Beat: News

Captain Jennifer Casey

Final Trip Home To Halifax

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USPA NEWS - Captain Jennifer Casey, joined the Canadian Armed Forces in 2014, and in 2018, she joined the Snowbirds team. Prior to her career in the Canadian Armed Forces, she had studied journalism and worked as a reporter, anchor, and radio producer in her hometown of Halifax, Nova Scotia. Sadly, Captain Casey was killed in a crash involving a Canadian Forces Snowbirds Tudor aircraft on May 17th, 2020 while participating in Operation INSPIRATION in Kamloops, British Columbia.

On May 3rd, the Canadian Forces Snowbirds commenced Operation Inspiration in Atlantic Canada and over two weeks made their way across the country. The purpose of the mission was to inspire and encourage all Canadians during these difficult times and to thank all of the frontline workers for their service by doing a series of flybys from coast to coast.

In a media release, Lieutenant-Colonel Mike French, 431 Air Demonstration Squadron Commanding Officer said, "The entire team is devastated by the loss of Jenn. She was the quintessential Public Affairs Officer. A tireless and energetic officer with a network of media contacts from her previous media career and savvy with social media which endeared her to the public. She absolutely loved what she did; she was one of the main reasons Op INSPIRATION has been so well received by the public. She had just received a 1st Canadian Air Division Commander´s coin in recognition of her stellar efforts and a nomination was being drafted for a Chief of the Defence Staff commendation. Her loss is a serious blow to not only our Team but to the Royal Canadian Air Force and the Canadian Armed Forces as a whole. I´ve spoken with Jenn´s family and passed on our sincere and heartfelt condolences. No words can ease the pain they are feeling right now, I have passed on that they are not grieving alone."

In a statement from Captain Jennifer Casey's family her mother said, "Captain Jennifer Casey, our beloved daughter lost her life on Sunday, May 17 in Kamloops, British Columbia while supporting an important mission that seemed to be designed for her. Operation INSPIRATION is a mission with one focus, making Canadians happy in a time of uncertainty and there was no better person in this world to carry out that mission than Jenn. Her beautiful smile and positively infectious personality could brighten anyone´s day and she proudly served the mission as she flew across our great nation with a team that she adored, the Snowbirds. Jennifer was more than a granddaughter, daughter, sister, and friend to many, she was a storyteller, a role that she embraced with passion and skill. She was also a proud Nova Scotian that served as an advocate and ambassador for her province wherever she went. Her journey took her to many places but her heart was always at home in Halifax."

In the late afternoon, on Sunday, the remains of Captain Casey arrived at the Halifax Stanfield International Airport onboard a CF-130 Hercules aircraft. It was met by a military honor guard and fellow Snowbirds carried her casket to a hearse that was waiting on the tarmac. Her family members, Royal Canadian Armed Forces, the Governor-General Julie Payette, and Defence Minister Harjit Sajjan were all on hand to pay tribute and say their final goodbyes.

After the Ramp Ceremony at the Halifax Stanfield International Airport, a motorcade carried Captain Casey on her final journey home to her beloved city of Halifax. The procession traveled through the west end and north end neighborhoods where she grew up and also passed by the News 95.7 radio station where she started her career after her graduating from the University of King´s College School of Journalism.

Hundreds of people gathered along the motorcade route to pay respects, mourn the loss and celebrate the life of Captain Jennifer Casey. Many people could be heard sharing stories of how she touched their lives, inspired, and the many ways that she served her country throughout her life. Many spectators could be seen wearing red and white which are the Snowbirds team colors. Others could be seen with items related to the Montreal Canadians and the Tragically Hip which were her favorite hockey team and band.

Since the tragic crash, the Canadian Forces has announced that Operation Inspiration is considered to be on an operational pause. We are being told that Captain Jennifer Casey was one of the driving forces behind the mission. She pursued the mission with passion and vigor telling the story of the Canadian Forces Snowbirds, saluting Canadians in the troubled times of COVID-19, promoting unity, inspiring Canadians to look beyond the current situation to better times ahead, and reminding everyone that we are all in this together.

The first day of the mission began in Atlantic Canada and included a fly-by over the Halifax region where they performed a special formation called the missing man maneuver as they passed over 12 Wing CFB Shearwater to pay tribute to the six Canadian Forces members who died in the recent Cyclone helicopter crash while deployed with HMCS Fredericton. Little did they know just how meaningful that maneuver would become.

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