

**Job Title**

Canadian Special Operations Forces Command (CANSOFCOM) Officer

**General Overview**

CANSOFCOM Operators are responsible for protecting Canadian national interests and combating terrorism at home and abroad. Some of their responsibilities include intelligence collection, hostage rescue and the capture of international High-Value Targets. CANSOFCOM is part of the international Special Forces Community, the actions of which have international consequences. The majority of their missions are carried out in secrecy, with the public having no knowledge of their deployment.

**Job duties and responsibilities**

Operators may deploy in any number of settings or environments from barren arctic or desert landscapes to highly populated and built-up urban areas. As well as work with other countries' Special Force units and members of other foreign and domestic militaries when required. Past examples include providing training to the Afghan Army in order to facilitate them in supporting themselves as an independent nation following the withdrawal of foreign and Canadian troops.

Operations at this level require the use of cutting-age technology in both equipment and weaponry. The training for proficiency with such equipment is provided as required. Operators from CJIRU, for instance are specialized in and responsible for providing a timely and agile response to any Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear (CBRN) attack or scenario in which they are deployed. This requires a wealth of knowledge and training on such an environments as well as proficiency with a large number of protective and detecting technologies.

**Typical Workday**

Operators spend the majority of their time training and maintaining operational readiness, as they must be ready to deploy at a moments notice in response to a variety of situations across the globe. As you may have guessed, this is not a regular 9-5 job. Operators may often enjoy a similar workweek when training out of their respective regimental headquarters, however they also travel internationally and work an unspecified amount of time in order to complete training when necessary. Some of this training includes combat exercises in close-quarter urban environments, completing tasks and scenarios such as hostage rescue situations. And other training includes skydiving, scuba diving, aggressive/combat driving, and rappelling and mountaineering courses.

**Educational requirements and other qualifications**

No formal education is required for Non-Commissioned Members (NCM), however in order to become a Commissioned Officer in the Canadian Military, a university degree is required.

Experience within the Canadian Forces is required in order to apply for CANSOFCOM and members of all trades and backgrounds are welcome to do so. After applying, applicants must undergo a barrage of mental and physical tests before they begin selection. Selection is a process in which all candidates must undergo prior to

completing their initial courses and training with their respective units. The purpose of selection is to find physically and mentally fit individuals who are capable of receiving such specialized training and will persist in the face of extreme adversity.

### **Related skills, interests, and qualities**

Only individuals interested in testing themselves, in terms of their limits and abilities and serving a cause larger than themselves should apply. A career in CANSOFCOM is demanding and requires strong mental resilience. The JTF2 brochure states that, “[They] seek excellent candidates committed to relentless and ruthless self-improvement and who consistently strive to achieve the best results, under all conditions.” (CFRG Multimedia Services, 2011)

Qualified candidates must also demonstrate exceptional leadership skills, discipline, resilience, and courage, as well as meet physical standards (See Physical Fitness Chart at end for entrance requirements). All operators must work well on their own or in a team and share responsibility for achieving mission success. They must be professionally and personally mature, with a highly developed sense of duty, integrity, and judgment. They must also be intelligent, creative, dependable, self-reliant and proactive, as well as confident yet aware of their limitations, and work best under pressure and under demanding circumstances. (CFRG Multimedia Services, 2011)

Commissioned Officers are responsible for supervisory and command positions, and should therefore emulate these traits as well as demonstrate themselves as developed and adaptive leaders with outstanding planning and communication skills. They must grasp and understand the complete workings of their occupation and easily figure out and set the right goals for their team, leading them to success. As a leader they must recognize and utilize the strengths and weaknesses of team members and self. They must also be mentally agile enough to confidently make sound and rapid crisis decisions and contribute effectively to group problem solving. They must also quickly adapt to their respective unit’s unique culture, set a proper ethical and command climate, and work well with the rest of the unit leadership. No matter what job or rank an individual may hold, CANSOFCOM culture demands that one delivers their best as they will be operating on the forefront of national security with international repercussions. (CFRG Multimedia Services, 2011)

### **Relevance of Psychology undergraduate degree**

An undergraduate degree in psychology is relevant to this career as strong mental health and psychological resilience is vital, as well as the ability and knowledge to lead and influence others. All elements of psychology are relevant and applicable to this career. However, the material covered in Abnormal Psychology and Sports & Performance Psychology as well as the neuroscience course offered on Stress and Mental Health may be most relevant.

Abnormal Psychology offers a better understanding of mental illness and their pathologies in terms of how mental disorders can manifest as well as an understanding of healthy schemas and coping strategies. A lot of the skills and concepts from Sports and

Performance Psychology such as mental toughness and positive psychology are also relevant and applicable to success in the Special Forces. The topic of resilience or mental toughness and how it can be fostered is important in order to reduce the occurrence of Operational Stress Injuries such as PTSD in individuals. A large part of being resilient revolves around utilizing adaptive coping strategies and thinking, which is also very similar to positive psychology. Rather than ruminating on negative aspects, it is more effective to utilize positive solution-based thinking and focus on what can be done to improve a situation and yield better results. Fixating on a problem only leads to negative feelings such as anger and frustration and takes up mental resources that can be put towards concentrating on creating and carrying out solutions. The latter of which is not only more effective but allows greater feelings of control.

Other psychological knowledge under the subject of motivation and emotion and cognitive psychology are pertinent. Material from the topic of motivation and emotion is useful in increase ones ability to understand and influence individuals and knowledge learned in cognitive psychology may aid in executive processes such as learning and problem solving through an enhanced understanding of how the brain works and how to better perform such functions. Leading to better memory and retention, as well as enhanced spatial skills for such tasks as navigation and orienteering.

A university degree in general is very beneficial as it fosters such abilities as active-thinking skills, more complex than automatic thought, such as knowing how and where to seek information.

### **Salary Potential**

Canada has four Special Operation units under the command of CANSOFCOM. These units offer differing salaries and pay bonuses dependent on the level of education and training required within them as well as the danger associated with the nature of their duties. Operators also receive special allowances such as hardship and risk pay as well as an additional clothing and equipment budget. Canadian special force members receive Regular Force salary as well as additional Specialist pay and Hardship, Risk, and Clothing allowances given the nature of their work. Unfortunately the Department of National Defense website does not provide a listing of specialist officer salaries as well as the budgets they receive: it does, however, provide specialized NCM salaries, whom start off making a basic salary of around \$72000 a year, with officers earning a projected substantial amount more given their additional leadership responsibilities and status.

#### Pay Rates

<http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/caf-community-pay/pay-rates.page>

#### Hardship and Risk Allowances

<http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/news/article.page?doc=chief-of-the-defence-staff-statement-on-hardship-and-risk-allowances/hie8w8f9>

### **Job Outlook**

CANSOFCOM is still relatively young and undergoing development, with units expanding and relocating to larger training facilities. Each unit usually runs selection

twice a year. CANSOFCOM is rather unique in that candidates are not selected in order to fulfill positions rather they are chosen on merit and ability.

**To apply or know more**

<http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/operations-special-forces/index.page>

The table below lists the basic physical requirements needed in order to begin CSOR selection. (Carlson & Jaenen, 2010)

FITNESS COMPONENTS	EXERCISE	LEVEL I	LEVEL II	LEVEL III
AEROBIC CAPACITY	2400 m RUN	10:57 - 10:06	10:05 - 9:22	9:21 - 8:45
	8 KM RUN	41:31 - 38:31	38:30 - 35:56	35:55 - 33:40
ANAEROBIC CAPACITY	400 m RUN	1:28 - 1:22	1:21 - 1:16	1:15 - 1:12
UPPER BODY STRENGTH	PUSH-UPS	40 - 47	48 - 54	55 - 61
	PULL-UPS	8 - 12	13 - 15	16 - 19
	BENCH PRESS 60 kg	6 - 13 reps	14 - 18 reps	19 - 21 reps
	70 kg	1 - 9 reps	10 - 14 reps	15 - 18 reps
	80 kg		5 - 11 reps	12 - 15 reps
	90 kg		1 - 7 reps	8 - 12 reps
LOWER BODY STRENGTH	SQUATS 60 kg	11 - 15 reps	16 - 17 reps	18 - 19 reps
	70 kg	7 - 12 reps	13 - 15 reps	16 - 17 reps
	80 kg	5 - 10 reps	11 - 13 reps	14 - 16 reps
	90 kg	2 - 7 reps	8 - 11 reps	12 - 14 reps
ABDOMINAL STRENGTH	SIT-UPS	41 - 46	47 - 52	53 - 58
LEG POWER	VERTICAL JUMP cm	45 - 52	53 - 59	60 - 66
WORK CAPACITY	7 KM 35 kg	1:19:00	1:19:00	1:19:00

**Bibliography**

Carlson, M., & Jaenen, S. (2010, June 8). CSOR Interim Pre-Selection Physical Fitness Training Program. Canada.  
 CFRG Multimedia Services. (2011). 2011 final revision brochure JFT2 EN FIN. Canada.