



The Royal Canadian Dragoons  
Worthington Barracks  
Garrison Petawawa  
PO Box 9999 Station Main  
Petawawa, ON K8H 2X3

03 September 2020

Dear Dragoons,

As I write this note to all of you, I'm sitting in the Isolation Facility (ISOFAC) in Kingston, marking time until the team and I get to head to Latvia for our Tactical Reconnaissance and to oversee some of the certification for the 2 RCR Battle Group. So you might say I have some time on my hands and I wanted to reach out to bring everyone up to speed on where the Regiment is at, as well as where we're headed in the near term.

Naturally, everything we're doing is tempered by the force protection requirements imposed by COVID-19. Dragoons are taking care of themselves, their families and the communities in which we live by following the Force Health Protection Measures and this has required some changes in how we do business. However, we still get the job done. Training has resumed. Maintenance is getting done. The operational requirements of our jobs may have changed the environment in which we work, but the need to get it done has not changed. Leaders at all levels are being diligent in maintaining the standards for protection as we get back to work and we can expect these standards to remain in place for the foreseeable future.

The Fall training window can be summed up as a back to basics – emphasizing patrol and troop drills, both dry and live. We began with ranges, Primary Combat Function (PCF) courses and will progress to field firing ranges up to Troop size, with some Squadron level dry activities as well. This training has been deliberately designed to provide flexibility at the Squadron level, empowering our junior leaders down to patrol commanders to lead and mentor their soldiers.

The priority for the Fall is gearing up for Op REASSURANCE, where the Regiment will take the lead for a Battle Group deploying to Latvia beginning in January, 2021. Incorporating elements from across the Brigade, the Regiment will have the responsibility of generating a robust Battle Group Headquarters, Combat Service Support sub-unit and elements of a Combat Support sub-unit that will include a reconnaissance troop mounted in Coyotes. These elements will form the core of a multinational Battle Group that will deter and, if necessary, defend against aggression in Europe.

A substantial portion of the Regiment won't be deploying with the Battle Group, however. The training pause imposed by COVID has caused a backlog of candidates at training centres across the country. From St Jean to Gagetown and on to Meaford, candidates are waiting to get going again and we need these graduates (both officer and NCM) for the continued health of our unit. Training institutions are not staffed to meet their regular production remits, certainly not the increased demand they're seeing now. So we can expect a continued wave of tasks to hit the operational units, where experienced leaders will be needed to pass on their knowledge to the next generation.

The loss of leaders and mentors to tasks would put appropriate supervision and mentorship at risk for the rest of the Regiment, so we conducted an internal reorganization. This ensures that junior

1/2

The Royal Canadian Dragoons – Canada's Senior Serving Armoured Regiment

Service Before Self – Discipline – Integrity – Loyalty – Courage – Excellence

members have an appropriate level of oversight but also that personnel at all levels have the right mentors to show them the way. The Regiment will hold the fort with a robust structure that allows for taskings to be supported while enabling good training during the Battle Group deployment. The Acting CO, Maj Maerz, and the Acting RSM, MWO Leblanc, will be well supported during this time.

In addition to the Op REASSURANCE deployment in 2021, the Regiment has deployed 60 Troop to the current 2 RCR Battle Group in Latvia, individual augmentees to Op IMPACT in the Middle East and Op UNIFIER in Ukraine, tasks that involve similar levels of preparation but without the added benefit of being able to train as part of a Regimental team. We will continue to support these deployed members and their families just as if they were overseas as part of our own team.

Leliefontein will look very different this year as a result of COVID-19. We will not be able to hold mess dinners or the All-Ranks Dance, sports competitions and right of line will not look the same, and the parade will be not on the same scale we're used to. It will be unlikely that we'll be able to welcome members of the Regimental family from outside Petawawa in the same 'family reunion' atmosphere we've traditionally enjoyed. However, we will still mark the 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Leliefontein in a way that respects our Regimental heritage and we will find an opportunity in the future to reconnect all the ties that typically happen at Leliefontein. Stay tuned for more details as the situation evolves, but rest assured that we intend to mark the occasion as best we can under the circumstances. The other events intended to occur around the time of Change of Command (including the commemoration of the new headquarters building and presentation of the fifth guidon) will be rescheduled for sometime in the future, but they remain important markers on our calendar.

Lastly, I want to address the very recent change in RSM. When opportunities arise and we're called on to take up new responsibilities, we're all professionals and I can think of no better example than RSM Leamon leaving the Regiment to become the 2 CMBG Brigade Sergeant Major at short notice. I want to personally thank RSM Leamon for the past two years he has served as our RSM and welcome back MWO (soon to be promoted to CWO) Larouche. RSM Leamon's calm, professional leadership has set an outstanding example for all ranks and we now get to share him with the rest of the Brigade as the Brigade Sergeant Major. Congratulations on all your hard work for the past two years and good luck over at Brigade. For RSM Larouche, we welcome you back after only a short time away but with a great deal of work ahead. I look forward to being your fire-team partner! For all, please keep an eye on the Guild's Facebook page for the Change of Appointment ceremony, which will be executed similar to how we did Change of Command this summer.

The next several months will see significant upheaval, but it will also involve a lot of great training. I am heartened to chat with Dragoons who are happy to be back at work again, with whatever restrictions are necessary to protect ourselves. We have a lot on our plate, but there's a solid team in place to ensure we continue to take care of business and take care of our people.



Enno A. Kerckhoff, MSM, CD  
Lieutenant-Colonel  
58<sup>th</sup> Commanding Officer

2/2

The Royal Canadian Dragoons – Canada's Senior Serving Armoured Regiment

Service Before Self – Discipline – Integrity – Loyalty – Courage – Excellence