



The Canadian Armed Forces in the Post-War Years



Every day Canadian Armed Forces members put their lives on the line to serve our country. Canada has become well known for its commitment to international peace support operations. This is only one of many duties, however, that our military members have fulfilled over the years. These brave men and women have also served in many other important and challenging roles in the post-war era.

NATIONAL SECURITY

The main responsibility of the Canadian Armed Forces is the protection of our country. Vigilantly patrolling our borders, they are continually at the ready to defend Canada. For many years during the Cold War between the communist countries of the East and the democratic countries of the West, the primary threat was the former Soviet Union. Canadian Armed Forces members had to constantly guard against the Soviet bombers and submarines that carried nuclear weapons and probed our defences. The nature of external threats to our country have changed over the years. Today, keeping watch against possible terrorist attacks is an important duty.

REGIONAL SECURITY

Canada also helps protect its allies. This was perhaps most evident during the Cold War that dominated the world's international relations from the late 1940s to the early 1990s. For example, as a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Canada stationed a brigade group and a number of fighter squadrons in Western Europe, helping offset the communist forces in Eastern Europe.

Another key international military commitment is to the North American Aerospace Defence Command (NORAD).

This joint American/Canadian organization is responsible for watching the skies over North America for potential threats. As missile and bomber technology evolved during the Cold War, strings of radar stations were built across Canada's North to guard against possible attack.

Today, the Canadian Armed Forces continue to uphold our country's international military responsibilities. For example, Canadians were in Afghanistan as part of a United Nations-authorized NATO deployment and our ships train and serve with a standing NATO fleet in the Atlantic Ocean. As part of the war on terror, the Canadian Armed Forces have served with the United States coalition fleet in the waters off Southwest Asia and taken part in airstrikes against ISIS forces in the Middle East.

DOMESTIC STABILITY

On rare occasions, members of the Canadian Armed Forces are called upon to help maintain civil peace within Canada. During the October Crisis of 1970, the federal government invoked the *War Measures Act* and Canadian soldiers were deployed in Quebec and Ottawa. They helped maintain security in the aftermath of dramatic kidnappings and bombings which, it was feared, may have escalated into widespread violence and unrest.



In 1990, Canadian Armed Forces members were sent to a Quebec community west of Montréal during the Oka Crisis to help deal with an Indigenous land dispute. The Canadian Armed Forces also often help the RCMP monitor our borders for criminal activity, such as the international smuggling of drugs and undocumented immigrants.

SEARCH AND RESCUE

Members of the Canadian Armed Forces have saved many lives in search and rescue operations. It takes great skill and courage to parachute into remote areas to help those injured in a plane crash or to dangle beneath helicopters during storms to rescue people on a sinking ship. This kind of expertise has also been valuable in other emergency response situations, like those following the Arrow Air Flight 1285 crash in Gander, Newfoundland in 1985 and the Swissair Flight 111 crash off the coast of Nova Scotia in 1998. These tragedies would see the Canadian Armed Forces help in the recovery efforts to retrieve human remains and aircraft debris.

NATURAL DISASTERS

The highly trained men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces are an invaluable resource when natural disasters strike. During the 1997 Red River floods in Manitoba, they helped build levees, rescued stranded people and provided aid to those in need. The Canadian Armed Forces also provided support and helped clear the damage after a massive ice storm hit Eastern Canada in 1998, causing major power outages. Forest fires are another natural threat they are called upon to help handle. For example, soldiers helped to fight major forest fires in British Columbia in 2003 and evacuated residents threatened by wildfires in northern Alberta in 2016.

The Canadian Armed Forces also assist when natural disasters hit farther from home. For example, a tsunami

battered the coasts of countries along the Indian Ocean in 2004 and Hurricane Katrina hit the Southern United States in 2005, causing great destruction and suffering. In both cases, Canadian Armed Forces members were quickly sent to provide specialized assistance and relief supplies. To effectively offer this kind of help, the Canadian Armed Forces has a Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) with the capability and equipment to provide safe drinking water, basic medical care and infrastructure repair to areas devastated by natural disasters or other upheavals.

SUPPORT ROLES

The many different operational efforts made by the Canadian Armed Forces would be impossible without the skills of the men and women who work in support roles. It takes great effort to provide the help necessary to enable front-line personnel to effectively perform their tasks. Members who have worked in roles like logistics, maintenance, transport, medical and administration services have been integral to the successes of our military.

FACTS AND FIGURES

- Canada's vast size and relatively small population has resulted in the development of some unique ways to defend our borders. For example, the Canadian Rangers are a reserve force that patrols Canada's northern areas and remote portions of our east and west coasts. These volunteers number approximately 5,000 and are mostly Inuit or other Indigenous men and women.
- The Canadian Army, Royal Canadian Navy and Royal Canadian Air Force comprise the three main branches of the Canadian Armed Forces. Their long and proud tradition of protecting and serving Canada on land, at sea and in the air continues today.

Canadian Armed Forces members during Manitoba floods. Photo: DND-1SD97-097



HEROES AND BRAVERY

- Many of the roles that Canadian Armed Forces members have performed are very hazardous. Constant training and being at the ready around the clock in all kinds of weather conditions takes great effort and creates an increased risk of accidents.
- In the fall of 1991, during a rescue mission to the site of a Hercules military transport crash near CFS Alert in Canada's High Arctic, 17 search and rescue technicians parachuted to the scene of the accident at night in a raging blizzard. They helped save the lives of 13 crash survivors and each technician earned a meritorious service award for bravery.

OPERATIONAL STRESS INJURIES

The rigors that Veterans of the Canadian Armed Forces have experienced can take a great toll, even if the injuries that result are not readily visible to others. The strains of experiencing violence, trauma, terror and loss of comrades can often lead to operational stress injuries—psychological difficulties such as post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety disorders, depression or other conditions that interfere with daily functioning. These consequences of serving in the cause of peace and freedom can have a significant impact on individuals and families.

SACRIFICE

The *Books of Remembrance*, located on Parliament Hill in Ottawa, record the names of Canadians who have died in service to our country over the years. The *Seventh Book*

of *Remembrance* contains the names of more than 1,800 Canadian Armed Forces members who have died in the line of duty since 1947. This number does not include those who died during the Korean War, whose names are recorded in a separate book.

CANADA REMEMBERS PROGRAM

The Canada Remembers Program of Veterans Affairs Canada encourages all Canadians to learn about the sacrifices and achievements of those who have served—and continue to serve—during times of war and peace. As well, it invites Canadians to become involved in remembrance activities that will help preserve their legacy for future generations. To learn more about Canada's role in peace support efforts over the years, please visit the Veterans Affairs Canada website at veterans.gc.ca or call **1-866-522-2122** toll free.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Veterans Affairs Canada: veterans.gc.ca
- Canadian Military History Gateway: cmhg.gc.ca
- Canadian Peacekeeping Veterans Association: cpva.ca
- Canadian Association of Veterans in United Nations Peacekeeping: cavunp.org
- The Royal Canadian Legion: legion.ca

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