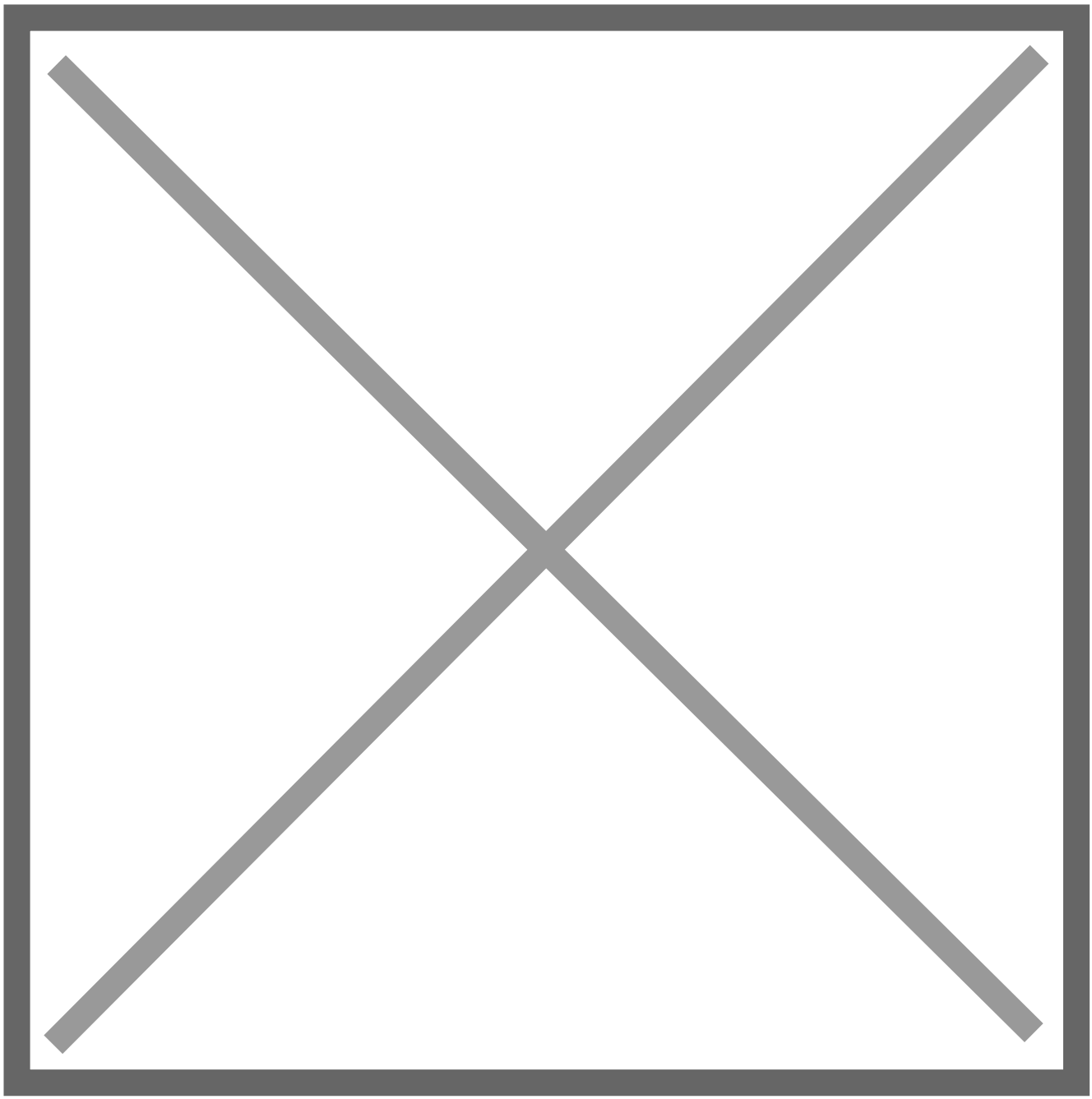
News



People attend a church service at Canadian Forces Base (CFB) Wainwright in Alberta Oct. 18, 2026, the day after a fast-moving fire killed at least four Canadian and injured dozens more, including 19 critically. The fire overtook soldiers conducting live-fire combat training at the military base, officials said Oct. 18. (OSV News/Reuters/Jennifer Gauthier)

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Canadian Catholic bishops have expressed sorrow and pledged prayer following a deadly fire at one of that nation's military bases.

An Oct. 17 blaze at Canadian Forces Base Wainwright in Alberta killed four service members and wounded 39 other people, with at least 19 of the latter sustaining critical injuries. As of Oct. 20, 33 of the 39 remained in the hospital.

The fallen military personnel were identified as Sgt. Morgan Wong and Pvts. Shaun Farrell, Aidan Goulding and Hayden Lykkemark. All served with the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry and were readying for deployment to Latvia in 2027.

According to the Canadian government's website, the base — located some 130 miles east of the Alberta province capital of Edmonton — is "one of the busiest" in Canada.

While an investigation is ongoing, preliminary statements from officials have indicated a fast-moving grass fire swept through amid a live-fire training exercise. The exact cause of the fire has not yet been determined, according to Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney, who announced 50 investigators are dedicated to probing the cause of the fire.

The exercises had continued following the breakout of the blaze, which was thought to be contained — a fairly common practice, Canadian retired Maj. Gen. Scott Clancy said in an Oct. 19 interview with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

The head of Canada's Military Ordinariate in a statement posted on Facebook expressed "great sadness" over the tragedy in Wainwright.

"I am praying for all the victims, the injured, and their families," Bishop Scott McCaig said. "We stand ready to help in any way we can and urge prayers from all members of the Ordinariate," which has its headquarters in Ottawa, Ontario.

"Behind every uniform is someone's beloved son, father, brother, or friend — someone who answered the call to serve Canada and contribute to peace and security throughout the world," said Bishop David Motiuk of the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of Edmonton in a statement to OSV News.

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Noting that the community is "deeply shocked and saddened" by the fire, Motiuk stressed that "our hearts, thoughts, and prayers are with the families of those who lost their lives, the injured, and the entire CFB Wainwright community during this time of profound sorrow."

"May the Lord grant blessed repose to the fallen, healing and recovery to the injured, and comfort, strength, and peace to all who mourn and struggle to come to terms with this tragedy," he said.

In his statement, McCaig similarly prayed that "the tender mercy of God" would "cover the suffering and pain of all involved. And give strength to all the many brave responders!"

"May everyone involved be wrapped in ... Our Lady's mantle of maternal love, protection, and intercession," he added.

In an Oct. 19 interview with The Catholic Register, Canada's national Catholic newspaper based in Toronto, McCaig offered his "deepest condolences to the families that have lost loved ones," adding that he had said Mass that morning "for the souls of the deceased."

"We're just continuing to pray for the whole situation as it unfolds, and as we learn more and more. We're praying for all those affected and praying for the first responders," he said. "Everybody involved in the situation is hopefully covered in the mercy of God. It's a very difficult moment for us in the military and who served in the military."

McCaig remains in close contact with his chaplains on site who are accompanying and comforting people experiencing grief.

Edmonton Archbishop Stephen Hero offered "heartfelt prayers and pastoral concern to all those affected" on behalf of Edmonton Catholics.

"Those who serve at CFB Wainwright are our relatives, friends and neighbors," he said in a statement. "We hold them close in our hearts and prayers, and we are called to accompany all who are suffering through compassion, practical support and the love of Christ. We commend to God's loving mercy those who have died, pray for healing for the injured and ask for comfort for those who mourn and strength and peace for all affected."

The archbishop also asked the Lord to "sustain" in faith and "unite" in prayer Fr. Benjamin Obetta, pastor, Deacon Carlos Lara and the community of Blessed Sacrament Parish in Wainwright.