

THE VIMY AWARD



General (Retired) Walter Natynczyk, CMM, MSC, CD

Walter John Natynczyk, born on 29 October 1957 is a retired Canadian Army General who has served as Deputy Minister of Veterans Affairs from 2014 to 2021. He was the President of the Canadian Space Agency from 2013 to 2014 and Chief of the Defence Staff of the Canadian Armed Forces from 2008 to 2012. He is currently the Colonel Commandant of the Royal Canadian Armoured Corps.

Natynczyk joined the Canadian Forces in August 1975. He attended Royal Roads Military College and College militaire royal de Saint-Jean, graduating in 1979 with a degree in Business Administration. His formative years were spent on NATO duty in West Germany with The Royal Canadian Dragoons in troop command and staff appointments.

In 1983, Natynczyk assumed duties as a Squadron Commander at the Royal Military College of Canada in Kingston, Ontario. In 1986, he commenced a five-year regimental tour in Petawawa, serving in several staff and squadron command appointments; this tour included six months of UN peacekeeping duties in Cyprus. On completion of Canadian Forces Command and Staff College, he served on the Army Staff in Saint-Hubert, Quebec.

In May 1994, Natynczyk embarked upon a year-long tour with the United Nations in the former Yugoslavia as Sector South-West Chief of Operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina within HQ 7 (UK) Armoured Brigade, then as the Chief of Land Operations, UN Protection Forces (UNPROFOR) HQ in Zagreb, Croatia.

In June 1995, Natynczyk was assigned to the Vice Chief of the Defence Staff within National Defence HQ in Ottawa, Ontario. He then commanded his regiment The Royal Canadian Dragoons for two years, leading the Dragoons during domestic operations in the Ottawa region during the 1998 ice storm. Natynczyk returned to Bosnia in 1998 as the Canadian Contingent Commander. On his return to Ottawa in March 1999, he was appointed J3 Plans and Operations during the period of deployments to Kosovo, Bosnia, East Timor and Eritrea.



Natynczyk attended the U.S. Army War College, and was subsequently appointed Deputy Commanding General, III Corps and Fort Hood. In January 2004, he deployed with III Corps to Baghdad, Iraq, serving first as the Deputy Director of Strategy, Policy and Plans, and subsequently as the Deputy Commanding General of the Multi-National Corps — Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom. Natynczyk led the Corps'

35,000 soldiers, consisting of 10 separate brigades, stationed throughout the Iraq Theatre of Operations.

He was later awarded the Meritorious Service Cross specifically for his combat efforts in Operation Iraqi Freedom January 2004 to January 2005.

Upon his return to Canada, he assumed command of the Land Force Doctrine and Training System. He was subsequently appointed Chief of Transformation, where he was responsible for implementation of the force restructuring and the enabling processes and policies.

Natynczyk was promoted to Lieutenant-General and assumed the responsibilities of the Vice Chief of Defence Staff on 28 June 2006.

From July 2008 to October 2012, General Natynczyk was Canada's Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS). In February 2012, in Washington, the U.S. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff awarded the Legion of Merit (Degree of Commander) to General Natynczyk. Natynczyk retired from the Canadian Armed Forces in December 2012 to take on public service.

In August 2013, Walter Natynczyk was appointed President of the Canadian Space Agency by the Prime Minister of Canada. Subsequently he was appointed as the 9th Deputy Minister of Veterans Affairs Canada, where he served from 2014 to 2021.

Natynczyk retired from the Public Service in 2021, after which on August 2021, he accepted the appointment of Colonel Commandant of the Royal Canadian Armoured Corps a position that he held until June 2024. He is serving on the Board of the Veteran Centre of Excellence for Chronic Pain, a non-forprofit funded by Veterans Affairs Canada. He is an advisor for the Homes for Heroes Foundation, which has built three small home villages for homeless Veterans. Finally, he is serving as the Honorary President of Last Post Fund, a not-or-profit foundation that ensures disadvantaged Veterans receive a respectful burial.

General Natynczyk's decorations include the Commander of the Order of Military Merit (Canada), the Meritorious Service Cross (Canada), the Commander Legion of Merit (U.S.), Commander Légion d'honneur (France), Commander's Cross of the Order of Merit (Poland) and the Medal of Merit in Gold (Netherlands).

He attended Royal Roads Military College and Royal Military College Saint-Jean and is a graduate of the Canadian Forces Command and Staff College, the U.K. All-Arms Tactics Course and the U.S. Army War College, where he earned his Master's in Defence Studies.