

Class of 65 Newsletter

Bulletin d'Information—Classe de 65



Number/Numéro 186

May/mai 2026

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Editor's Corner/Coin du rédacteur

Just a short edition this time. In 185 we reported the passing of **Jerry Jensen** but at the time did not have an obituary. That absence is corrected herein. Previous issues have provided interesting competing views on the current fighter jet replacement program. **6069 Peter Houlston** has provided another perspective on this major acquisition program.

6188 Jerry Jensen (1943-2026)

The following obituary is from the Heritage Funeral Home in Ottawa.



It is with profound sadness that we announce the passing of Major Gerald K. Jensen of Ottawa on 8 April, 2026. Jerry was born in Regina, Saskatchewan, and was a lifetime member of Rider Nation. In his youth he took up the trumpet, and a highlight of his teens was an evening spent playing alongside the Count Basie Orchestra. His playing days ended in adulthood, but his love of jazz music continued.

He attended the Royal Military College (RMC) in Kingston – where he met his wife Angela – and graduated as part of the Class of 1965. He served with pride in the Canadian Army (infantry) for over 35 years, first with the Regina Rifle Regiment, RMC, then the Queen's Own Rifles of Canada, and ultimately the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. Jerry's service included two tours with the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (1965 and 1970), instructor and Adjutant at the Combat Arms School at Camp Borden, the Canadian Land Forces Command and Staff College (1975), Aide-de-Camp to the Lieutenant Governor of Manitoba, the Australian Army Staff College (1980), and West Germany (1985-1987). While posted to field battalions he served as a platoon commander, company commander, and battalion Deputy Commanding Officer. The latter part of his career was spent at the Directorate of Land Operations Research (DLOR) in Ottawa.

Following his 'retirement' in 1997 he filled his time with many activities. Jerry found himself continuing to work with DLOR on a contract basis, and also part time at a local hobby shop.



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Jensen Obituary (Concluded)

He volunteered at the Canadian War Museum in numerous capacities. He was instrumental in running the Friends of the Canadian War Museum's used Book Room and served a term on the Friends' board. He worked as an interpreter in the museum's LeBreton Gallery – the giant room full of tanks – where he enjoyed interacting with the public (and delighted in correcting gamers' misconceptions) about the vehicles on display. He was a member of the Ottawa Civil War Round Table for many years, continuing his interest in military history. His award winning model tanks travelled with him to many plastic modelling competitions across North America, and he shared this passion with his son and grandsons. He was a longtime devotee of Ottawa's Hobby House, with regular Saturday morning visits. Jerry and Angela travelled frequently and enjoyed time with family. "Gramps will fisk (fix) it!" was a common refrain whenever repairs were required in family households.

Jerry is survived by his beloved wife of 60 years Angela, his son James (Diane) and daughter Christine, grandsons Taylor (Stephanie), Connor (Carissa), Alexander, and Christopher, and great grandsons Ethan and Daniel. He was predeceased by his parents, Carl and Irma Jensen, and his sister June.

The family is grateful for the professionalism and care demonstrated by many organizations during the past years – The Dementia Society of Ottawa and Renfrew County, Ottawa Police Service, Ottawa Paramedic Service, Hôpital Montfort, The Ottawa Hospital (General Campus), and Centre d'Accueil Champlain.

A celebration of life is set for Saturday the 20th of June, 2026 at the Heritage Funeral Complex 1250 Trim Road, Orleans between 1:00 and 4:00pm. In lieu of flowers, the family is requesting donations in his name to The Dementia Society of Ottawa and Renfrew County.

F35, Gripen or Neither? By 6069 Peter Houliston

I enjoyed reading the articles written by Ernie Cable and Jim Astley arguing the advantages of the F-35 aircraft vs the Gripen. At the same time, I couldn't help but be reminded of the old adage that "Generals always fight the last war." That thought arises as the current conflicts in the Middle East and Ukraine have demonstrated that the world is witnessing a fundamental transformation in the nature of warfare. That transformation involves a move away from the traditional model of expensive, high-end weapons systems and toward a new paradigm defined by cheap drones, mass production, AI-enabled targeting, and changed cost dynamics. These wars have shown that combatants can deploy hundreds of drones for the price of one missile or aircraft.

In Ukraine, both Russia and Ukraine now rely heavily on drones for reconnaissance, targeting, defence and direct attack. AI-assisted systems, commercial satellite imagery, and rapid sensor-to-shooter loops have compressed the time between detection and strike. American defence analyst Michael Horowitz describes this moment as the dawn of "precise mass" — the ability to deploy large numbers of inexpensive systems with high accuracy. They represent a global shift toward autonomous, networked, low-cost warfare, where quantity and connectivity matter as much as — or more than — traditional firepower. He warns that countries relying on legacy systems built for a different era must rethink their assumptions. They need to adapt quickly or risk being outpaced by adversaries who can produce and deploy cheap systems at scale.



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F-35, Gripen or Neither (Continued)

Recently, at a U.S. Congressional hearing, NORAD commander, Gen. Gregory Guillot, stated that fifth-generation fighters like the F-35 are not needed to defend North America. He did say that other fighters were required but it is not unreasonable to think that this requirement can soon be met by drones. For our military, which should be defence oriented, with particular emphasis on the Arctic, it is difficult to see what purpose these expensive jets will serve in the future beyond contributing to the arbitrary defence spending targets that have been set.

Then there is the issue of defence procurement and Canadian industrial capacity building. It has long been known that our defence procurement is broken. We have spent billions using military spending as a job creator. We have ended up with a second class military and little sustainable job creation. With the changing paradigm of warfare we may have the opportunity to have our cake and eat it too. The new weapons systems are still in relatively early stages of development. Canada has the technical expertise and manufacturing capability to become a leading actor in this sector. Moreover, if \$80 billion or so were to be diverted from the purchase of fighter aircraft, we would have the resources to invest in this effort. And, our military could make a big step towards regaining relevance. Canada should buy neither the F-35 nor the Gripen, but instead make a push to develop, when appropriate in cooperation with others, our own capability to produce weapons systems that are consistent with the new model of warfare.

Of course, there is almost zero chance that the fighter procurement will be cancelled. The process is too far along and there are vested interests and political considerations. In any case, it is not clear that our political and military leaders have the foresight, willingness or the courage to make the necessary changes to our defence planning and procurement systems despite recent pronouncements from the PM. The best that can be hoped for is that the Gripen will be chosen over the F-35 and the money freed up will be spent for more useful purposes.

Already our foray into drones seems to be well off track. Currently, Canada has committed to buy eleven MQ-9 Reaper drones from General Atomics in the U.S. for \$2.5 billion. Compare this to the \$35,000 cost of many drones in use in Ukraine and Iran. Granted, the MQ-9's are more sophisticated and powerful drones than those referred to above. But, a recent Ottawa Citizen article confirmed from DND that the first of these, will not be available until 2028, would have "limited" capabilities initially, only being able to conduct basic intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance and would carry no weapons. In addition, the system would not be available on a 24/7 basis as originally expected, and the entire drone fleet is not expected to be fully operational until between 2030 and 2033! Is this the best we can do?

Closing Notes

Special thanks to our F35/Gripen/Drone advocates for their thoughtful insights into this important and expensive program. I hope they might stimulate some further debate for inclusion in future editions. Perhaps a similar approach to the competing submarine programs would be interesting?? Regarding the latter and frankly without much in depth research, it would seem to me that we should be leaning toward support for a fellow NATO Member who also just happens to have some fairly extensive experience with submarines!