RWI-HC-004 — The RCAF on the night of the Wainwright fire

Hindcast. Window 17 Oct 2026 16:00 MDT (fire reaches C Company) → 18 Oct 06:00 MDT (jump aircraft back in Winnipeg); 22:00 UTC → 12:00 UTC. What every Canadian military aircraft that transmitted a position was doing, which units in Canada could have parachuted medics in, and the air traffic over the drop zone. Companion to RWI-BRIEF-002 (the jump aircraft, CC-130H 130339). Flight data: RWI scan of the adsb.lol daily archive (every Canadian military hex worldwide; every military, business-jet and hidden-registration aircraft within 600 km of Wainwright). LLM-assisted; times MDT unless marked.

REPORTER LEADS — things in our data that no public reporting explains yet. Leads, not findings: each needs a reporter to confirm or kill it.

L1. A SAR Kingfisher was airborne at Comox when the fire hit
CC-295 295505 'SNAK505', 442 Sqn, 19 Wing Comox: airborne 15:17–17:50 MDT 17 Oct, local, down to 200–500 ft
Why it is a lead: Comox is 1,034 km from Wainwright, almost exactly Winnipeg's distance (998 km), and its Kingfisher has been on SAR alert since May 2025 with a proven ramp-jump capability. It was already flying, with a crew up, when the fire reached the troops at about 16:00. It landed at 17:50. The jump came from Winnipeg on a Hercules that took off at 19:49.
What would settle it: DND/JRCC: was 442 Sqn or its airborne Kingfisher considered for Wainwright? Who decided on 435 Sqn, and when? (Plate H1)

L2. The nearest unit that could parachute medics was 1,000 km away — by design since 2018
4 Wing Cold Lake (417 Sqn) 177 km from Wainwright; 17 Wing Winnipeg (435 Sqn) 998 km
Why it is a lead: 417 Sqn at Cold Lake (now a 'Domestic Response Squadron') flies Griffons crewed with a Medical Technician since SAR techs were replaced from 2018; med techs are not trained to parachute. Its Griffon could have landed at the hospital helipad in about 50 minutes. Whether it or 408 Sqn (Edmonton, 196 km) flew that night is not reported, and neither transmitted a position.
What would settle it: DND: were 417 or 408 Sqn Griffons (or 1 Field Ambulance medics in Edmonton) requested or used on 17 Oct? (Plate H1)

L3. The drop zone sat under the air-ambulance traffic stream — and a helicopter is in the video of the jump
Wainwright Health Centre, 21:56–00:38 MDT 17–18 Oct
Why it is a lead: Fixed-wing air ambulances arriving at and departing Wainwright passed within 0.3–2 km of the hospital at 2,600–4,300 ft above the ground at 21:58, 22:06, 23:50, 00:33 and 00:37 — minutes from both reported jump times (~22:00 and 'just before midnight'). An EC145 air-ambulance helicopter (C-FLCI) worked the area 17:27–00:36. Prime Rogue's review of a video of the jump, circulating on YouTube, shows a helicopter in the shot with the parachutists and obstacles throughout the landing area (video not yet archived by RWI).
What would settle it: NAV CANADA: was a NOTAM issued for the drop, and when? STARS / air-ambulance operators: were crews told of the drop, was the helipad held? DND: who coordinated the airspace, and did the Hercules crew have contact with the helicopter? (Plate H2)

1. Bottom line

1.1 **Almost nothing else in the RCAF was flying.** In the 14-hour window only five Canadian military aircraft transmitted a position anywhere: the jump Hercules 130339; a 442 Sqn CC-295 Kingfisher on local flying at Comox until 17:50; a CC-130J landing at Thermal, California at 16:04; a CC-130J flying Rzeszów (Poland) → Prestwick overnight; and an unregistered Canadian military aircraft climbing out near Renton, Washington at 16:19 (possibly an RCAF P-8A on a Boeing test flight; unconfirmed). No CH-149 Cormorant and no CH-146 Griffon transmitted anywhere in Canada. Military aircraft often fly with position reporting off, so this is what was visible, not everything that flew.

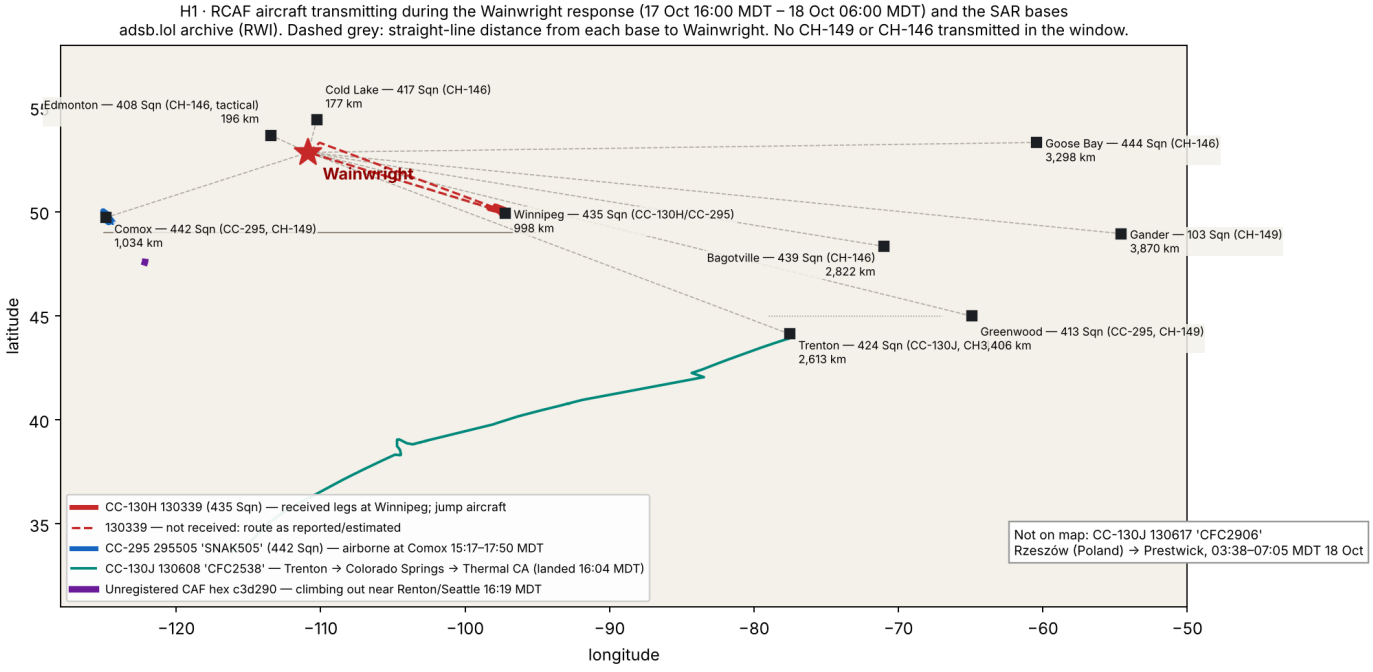
1.2 **Only the national SAR squadrons can parachute medics** — 413 Greenwood, 424 Trenton, 435 Winnipeg and 442 Comox (103 Gander is helicopter-only). All SAR techs are trained to the same standard at the Comox school (about 11 months: paramedic, parachute, diving, Arctic and mountain rescue); squadrons differ by aircraft and terrain, not by the technicians' qualifications. The Griffon squadrons at Cold Lake, Bagotville and Goose Bay replaced their SAR techs with non-parachuting medical technicians from 2018. On Wainwright's side of the country, that leaves Winnipeg (998 km) and Comox (1,034 km).

1.3 **The choice of Winnipeg is explainable; the timing is the question.** 435 Sqn is the primary SAR unit for Alberta and still flew the CC-130H in October (the type retires in November; ceremony at 17 Wing on 24 Oct). Its aircraft left at 19:49 — nearly four hours after the fire reached the troops — under the two-hour weekend standby. A typical standby crew holds 2–3 SAR techs; putting 11 out of one aircraft means recalling off-duty techs, which takes time. There is no published precedent for a SAR-tech jump as medical reinforcement into a populated place; the nearest doctrine is the major-air-disaster plan (CONPLAN SOTERIA). Whether it was invoked, and who tasked the jump, is unknown.

1.4 **The drop zone was busy airspace.** See lead L3 and plate H2.

2. Every Canadian military aircraft that transmitted, 17 Oct 16:00 – 18 Oct 06:00 MDT

Aircraft	MDT	Where	Reading
CC-130H 130339 'C130H339' (435 Sqn)	19:49 → 05:01	Winnipeg → (not received 20:16–04:45) → Winnipeg	The Wainwright jump aircraft (BRIEF-002)
CC-295 295505 'SNAK505' (442 Sqn)	15:17–17:50	Comox, local; to 10,250 ft, then low (200–500 ft) over water	SAR Kingfisher airborne at the moment of the fire; landed 17:50 (L1)
CC-130J 130608 'CFC2538'	landed 16:04	Trenton → Colorado Springs (Peterson) → Thermal, California	Transport run to a US desert airfield
CC-130J 130617 'CFC2906'	03:38 → 07:05 (18 Oct)	Rzeszów-Jasionka (Poland) → Prestwick (Scotland)	Ukraine-aid hub run (cf. SITREP 015)
Unregistered, hex c3d290	16:19	Climbing out near Renton / Seattle to 1,200 ft	Possibly RCAF P-8A Poseidon at Boeing — unconfirmed



H1 · RCAF aircraft transmitting in the window, and every SAR / rescue base with its straight-line distance to Wainwright.

Other military aircraft within 600 km of Wainwright that day were all transits: a USAF KC-135R and an RCAF CC-130J before the fire, a USAF C-17A 167 km away at 31,000 ft at 16:06, and a Belgian Air Force Falcon 7X (Tokyo → Vancouver → Brussels) the next morning (BRIEF-002).

3. Who in Canada can parachute medics in

Unit	Base · distance	Aircraft (Oct 2026)	Parachute SAR techs?
435 Transport & Rescue Sqn	Winnipeg · 998 km	CC-130H (retiring Nov 2026); CC-295 arriving since Jun 2026	Yes — the Wainwright jumpers
442 Transport & Rescue Sqn	Comox · 1,034 km	CC-295 (SAR alert since May 2025); CH-149 Cormorant	Yes (CC-295 ramp jumps proven 2025)
424 Transport & Rescue Sqn	Trenton · 2,613 km	CC-130J (SAR since May 2023); CH-146 Griffon	Yes
413 Transport & Rescue Sqn	Greenwood · 3,406 km	CC-295; CH-149 (CC-130H retired Jan 2026)	Yes
103 Search & Rescue Sqn	Gander · 3,870 km	CH-149 Cormorant	Hoist only, no parachuting
417 Domestic Response Sqn	Cold Lake · 177 km	CH-146 Griffon	No — Med Techs since 2018 (not parachute-trained)
439 / 444 Domestic Response Sqns	Bagotville · 2,822 km / Goose Bay · 3,298 km	CH-146 Griffon	No — Med Techs since 2018
408 Tactical Helicopter Sqn	Edmonton · 196 km	CH-146 Griffon (army aviation)	No SAR role

3.1 **Same people, different aircraft.** There are about 140 SAR techs in the CAF (national figure only). All complete the same course at the Canadian Forces School of Search and Rescue, Comox: primary-care paramedic, static-line ram-air parachuting (1,200 ft minimum on operations), diving, Arctic and winter mountain rescue; their task statement includes triage in mass-casualty situations. Published sources show no squadron specialisation; differences come from the aircraft (fixed-wing jump platform vs hoist helicopter) and the terrain each region covers (maritime and hoist at Gander and Greenwood, mountains at Comox, the High Arctic for Winnipeg and Trenton).

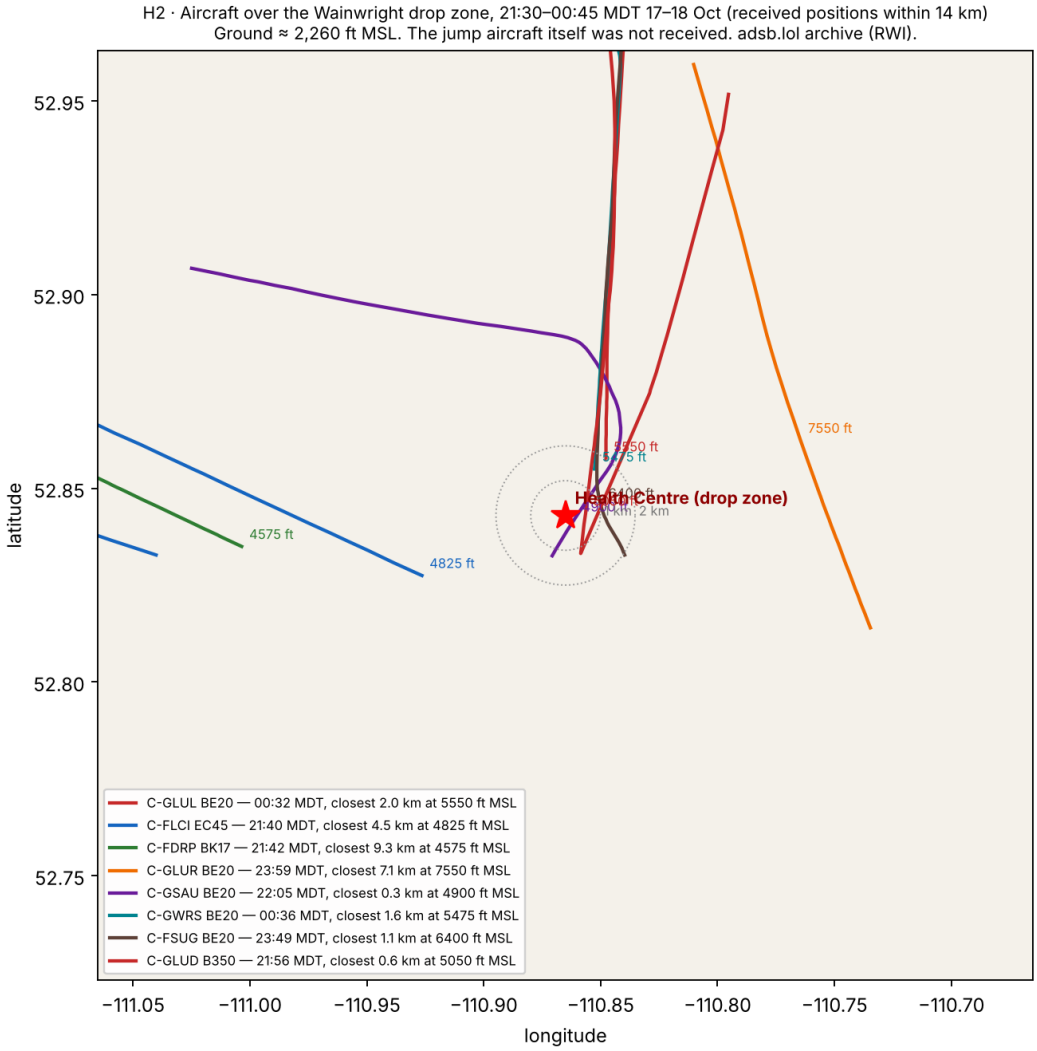
3.2 **Aircraft.** CC-130J: up to 92 paratroopers; CC-130H: about 64 (generic figure); C295: 48 generic, fewer in the RCAF SAR fit with its sensor consoles. Seats were not the limit at Wainwright — people were: a standby crew carries 2–3 SAR techs.

3.3 **Precedents.** No published case of SAR techs parachuted into a town as medical reinforcement before Wainwright. Closest: Alert 1991 (Boxtop 22 crash: SAR techs jumped from two Hercules, about 32 hours after the crash); Resolute 2011 (SAR techs already on the ground for an exercise); a three-tech night jump from a 435 Sqn CC-130H to a Northwest Territories crash in December 2023. The major-air-disaster plan (CONPLAN SOTERIA) foresees a first wave of 6–10 SAR techs and further waves — so far only exercised.

3.4 **Tasking.** CJOC leads military SAR; the three Joint Rescue Coordination Centres task aircraft for air and maritime SAR. Medical surge to a hospital is outside the SAR mandate; domestic assistance normally runs province → Chief of the Defence Staff → regional joint task force. No published doctrine says who may order a SAR-tech jump for a non-SAR mass-casualty event.

4. The air over the drop zone

MDT	Aircraft (received)	Closest to the Health Centre	Height MSL (≈ above ground)
21:40	EC145 helicopter C-FLCI (air ambulance; in the area 17:27–00:36)	4.5 km W (last received; low near the pad is below coverage)	4,825 ft (≈2,600)
21:42	BK117 helicopter C-FDRP	9.3 km W	4,575 ft (≈2,300)
21:57–21:58	King Air 350 C-GLUD, arriving southbound over town	0.6 km	5,050–5,125 ft (≈2,800)
22:05–22:06	King Air 200 C-GSAU, departing northbound over town	**0.3–0.6 km**	4,900–5,075 ft (≈2,700)
23:49–23:50	King Air 200 C-FSUG, departing	1.1 km	6,100–6,550 ft (≈4,000)
00:32–00:33	King Air 200 C-GLUL, departing	2.0 km	5,550 ft (≈3,300)
00:36–00:37	King Air 200 C-GWRS, departing	1.6 km	5,475 ft (≈3,200)



H2 · Received aircraft positions within 14 km of the Wainwright Health Centre, 21:30–00:45 MDT. Wainwright's own airport was the air-ambulance hub; its arrivals and departures crossed the town. The jump Hercules was not received.

P3 (from BRIEF-002) · The drop zone: Wainwright Health Centre heliport and a 1 km box — residential grid, trees, streets, the golf course to the north the only large open ground. Sentinel-2, 4 Oct 2026.

4.1 **What this shows.** The fixed-wing air ambulances flying the casualties out climbed or descended over the town at about the altitudes from which SAR techs jump (operational minimum 1,200 ft above ground), minutes from both candidate jump times. The jump aircraft's own position and the exact jump time are not in the open data, so the data cannot show how close any aircraft came to the jumpers. Deconfliction normally shows up as a NOTAM and as coordination by Edmonton Centre with traffic into Wainwright; neither has been published.

4.2 **The video.** Prime Rogue has reviewed a video of the jump posted on YouTube that shows a helicopter in the frame with the descending parachutists and obstacles throughout the landing area. RWI has not yet archived the video; once it has, the helicopter's livery and any timestamp can be matched against C-FLCI's movements and the King Air passes.

5. Questions for DND, NAV CANADA and the air-ambulance operators

1. Who requested the SAR-tech jump, at what time, and through which chain (JRCC Trenton, CJOC, JTF West, the province)? Was CONPLAN SOTERIA invoked?
2. Was 442 Sqn's Kingfisher — airborne at Comox until 17:50 — or 424 Sqn's CC-130J considered? Why 435 Sqn?
3. How many of the 11 SAR techs were on standby and how many were recalled off duty? When did the last one arrive at 17 Wing?
4. Were 417 Sqn (Cold Lake) or 408 Sqn (Edmonton) Griffons, or 1 Field Ambulance medics, requested or used that night?
5. Was a NOTAM issued for the parachute drop at Wainwright? At what time? Who coordinated the airspace with Edmonton Centre and the air-ambulance traffic?

6. Were the STARS and fixed-wing air-ambulance crews told of the drop? Was the Health Centre helipad held during the jump?
7. Did the Hercules crew have radio contact with the helicopter seen in the video of the jump?
8. What were the drop altitude, the number of passes and the wind at the time of the jump? Was the drop zone the golf course north of the Health Centre?

Sources

• RWI flight archive: adsb.lol globe_history 17–18 Oct 2026 (data/adsb_rcaf/, data/adsb_wainwright_airlift/ in the RWI pipeline repository); RWI-BRIEF-002; RWI SITREPs 013, 015.
• canada.ca — RCAF search and rescue program; SAR aircrews and aircraft; CAF structure for SAR
• DND evaluation of CAF SAR operations (2020); SAR technician task statement (MOSID 00101); CFSSAR
• 4 Wing (417 Domestic Response Sqn); 5 Wing (444 Sqn); Skies: Med Techs replace SAR techs at 444 Sqn (2019)
• CTV Winnipeg: CC-130H retired (24 Oct 2026); Skies: 413 Sqn retires CC-130H (Mar 2026); ChrisD.ca: Kingfisher arrives in Winnipeg (Jun 2026)
• CC-295 on SAR alert at Comox (May 2025); Skies: first CC-295 operational jump (May 2025); Global News: first CC-295 night jump (Jul 2025)
• Skies: Air Tindi rescue (Jan 2024); Boxtop 22 (Alert, 1991); Vertical: major-air-disaster exercise (2023)
• CBC via Yahoo: rescue techs parachuted into Wainwright; Global News: what we know; BorderPulse