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Dear Families and Members of the Canadian Armed Forces,

As we close out our second week of doing our part in Canada's concentrated effort to fight the spread of COVID-19, I thought it best to update you on your Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) efforts to date and the way ahead in some key areas.

The routine battle rhythm that governs our lives is very different today because of this pandemic and as a result normal activities have changed dramatically. Today, our mission along with the armed defence of Canada is to safeguard our health, safeguard the health of Canadians, and be prepared to respond to calls for assistance. The health of the CAF will be critical in the days and weeks to come as we may be requested to support Federal, Provincial, Territorial and Municipal response to COVID-19 scenarios with specialized and general duty capabilities, and we must carry on with domestic and deployed operations.

To ensure a healthy force we have taken measures to reduce or pause routine activities that could contribute to the spread of the virus, while ensuring assigned missions and key functions that cannot stop are conducted safely. We have identified a number of further actions that will need to be taken in the future.

### The Big Picture

Pay close attention to our national TV, radio and print media, and our Federal, Provincial/Territorial and Municipal Health officials, the Surgeon General as well as our political and military leadership. These are trusted sources and are vital as you consume information about this crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic is a global health emergency that threatens many lives and economies.

Extraordinary measures have been put in place to stop its spread within Canada and around the world. It is not 'business as usual' in most areas and will not be so until the virus subsides and there is a vaccine in place to prevent re-emergence. This will take time, discipline and patience.

The disease is spread by close person-to-person contact and it spreads very rapidly. We have scaled back virtually all activities in the CAF to help you as individuals prevent the spread within the CAF and within our communities in

Canada. Our method is to keep as many people isolated at home or in quarters as possible.

For those of you who are isolated at home or in quarters – this is your place of duty and your duty is to prevent the spread by ceasing contact with those outside your home or quarters except for essential shopping for the necessities of life and individual PT outside. When you do leave your home or quarters for these essentials, you must continue to reduce the risk to yourself and your community by staying two meters away from people, trying not to touch anything anybody else has touched, avoiding touching your face and washing your hands thoroughly for 20 seconds when you get back home.

For those who must report for duty outside your home or quarters, you must do so safely, maintaining physical distance from others and washing your hands often. We are taking these steps to keep the force fit to fight - to make sure we don't spread the virus into the general population or allow it to spread from the general population into the CAF. If we slow the spread, or better yet prevent it, our families stay healthy, and we stay healthy and ready to help Canadians and do our military missions. If the spread in Canada as a whole is slowed, we can recover faster as a nation and our medical systems will be able to take care of our most vulnerable. I am counting on your self-discipline and your motivation to serve the welfare of Canada, the CAF and your families.

### Operations

We will maintain our ongoing domestic and global operational commitments, although specific mission postures will be reviewed. We will conduct expeditionary operations as safely as we can, but preventing spread and force protection is our main effort. We will identify and make ready for action COVID-19 response forces in Canada under Op LASER and domestic response forces under Op LENTUS. We will continue critical intelligence functions, including medical intelligence. We will maintain our classified and unclassified networks. And we will continue to take care of those of you who live in quarters on our bases, wings and schools, including food service and administrative support. Our CAF medical system will continue to provide health services. Strategic airlift operations to sustain and rotate deployed forces will continue. Strategic and operational planning for future operations and personnel administration is well advanced.

Deployed operations will continue but will scale back to maintain force health and force protection. Many of you will remain at home because of a delay in your rotation, and some of you will return from deployment early. Re-setting operational rotations will be planned and communicated later when the situation in each of our deployed AORs stabilizes. All those who return will be subject to a 14-day quarantine, and then available for operational duties under Op LASER or Op LENTUS if required. Details of where and how you will be quarantined will be



given to you. If you have recently returned and are at home, you are under full quarantine at home for 14 days and are not permitted to leave your residence.

Op LASER is the CAF operation responding to COVID-19 within Canada. Our tasks will be geared to support Federal, Provincial, Territorial and Municipal governments and agencies in their efforts to suppress the disease, to support vulnerable populations and to provide logistical and general support to communities. To do this we are now in the process of identifying the forces required, including our incredibly valuable Primary Reserves and Canadian Rangers. These forces will be organized down to individual level into task forces able to deploy by sea, road or air to where they are needed. More will come through the chain of command as we complete the work to identify and set the force. The concept of employment of the force is being developed and will include Regular, Primary Reserve and Canadian Ranger. More on this next week.

Op LENTUS is the CAF operation to respond to domestic emergencies, like floods and forest fires, where civil agencies need CAF support. Similar to the process for Op LASER, the forces are being identified and will be warned off and re-grouped in the days to come. We are anticipating that Op LASER and Op LENTUS could run concurrently.

Many of you volunteer in your communities, and that is a very good thing. Should you be placed on standby for CAF operations, volunteer work must be restricted to first responder duties only, such as ground search and rescue and volunteer fire-fighting. You must be available for CAF operations and volunteer organizations must aware that your services may be required elsewhere at short notice.

There will be many differences in operational, training and administrative posture across Canada. This is to be expected given the variance in demand across our Force.

Bottom line for operations – stand by and be ready. Battle procedure will be quick and we will have to do much of the preparation in this dispersed posture we are in. When it's time, we will marshal forces, conduct reconnaissance and deploy as, where and when required.

### Big Institutional Concerns

We have paused entry level individual training and throughput, normal releases will shrink the force and the posting cycle is set to occur at the same time Op LASER and Op LENTUS are most likely to demand we be all in. Something has to give.

As a result of the reduced ability for movement within Canada and around the world, combined with almost no commercial lodgings available, the reduced certainty of routine real-estate and banking activities, and the risk of contributing to the spread of the virus while house-hunting, moving and using interim lodgings and meals, the Annual Posting Season (APS) will be seriously disrupted this year. That said, it is our intention to execute as many of the planned postings as is responsible and reasonable to do. Further direction will come shortly via CANFORGEN, but in a nutshell: the overall number of moves will be reduced significantly and they must be vetted and approved by L1/Service Chiefs as operationally essential; the APS will be lengthened to conclude by 31 Dec 20; Imposed Restriction remains an option for all moves if a family move is not practical in the short to mid-term; report for duty dates will be adjusted to allow greater flexibility in report dates relative to the Change of Strength (COS) date; many COS dates will be later than is normal; priorities for moves and move dates will be considered based on individual and family needs or concerns; OUTCAN military students will be posted home, and the remainder of the OUTCAN posting plan will be vetted and approved by the VCDS with the expectation that many new OUTCAN postings will be cancelled or delayed until next APS, keeping personnel already posted OUTCAN in place to the degree possible. These decisions to reduce movement will impact people who have been identified by Selection Boards for promotion this year. We will aim to protect these promotions to the greatest extent possible and will work to identify how this can be achieved while still meeting our service requirements and protecting the safety of our members, their families and members of their communities in which they live and work.

This crisis is disrupting normal administration. To reduce the administrative risks and to preserve our strength as recruiting has almost ceased, transition out of the CAF and retirements may be voluntarily delayed. Those who are releasing voluntarily but wish to remain in the CAF are welcome to do so and appropriate terms of service will be offered. Those wishing to continue with transition may do so, but you must expect significant delays and disruptions. Those who are releasing for medical reasons and where your successful transition may be jeopardized under the current circumstances, we are examining ways to retain you until you believe you and your family assess that you can be fully successful in transition. Those releasing under other release items will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

I know that some leave plans have been badly disrupted. Some of the disruption is just unlucky and there is little we can do about it. Where unlucky becomes unfair is where we will look to try to address any concerns. We will investigate buy-out, Compensatory Time Off (CTO), and accumulation or some combination thereof to try and make it up to you. I can make no promise that we will make it perfect but we will do our best to make it as right as possible. My departure point will be starting when I signed the order restricting leave until the end of the FY. My team will provide me options to find the right solutions.

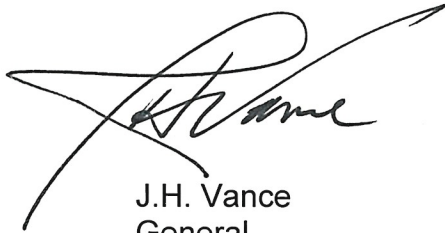
Finally, to former members who are considering serving again, you are encouraged to re-enroll. Contact your Recruiting Centre.

There's a lot in this letter and you will no doubt have many questions. There will be a series of CANFORGENs published in the next days that will address the APS, Compensation and Benefits (including leave) and release administration. These CANFORGENs will be actioned by your chain of command and once released they will be able to respond to your questions. Keep an eye on the Canadian Armed Forces Application (CAF App) for details.

These are unique and stressful times, take care of yourselves and your families both physically and mentally, stay in contact with your colleagues and reach out to support one another.

To you and your families, this is all very real and very personal. Rest assured that your chain of command will be or are engaging with you on all of this and will be prepared to answer your questions and meet your needs. Thank you for your loyalty and dedication to service for Canada during these challenging times. You make me proud to be your CDS.

Stay Fit To Fight!



J.H. Vance  
General

STAY FROSTY!  
