit. He made it his mission to prevent this from happening.</p>
44:05	<p>Soldiers' reactions? Some guys were happy to see the CSM go. Others shook their heads. "If they're willing to do that, who's going overseas at this point?" They already knew there was a whole PPCLI company ready to replace them if necessary. "Everyone was walking on eggshells, especially at a leadership level. The way they did it, I didn't agree with it. It was a bitter point for me."</p>
45:35	<p>The explanation? It made no sense. They knew they wanted the other MWO in that position. "A convenient harassment thing popped up and they said, 'You're not going.' Nothing ever came of it."</p>
46:25	<p>Who else was there? He met up with Capt Rob Peel in Victoria recently and they started discussing the CRIC. Peel said, "When you break down the CRIC, there were guys who came back and left the military. That was their career highlight. But the number of CWOs who came out of that organization, the number of COs who came out of it and went on to other things. The number who went to CANSOFCOM is notable. It's amazing. There's a level of individual soldier skill in that company that is notable. And it's reflected in those numbers. The number who stayed in and went to Afghanistan, the number awarded medals of valour and bravery. The number who joined the Regular Force or stayed with their Reserve units, for the betterment of the CAF. Notable. Taking all that into account, shows the success of the CRIC itself. But it's one of those things we don't track in the CAF." And then there's their civilian career success. "You can't put a price tag on that." But he can't explain why. "We had some really good soldiers who met the challenges and performed extraordinarily well. But it's not reflected in the report afterwards. And that's the real travesty of the CRIC."</p>
50:50	<p>He relates walking in on a conversation, the gist of which was, "Remember, the reason why the CRIC failed was because of the NCOs.</p>

	<p>The failure of the NCOs. I couldn't believe I heard that. Very disappointing... Just before the medals parade with Lady Patricia. It was the CO talking to the OC [Maj Paul Bury]." The CO thought the CRIC was a failure. "I didn't see it as that. I saw a group of infants, reservists, band together and do a great job. Another example was the patrolling. Another mandate was Op HARVEST, weapons collection. Op HYDRA—two companies and an American company, the three different heads, to conduct an Op HARVEST operation. On HYDRA, 98% of the weapons confiscated were picked up by Delta Company. We laid it all out on the ground to take the pictures of it." It was because they'd been patrolling so much, they had good interaction with the locals, picking up language and building trust. They'd get tips from the locals. "We had one lady who actually turned over her son's pistol. Now, her son was actually a cop, Bosnian police, and she turned his service pistol over to the guys, and so they're like, 'Check out this Glock!' That doesn't seem right. And so the police chief from Bihac shows up at the front gate: 'Yeah... can we get our pistol back?'"</p>
55:10	<p>Where's the OC in all this? "He was trying to keep everything together. I could not imagine being in his shoes. He's literally stuck between a rock and a hard place. That's all I'm going to say about that. I wouldn't want to be in his shoes. I'll leave it at that."</p>
56:15	<p>Did the us and them environment actually build esprit de corps? "The esprit de corps transcended the regimental affiliations, for sure. Sgt Shannon from the Seaforths put together a t-shirt and it had all the cap badges from all the units on the back. And on the front ... we had "The Fighting Maggots." Obviously a derogatory term for Reservists, but we embraced it and we rallied around it. And you go out on exercise or you go to work and you'll see someone wearing that t-shirt still. I still wear mine once in a while... It was where we found that common ground and where we really banded together to form a cohesive organization. We knew that the only people we could rely on were the guys left and right of us. And that was that. And no one was there to help you. You helped yourself. You made things happen."</p>
58:05	<p>The Treasury Board story? They took some Treasury Board officials on patrol through the area of responsibility. "The Treasury Board guys show up and we take them out on patrol... So I've got one of the Treasury Board guys beside me in the back of the Itis as we're ripping around, and I think we had maybe six vehicles in the packet to let these guys see the AOR [area of responsibility]... " One was seated beside him. Six vehicles in the packet. Tucker and he discussed cutting the PPCLI company. "We're not paying for that," he said. "You're dictating operations now?" That was an insight Tucker had never had before. The TB official then questioned the accumulation of courses by NCOs. "We've got to cut it out and save money." Tucker questioned this. Right after that, the infantry actually lost mortars and anti-armour to the</p>

	<p>artillery and Strathconas. “We’re talking, and I’m like, “Our equipment- these Iltises—these things are run ragged. It would be cheaper to cut these things up for scrap metal and leave them here than to bring them back to Canada.’ We’re talking about that and he goes, ‘These vehicles are fine. There’s nothing wrong with them.’ And then that’s when we had the fire in one of the vehicles up front. The whole packet pulls over and guys jump out, and the Iltis is filled with smoke. And what had happened was that just over time the seat had made contact with the battery posts on the batteries underneath the seat in the back, and it lit the seat on fire. And these guys, the Treasury Board guys that were up in that Iltis, they were like, ‘You did this on purpose!’ because they were talking about the exact same thing. And the section commander was like, in the vehicle: ‘I didn’t do anything. This is the state of the vehicles that we have. And we need to invest in a newer vehicle.’ Anyways, I don’t think they really enjoyed their time with us.”</p> <p>[LCol Simon Cox told the same story, during his 2016 interview]</p>
1:03:10	<p>Frame of mind returning home? Coming back, he made a conscious decision to get his 6B (Warrant Officer course), to make some changes. “I don’t want to treat people the way I’ve been treated over the years. I haven’t always been the best leader, we all have our flaws. But treat people as you’d like to be treated. We’re all infanters, Patricias, Can Scots, Calgary Highlanders. There should be a brotherhood there. But we’re very fractured. Not along regimental lines in the Reserve, as much as in Regular Force, but we’re certainly fractured along Reg/Reserve lines, which is detrimental to our operability. We need to embrace the regimental system even more.” He believes it’s the reason the Reserve has survived through years of austerity, to where we can deploy soldiers overseas. It keeps individuals from being numbers. It helps us care for our soldiers and their needs. Part of a family. “We need to transcend this to the corps level. We’re all infanters—light, mechanized etc. We are still the only trade that holds ground. That closes with and destroys the enemy in all phases of war.” When they cut the air force budget, they don’t fly as much, or the Navy doesn’t sail as much. But the army loses people. It’s counter-intuitive. He sees Roto 11 as a perfect example of this austerity and how it affects morale.</p>
1:08:25	<p>Could CRIC have worked in Afghanistan? Yes. There were 3200-3400 Canadians deployed, with the lion’s share at KAF. The pointy end outside the wire was a smaller amount. Having companies of reserve infantry to augment those in the sticks, in the combat outposts and forward operating bases, desperately needed infanters to do the job. “As a corps, we missed a phenomenal opportunity to solidify our place in the CAF. Because we don’t think big in operations. We’re stuck at the company, battalion level. We should have battalions overseas when we deploy.” There’s leadership that sees that, but there are budgetary constraints. “Mission needs this, but can you get away with this.?”</p>

1:11:05	On his ALP course, an air force LCol described difference between efficient and effective, using an infantry company as an example. Analyzing a perfect company attack, what did the third (reserve) platoon's role in depth, was that "efficient"? No, they weren't in the fight. Was it "effective", yes. You need to articulate the difference to bean counters who have no context for understanding what a reserve force does. We need to make a better case when it comes to deployments. Now we understand why pre-training is exploding in length. Three months for Croatia in 1992, up to nine months for Afghanistan.
1:14:10	Final comments? It was a wholehearted success.
1:14:45	The Reg Force sergeant major... There was a negligent discharge at a control point. A soldier loaded a round into a weapon and shot it through the back of an LSVW truck. The platoon warrant officer followed up and when the information got to the JAG, they noted that it had been a rusted, foreign weapon—not a C7. "This really doesn't fit the definition for an ND. Haven't done much foreign weapons training. Scrap it." They opted not to pursue charges. The rifle was thrown into a bin with other confiscated weapons, cut up and smelted down. Then things changed. "No, we're going to charge this individual. New information..." When all was said and done, the Reg Force sergeant major—who was everything a SM should be—went to bat for the soldiers. They returned from tour and learned he had been charged under the NDA and basically run out of the army. "I was gutted after that. Another soldier ran into him and learned he'd left the army. He couldn't believe his own battalion treated him like that. And I think it had everything to do with how successful that company was. I can't help but think that. If anyone's got a grievance, it would be him. But he wouldn't. He's a stand-up soldier."
1:19:55	He doesn't know the specifics and the details, how it was resolved, because the ND happened at the end of the tour. But the National Investigation Service was involved, "for something that seemed as trivial as it was."
1:21:10	Transition back in Canada? There was no formal decompression. It was like returning from Croatia, nothing set up. After finishing leave, soldiers reported back to the battalion for three days. A lot of the soldiers used those three days to process out of the army. Others didn't bother to show up. Some used the time to make improvements in the Junior Ranks Club. One of them is now a medical doctor. "It's amazing who you meet in the Reserve force." A number ended up in Wainwright, teaching. That's what he did, before returning to university.
1:23:25	His mood? He was proud of how the company came together and performed, with the sheer will of the soldiers, NCOs and officers to work through adversity and austere conditions (not environment, but

	<p>in terms of the battle group). He was disappointed with how things unfolded on the tour. Part of that is related to not following up on what happened to the Regular Force sergeant major. Well, both of them. "It seemed you were doomed in that position." It showed reservists that the chances of deploying overseas as a warrant officer or higher is extremely limited. On another note, the former RSM of the Highlanders, CWO Fletcher (ex-PPCLI), had a serious road accident on that tour and had to be repatriated along with his driver. Tucker also makes it clear they didn't have an A-team in all respects; there were some problem soldiers. Boredom was a factor. "If there's mud in the white room, they'll cover it in mud." They had their share of disciplinary issues, plenty of rumours swirling. One rumour: They had a pet...a pet bear in Bihac. Troops were just bored, making stuff up. "It's all part of the game, I guess."</p>
1:28:30	<p>One final story? <i>"New Year's Eve was a blast. I went out on patrol with Steve Malenfant and his section. The tracer rounds that were flying through the air that night...it was just comical. We're on foot. By the time we got there...you'd see green tracer flying through the air this way, then look behind you and see red tracer flying through the air and you're like, 'Just hope no one gets killed.' That was about it. We just walked around, said 'hi' to everyone and let the police do their thing. We knew that on New Year's it was going to be a mess. And it certainly was. But at the end of it, we knew that there's a lot of weapons still out there. A lot of automatic weapons. That just helped justify that we needed to do more Op HARVEST and stuff like that cause there's still a ton of ordnance out there."</i></p>
	<p>Additional details?</p>