

# SAPPER OFFICER BECOMES CHIEF OF DEFENCE STAFF

---

On 18 July 2024, General M.A.J. Carignan became the first Sapper Chief of the Defence Staff since 1964. In that role, she is responsible for the overall strategic direction of the Canadian Armed Forces.

General Carignan joined the CAF in 1986 and attended the Royal Military College of Canada. Graduating in 1990, she was commissioned into the Canadian Military Engineers. Over the course of her career, General Carignan deployed overseas four times, earned multiple university degrees, and held a series of appointments in Canada with increasing responsibility.

Her first deployment as an engineer troop commander was to the Golan Heights in southwestern Syria. From June to December 1993, she served on Operation DANACA as part of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force, helping maintain peace between Israel and Syria.

General Carignan served in Bosnia-Herzegovina from March to October 2002 on Operation PALLADIUM, Canada's contribution to the NATO stabilization force in the region. As Chief Engineer for the NATO Multinational Division South-West, she managed the removal of explosive ordnance and cleared land so it could be returned to local farmers.

From November 2009 to September 2010, General Carignan deployed to Afghanistan to command the engineer regiment of Task Force Kandahar. This was her second command of an engineer regiment, following her tenure as Commanding Officer of 5e Régiment du génie de combat. As Commander of the Kandahar Engineer Regiment, she oversaw all engineer support for Canadian and coalition forces in the region. She led infrastructure development projects and coordinated military operations with civilians and contractors. For her accomplishments, General Carignan was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal.

General Carignan's most recent overseas deployment was to Iraq, from November 2019 to November 2020, on Operation IMPACT, where she served as Commander of NATO Mission Iraq. Although this was not an engineering appointment, she drew on her experience as a Sapper to advise civilian and military leaders, help shape future NATO options in Iraq, and facilitate engagement with senior Iraqi government and defence officials. For this service, General Carignan received the Meritorious Service Cross.

General Carignan has had an exceptional CAF career across a wide range of postings. She was the first woman in the Canadian Forces to command a combat arms unit, the first Canadian woman to reach the rank of Full General, and the first woman appointed Chief of the Defence Staff.

General Carignan's appointment as a Sapper Chief of the Defence Staff is a significant departure from the norm. It sets a precedent that engineers, and many other occupations, can hold the CAF's most senior military role.



