

Major Mark C. Phillips, CD



After 41+ years of service to the Canadian Armed Forces, Major Mark Phillips is finally retiring for good. Born and raised in Pointe Claire, Quebec, Mark jumped at the chance for a “free” university education and enrolled in the Canadian Forces in 1975 through the Regular Officer Training Plan, majoring in physics and mathematics at Collège Militaire Royal de Saint Jean. He became a Military Engineering officer and was fortunate to spend the summer of 1979 with 2 Combat Engineering Regiment in Petawawa, after having earned his jump wings from the Airborne School in Edmonton.

After a posting in the Construction Engineering Section of Canadian Forces Base Trenton, Mark decided to specialize as a Geomatics officer. He attended the Royal Engineer’s Army Survey Course in Hermitage, United Kingdom, during which time he was promoted to Captain and managed to earn his British parachute wings. Returning to Canada and posted to Mapping and Charting Establishment (MCE) in Ottawa, he served there as a Troop Commander and Engineering Officer.

In 1986, a phone call from Rideau Hall led to a two and a half year posting-of-a-lifetime as Aide de Camp to the Governor General. He then went to the University of New Brunswick in Fredericton, where he was promoted to the rank of major while earning a Master of Engineering degree in digital mapping.

The next eight years saw Mark carry out postings within Defence Geomatics as a Topographic Squadron Commander, International Plans & Policy Coordinator, and Geomatics Support Squadron Commander. He then ended up in National Defence Headquarters, being posted first to the Y2K Intelligence Response Team, then to successive strategic realty asset positions - first with the Directorate of Land Force Readiness, and then with the Assistant Deputy Minister - Infrastructure and Environment.

He returned to the Defence Geomatics community in 2001 as a staff officer for combined and joint geomatics operations and retired for the first time in 2002 after being offered a second career with ESRI Canada – managing the marketing and sales of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software and services to the Canadian military. Six years later, he left ESRI to teach at Algonquin College as well as managing their GIS programs, including the one for MCE’s QL5A students. In 2006, he joined the Primary Reserve to become the Deputy Commanding Officer of 33 Combat Engineering Regiment, and was promoted to Lieutenant-Colonel in January 2008 when he assumed command of the unit. Post-command, Mark left Algonquin College to manage the Afghanistan Legacy Project on a full-time Reserve Class B contract, and then deployed on a six month UN peacekeeping mission to the Democratic Republic of Congo on a Class C contract, where he was the senior Liaison Officer in Goma between the UN and the Congolese Army.

Upon his return to Canada in 2012, Mark completed a Class B contract at 33 Brigade Group HQ and then transferred back into the Regular Force. After short postings to Director Intelligence Policy and Plans and MCE (Commandant of the School of Military Mapping, and Officer Commanding Geospatial Support Squadron), Mark was posted to the newly formed Canadian Forces Intelligence Group in 2015 in the role of Geospatial Intelligence officer in the J5 branch. Mark was promoted to LCol (while so employed) for a 7-month deployment in 2017 as the Canadian Forces Liaison Officer to the African Union, while also standing up a Canadian Defence Attaché Office in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. He climbed Mount Kilimanjaro (because it was there) just before heading back to his J5 GEOINT job in Canada.

Mark has always been very involved in his community, contributing literally tens of thousands of hours volunteering with his local church and schools, coaching various sports, serving as President of the Ottawa Lions Track & Field Club for a decade and officiating for Athletics Ontario (including the 2017 Invictus Games); donating his performances as a professional clown at kids' events for over two decades; and donating blood over 325 times. He has competed in a wide variety of team and individual sports at both civilian and military national championships, and was inducted in the Canadian Forces Sports Honour Roll in 2005. Mark and his wife Sherry are the very proud parents of Colin, 27, and Clara, 25. After his retirement, when not visiting their kids or travelling abroad, Mark and Sherry plan on remaining in Ottawa.