

Table of Contents

<u>Soldier faces charges after shooting during training</u>	1
<u>Korea aims to meet Taliban captors</u>	2
<u>Armour shortage may delay Canadian tank upgrades</u>	4
<u>Image of fallen soldiers conveys a message</u>	5
<u>Troops welcomed home</u>	6
<u>Hostage talks in works; South Korean legislators urge U.S. to help end 15-day crisis as Taliban holds 21 South Koreans prisoner</u>	7
<u>Armour plating shortage could delay tank upgrade: executive</u>	9
<u>N.B. soldiers make an emotional homecoming; Latest group of soldiers returns to CFB Gagetown from duty in Afghanistan</u>	10
<u>Tempered-armour shortage could affect Armed Forces</u>	12
<u>Soldiers, families begin anew</u>	14
<u>'I know how it feels to hurt'; Army chaplain will use difficult past as tool in Afghanistan</u>	17
<u>Shortage of materials may delay tank upgrades; Armoured vehicles meant to be deployed overseas next year</u>	19
<u>Soldier charged in exercise shooting</u>	21
<u>Armour shortage may delay tank plan</u>	22
<u>Afghan war is about control of pipeline route</u>	23
<u>South Korea, hostage-takers aim for direct talks</u>	24
<u>Armour shortage could delay new tanks</u>	25
<u>Steel armour shortage could delay new tanks</u>	27
<u>Soldiers return to steamy N.B. after tour in Afghanistan</u>	29
<u>Tories lacking a consistent message</u>	30
<u>Several dozen soldiers back in N.B. after six-month tour of Afghanistan</u>	32
<u>Shortage of armour plating could delay Leopard tank upgrade: industry exec</u>	34

Table of Contents

<u>Soldier faces charges in shooting during training on Manitoba base</u>	36
<u>Afghan–Cda–Tanks</u>	37
<u>Afghanistan Hostages–Update (looking for meeting place)</u>	38
<u>O'Connor–Afghanistan</u>	39
<u>Soldier faces charges in shooting during training on Manitoba base</u>	40
<u>Army urged to act soon on overhauling tanks; Shortage of armour plating could delay upgrade needed for Afghan mission</u>	41
<u>Applying lessons of Northern Ireland</u>	43
<u>Dump O'Connor from defence role</u>	45
<u>Soldier charged</u>	47
<u>'Goodbye, my love' Candlelight vigil for slain soldier</u>	48
<u>TALKS SITE SOUGHT</u>	49
<u>Upgrade of tanks threatened A shortage of specially–tempered armour may delay deployment of Leopards to Afghanistan</u>	50
<u>Spit and politics</u>	52
<u>Returning soldiers laud support</u>	54
<u>Council troops out plan to pay reservists</u>	55
<u>Hostages still alive but two very sick: Taliban</u>	56
<u>Koreans in Canada appeal for support</u>	57
<u>Muddled message leads to confusion</u>	58
<u>A future more uncertain than the present</u>	60
<u>The end is near! An appreciation</u>	62
<u>CIDA one of Canada's great success stories</u>	64
<u>SOUTH KOREAN HOSTAGES Taliban agree to discuss end to crisis</u>	65

Table of Contents

<u>THE MILITARY AND AFGHANISTAN Commander in chief? Hillier v. O'Connor: The confusion about who's in command can't continue.....</u>	67
<u>Our Kandahar operation is missing opportunities.....</u>	69
<u>The Afghan/Outremont factor.....</u>	71
<u>IN BRIEF Soldier charged over shooting at base.....</u>	72
<u>THE AFGHAN MISSION Steel shortage hampers tanks DND warned to move quickly in upgrading Leopards bought from Dutch.....</u>	73
<u>Steel crunch could delay deployment.....</u>	75
<u>A pudgy white cat ships out; Comic-book creator sends his cartoon kitty Perogy Cat to join our troops in Afghanistan.....</u>	76
<u>S. Korea, Taliban hint at talks on hostages.....</u>	79
<u>U.S., Britain told to plan exit from Afghanistan; Urged By Pakistan.....</u>	80
<u>SOUTH KOREAN POLITICIANS LEAVE FOR U.S. IN BID TO END HOSTAGE CRISIS.....</u>	82
<u>PM's party is mired in Minorityland; But Stephen Harper keeps trying the same old unpalatable recipe.....</u>	83
<u>Defence department needs a new minister, but who?; PM has three possible candidates to replace the faltering O'Connor.....</u>	85
<u>U.S., U.K. share blame.....</u>	87
<u>Clinton, Obama clash over using nuclear weapons against terrorists; Policy sniping continues between senators over foreign policy.....</u>	88
<u>U.S., Pakistan urged to help free hostages.....</u>	90
<u>Ailing South Koreans face Week 3 as captives.....</u>	91

Soldier faces charges after shooting during training

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SOURCE: Canadian Press
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A corporal was charged yesterday in the shooting of a fellow soldier during a live-fire training exercise at Canadian Forces Base Shilo.

The victim, a reservist from the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders of Canada, was shot at least twice during small arms practice last May for an upcoming tour in Afghanistan.

Cpl. Dylan Nash with 2 Battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, faces charges of criminal negligence causing bodily harm and careless use of a firearm.

Korea aims to meet Taliban captors

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SOURCE: Associated Press
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WORD COUNT: 365

Officials searched yesterday for a neutral meeting place that would be safe for both South Korean negotiators and Taliban captors to hold face-to-face talks about the release of 21 South Koreans held hostage in Afghanistan.

At an Asian security conference in the Philippines, South Korean Foreign Minister Song Min-soon and U.S. Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte agreed to place top priority on safely freeing the hostages, ruling out a military option for ending the standoff, a South Korean official said.

But in Washington, senior State Department official Richard Boucher said the United States is not ruling out military force to free the hostages.

A delegation of South Korean legislators left for Washington in the latest diplomatic effort to urge the United States to help end the 15-day crisis.

Afghan officials said the Taliban captors have agreed to meet with South Korea's ambassador, but they had not yet agreed on a venue.

"If the Taliban want to come to the area where we are for the sake of these hostages, 100 per cent, they will be safe," Ghazni Gov. Marajudin Pathan told a news conference.

Both sides have proposed places that could put them at risk, including the office of the provincial reconstruction team, which is run by international troops.

Purported Taliban spokesperson Qari Yousef Ahmadi said the South Koreans had not requested direct talks with the militants, but the insurgents would be willing to hold such a meeting in Taliban-controlled territory.

The Taliban "want to negotiate directly with the Koreans because the Kabul administration is not sincere about releasing the Taliban prisoners," Ahmadi told The Associated Press by telephone from an undisclosed location.

Ahmadi said the remaining 21 hostages were still alive, but two of the women were very sick and could die from illness.

Afghan officials have said the militants have demanded the release of local Taliban fighters from Ghazni province as well as a former militia spokesperson, Mohammad Hanif.

The Afghan government has said it is opposed to a prisoner swap out of concern that it could encourage more kidnappings.

The 23 Korean church group volunteers were kidnapped in Ghazni province on July 19 as they travelled by bus from Kabul to the southern city of Kandahar. The Taliban have shot and killed two men in the group.

Earlier South Korean efforts, including sending the presidential envoy to Afghanistan and phone calls between President Roh Moo-hyun and Karzai, failed to bend Afghanistan's refusal to respond to Taliban demands.

Armour shortage may delay Canadian tank upgrades

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A worldwide shortage of specially tempered armour could delay next year's deployment to Afghanistan of newly purchased Dutch Leopard tanks — unless the Canadian army moves quickly to finalize an upgrade contract, a defence industry executive says.

It could take up to 18 months to get the steel necessary to reinforce the hulls of as many as 40 Leopard 2A4s, says a senior official with Rheinmetall Canada, the Montreal company vying for the roughly \$200-million improvement contract.

"Armoured steel today is very difficult to get fast," said Jean-Claude Rollier, who oversees the company's land defence arm.

"You might be ready to do the work and have prepared your vehicle, but you won't have the steel you need in order to put additional armour on the vehicle."

He said it's critical National Defence decide within a couple of months precisely what upgrades it wants to make to the tanks and to have a contract in place, Rollier said in an interview.

Improvements on the slightly-used Dutch tanks are required in order for them to withstand increasingly powerful Taliban roadside bombs. That, and installing some form of air conditioning are considered the key priorities of the upgrade plan.

The army is currently borrowing 20 Leopard 2 A6M tanks from the Germans — vehicles that have built-in mine protection. It hopes to swap those tanks with the upgraded ones by the end of next year.

The war in Iraq and the widening conflict in Afghanistan have led a number of countries to either purchase new armoured vehicles or buy armoured plating kits to upgrade their existing tanks and troop carriers.

"There is such a demand today worldwide for armoured steel that they're just not able to supply," said Rollier.

Canada's planned purchase of 16 CH-47 Chinook helicopters from Chicago, Ill.-based Boeing is facing a similar problem. A scarcity of titanium used in constructing airframes, combined with a glut of orders, created an assembly line backlog that means the new choppers likely won't arrive until 2012.

Image of fallen soldiers conveys a message

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COLUMN: LETTER OF THE DAY
BYLINE: Joanne Baxter
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I was very moved by news footage of ordinary Canadians showing their respect for our latest fallen soldiers as the procession moved along Highway 401.

The coverage showed people on an overpass, saluting as the cars passed beneath them.

I believe we should return to having Remembrance Day as it used to be, a day reserved to remember and say thank you to the young men and women who are on the front lines now and to their comrades who have given the supreme sacrifice. I believe every business, store, school and government office should be closed. Period.

How can we show recent immigrants and new Canadians that we value our soldiers, sailors and airmen if we make our day of remembrance just another business day? If we don't show we value our freedom and support the effort to help Afghanistan obtain freedom, what does this say to the terrorists?

It says that we are not determined to stay the course. It says we can be discouraged and made to question our role in the fight for freedom and it says victory for the terrorist is not far away.

Contact your member of Parliament and insist that we must show we are Canadians who care about and value our freedoms and we value our fighting and fallen soldiers. We care about their sacrifice and remembering is a priority.

We want Remembrance Day the way it used to be.

Joanne Baxter

Kitchener

Troops welcomed home

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COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Times & Transcript
(Moncton)
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Stephanie Simms, 12, looks up at her father, Sgt. Michael Simms, after giving him a welcome home hug last night at CFB Gagetown. Sgt. Simms was one of approximately 50 soldiers from the base who returned home yesterday after being deployed to Afghanistan for a six-month tour of duty.

Hostage talks in works; South Korean legislators urge U.S. to help end 15-day crisis as Taliban holds 21 South Koreans prisoner

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Officials searched yesterday for a neutral meeting place that would be safe for both South Korean negotiators and Taliban captors to hold face-to-face talks about the release of 21 South Koreans held hostage in Afghanistan.

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But in Washington, senior State Department official Richard Boucher said the United States is not ruling out military force to free the hostages.

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Afghan officials said the Taliban captors have agreed to meet with South Korea's ambassador, but they had not yet agreed on a venue.

"If the Taliban want to come to the area where we are for the sake of these hostages, 100 per cent, they will be safe," Ghazni Gov. Marajudin Pathan told a news conference.

But both sides have proposed places that could put them at risk, including the office of the provincial reconstruction team, which is run by international troops.

"The Koreans told the Taliban to come to the PRT, and the Taliban told the Koreans to come to their base," Pathan told The Associated Press after the news conference.

Purported Taliban spokesman Qari Yousef Ahmadi said the South Koreans had not requested direct talks with the militants, but the insurgents would be willing to hold such a meeting in Taliban-controlled territory.

The Taliban "want to negotiate directly with the Koreans because the Kabul administration is not sincere about releasing the Taliban prisoners," Ahmadi told The Associated Press by telephone from an undisclosed location.

A South Korean Embassy official in Kabul would not confirm any Korean efforts to hold face-to-face talks with Taliban.

Hostage talks in works; South Korean legislators urge U.S. to help end 15-day crisis as Taliban holds 21 South Koreans prisoner

Ahmadi said the remaining 21 hostages were still alive, but two of the women were very sick and could die from illness.

Meanwhile, Newsweek magazine reported a regional Taliban commander claiming to be the mastermind behind the abductions said the militants might prolong the crisis to embarrass President Hamid Karzai.

The commander, who did not give his name, said the militants want to secure the freedom of eight Taliban prisoners in exchange for all the South Korean hostages. He also said the 16 women among the captives were safe for now.

The Afghan government has said it is opposed to a prisoner swap out of concern that it could encourage more kidnappings.

Armour plating shortage could delay tank upgrade: executive

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COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Times & Transcript
(Moncton)
WORD COUNT: 129

A world-wide shortage of specially-tempered armour could delay next year's deployment to Afghanistan of newly-purchased Dutch Leopard tanks -- unless the Canadian army moves quickly to finalize an upgrade contract, says a defence industry executive.

It could take up to 18 months to get the steel necessary to reinforce the hulls of as many as 40 Leopard 2A4s, says a senior official with Rheinmetall Canada, the Montreal company vying for the \$200-million improvement contract.

"Armoured steel today is very difficult to get fast," said Jean-Claude Rollier, who oversees the company's land defence arm.

He said it's critical National Defence decide within a couple of months precisely what upgrades it wants to make to the tanks and to have a contract in place.

Improvements on the slightly-used Dutch tanks are required in order for them to withstand increasingly powerful Taliban roadside bombs.

N.B. soldiers make an emotional homecoming; Latest group of soldiers returns to CFB Gagetown from duty in Afghanistan

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BYLINE: Meghan Cumby canadaeast news service
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Inside Building D57 at CFB Gagetown, Jim Dicks sat on the edge of his seat, next to a bouquet of flowers and a pink teddy bear, waiting for his wife Private Colleen Noseworthy.

After six months of fearing for his wife's safety while she was in Afghanistan, one of the hardest parts was knowing she was mere kilometres away.

"I think this is the longest hour of my life, to be honest with you," he said, followed by a small laugh. "This is brutal."

About 60 Atlantic-area soldiers, most from CFB Gagetown, flew into the Fredericton International Airport at about 5:15 p.m. last night. After almost an hour spent going through customs, they hopped on a bus and drove to the base.

Meanwhile, more than 100 anxious wives, husbands, siblings, parents and children waited in Building D57 on the base, holding balloons and "Welcome Home" banners.

With her three-week old baby by her side, Ashley White waited in full view of the doors where the troops were about to come through. She shifted from foot to foot and wringed her hands as she spoke to reporters, yet had a calm in her voice.

"Part of me still doesn't quite believe he's on the other side of those doors," White said.

White was three months pregnant when her fiancé, Master Cpl. Chris Lawrence, was deployed to Afghanistan. Aiden Lawrence was born just three weeks ago. Lawrence took his days off to see the baby born and play Dad for a week in their Fredericton home, but had to then leave his newborn to finish his tour.

After almost two hours of waiting, doors opened, and the soldiers marched in, led by a piper. Once dismissed, a frenzy of hugs, kisses and smiles broke out.

White embraced Lawrence and immediately passed their son to him. The love was palpable as Lawrence held the baby.

"There's no better feeling in the world," Lawrence said, looking forward to doing all the daddy–duties ahead of him.

Cpl. James Nickerson held his two children James and Cora–Ann in his arms. Neither child could be convinced to let go of their father. Little James threw his arms around his father and shouted "Daddy!"

"All day on the plane, I was just waiting for them," said Nickerson.

His wife, Dawna, said she was relieved to have Nickerson home and to continue with normal life.

Over the next six weeks, the 700 soldiers from the Atlantic area, about 650 from CFB Gagetown, will return home on flights arriving about every other day. A small contingent arrived Tuesday night, but yesterday's welcoming was much larger.

Lieut.–Col. Paul Kearney, CFB Gagetown's chief of staff and acting base commander, had a difficult time putting into words the feeling in the room when the soldiers return.

"I've been in (the military) 31 years now you know, and you think you get hard to some of these things," he said. "But I'll tell you what, I sometimes tend to believe the older you get, the softer you get. The more these things affect you, even though you don't want to admit it because you're a big tough old army guy."

Charged with establishing order in Kandahar, the birthplace of the Taliban, Gagetown soldiers with the rest of their comrades have the lead in this multi– country NATO mission.

That's meant an increase in casualties. This tour, which began in January, has been plagued by tragedy. CFB Gagetown suffered seven casualties. In the last six months, the army lost 22 Canadian soldiers "" one third of the Canadian casualties since 2002.

But these soldiers also made plenty of progress since they arrived in January, said Lee Windsor, deputy director for the Gregg Centre for the Study of War and Society.

While they fought back insurgents and Taliban loyalists, this rotation of soldiers made strides in establishing security beyond Kandahar into rural areas of Kandahar province, said Windsor.

This allowed the Provincial Reconstruction Team made up of soldiers and civilians to organize the building of schools and roads, ensuring clean water supplies, restoring electricity and putting in sewage lines.

N.B. soldiers make an emotional homecoming; Latest group of soldiers returns to CFB Gagetown from duty

Tempered–armour shortage could affect Armed Forces

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A world–wide shortage of specially–tempered armour could delay next year's deployment to Afghanistan of newly–purchased Dutch Leopard tanks — unless the Canadian army moves quickly to finalize an upgrade contract, says a defence industry executive.

It could take up to 18 months to get the steel necessary to reinforce the hulls of as many as 40 Leopard 2A4s, says a senior official with Rheinmetall Canada, the Montreal company vying for the roughly \$200–million improvement contract.

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"You might be ready to do the work and have prepared your vehicle, but you won't have the steel you need in order to put additional armour on the vehicle."

He said it's critical National Defence decide within a couple of months precisely what upgrades it wants to make to the tanks and to have a contract in place, Rollier said in an interview.

Improvements on the slightly–used Dutch tanks are required in order for them to withstand increasingly powerful Taliban roadside bombs. That, and installing some form of air conditioning are considered the key priorities of the upgrade plan.

The army is currently borrowing 20 Leopard 2 A6M tanks from the Germans — vehicles that have built–in mine protection. It hopes to swap those tanks with the upgraded ones by the end of next year.

The war in Iraq and the widening conflict in Afghanistan have led a number of countries to either purchase new armoured vehicles or buy armoured plating kits to upgrade their existing tanks and troop carriers.

"There is such a demand today world–wide for armoured steel that they're just not able to supply," said Rollier.

Canada's planned purchase of 16 CH–47 Chinook helicopters from Chicago, Ill.– based Boeing is facing a similar problem. A scarcity of titanium used in constructing airframes, combined with a glut of orders, created an assembly line backlog that means the new choppers likely won't arrive until 2012.

Last week, a senior official at National Defence said one of the biggest hurdles facing the tank refurbishment project was the fact that there was no one company with the capability to quickly carry out the work. Until a

few years ago, the Canadian Forces maintained its own ability to do major overhauls on tanks.

Dan Ross, the assistant deputy minister of materiel, said the department has been focused primarily on getting the borrowed tanks into Afghanistan and would soon turn its attention to the upgrade project.

Rollier's company has been in talks with both the federal government and Krauss–Maffei–Wegmann — the Leopard's German manufacturer.

Rheinmetall would have to subcontract the automotive portion of the upgrade to another company, said Rollier, but he insisted it is fully capable of carrying out the necessary electrical, fire control and air conditioning improvements.

In order to meet a December 2008 deadline, a contract would have to be finalized by the end of the summer, he said.

"The longer it takes, the less the likelihood it's going to happen."

Whether the Conservative government and the Defence Department bureaucracy is prepared to move that quickly is another matter.

Since Prime Minister Stephen Harper's government began its rearmament program, it has been regularly criticized for sole-sourcing multi-billion dollar contracts.

In April, Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor announced Canada would spend \$650 million to modernize the army's tanks. It was later revealed that an additional \$650 million will be spent on long-term support contracts.

Soldiers, families begin anew

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The sight of soldiers in tan uniforms returning from active service in Afghanistan unleashed a torrent of tears at Canadian Forces Base Gagetown, but that quickly turned into a stream of long-awaited embraces as troops were dismissed Thursday night.

As a throng waited by the front of a white cordon, anxious to catch a glimpse of their loved one safely home after six months overseas, Ashley White of Fredericton stayed near the back of the crowd.

Her three-week old son Aiden in hand, she knew her husband would find them.

"There's no better feeling in the world," Master Cpl. Chris Lawrence said moments later as he cradled his wide-eyed son in his arms.

While many of his comrades said they were looking forward to beer, steak or "a decent donair," Lawrence had other plans.

"Changing diapers," said the new father.

He couldn't wait to take on the additional duties of fatherhood.

As he rubbed the tuft of fine brown hair on the baby's head, he reflected on his experiences overseas.

"We lost a lot of good guys which was pretty bad, but also we had a lot of good guys, and they're friends for life."

Lawrence had his first chance to connect with his son — who was born during his leave last month — but he couldn't wait to see him again.

In fact, he and his wife had choreographed his arrival days in advance, agreeing he'd hold his son, get a pizza and go home to spend time together as a family.

While the plane touched down at 5:15 p.m., the two-and-a-half-hour wait loved ones went through as the troops cleared customs, turned in their equipment and talked to the military chaplain was an exercise in patience for some.

"I can't sit still," said 23-year-old Melissa Hunt of Halifax who travelled to the base Thursday to greet her fiancé, Pte. Andrew Ward.

"I've been counting down the hours for the last two weeks," said Hunt, who became engaged to Ward in April during his leave from duty in Afghanistan.

"I've been pacing around for the last few days," she said.

Soldiers arriving home were grateful to see their families again, but there were feelings of sadness knowing not everyone made it back.

Seven soldiers from CFB Gagetown were killed during the rotation.

Pte. Dallas Curran of Fredericton said the homecoming was emotional.

"I knew the six RCRs that died in the LAV accident," said Pte. Dallas Curran of Fredericton.

"It's pretty hard because a couple of them I knew before we went over and I got to know them pretty well ... It's sad."

Lt. Col. Paul Kearney, acting base commander, said the losses in Afghanistan are on everyone's minds during the homecoming.

"There is that bittersweet tinge to it because of the fact we have lost some fallen soldiers," he said.

"Some times the reality of the danger of the mission and the hazards associated with the mission come home. That's something that is accepted by the soldiers and managed by the families."

Kearney said soldiers are being given help to make the transition from the battlefield to the home front.

They received two days of decompression training before leaving Afghanistan, and while they'll benefit from a four-day long weekend, they're expected to show up for three half-days next week.

Military families have been offered briefings as well.

Beth Corey, executive director of the Military Family Resource Centre, said the organization continues to help families, advising them to slowly get back to their old routines.

Kearney said the reunion is just as much about recognizing efforts spouses have made while soldiers were deployed.

"The families have been separated from their loved ones for six months. The soldiers have been away in a hot, dusty, dirty, dangerous place. Now, today, we have this joyful reunion.

"It's a celebration of the fact that they're home safe and it's a celebration that their families are well and safely united. It's a bit of both."

Spouses have taken care of the kids, the chores and even their own careers, all while their loved ones were away, he said.

"It's an awful lot for one person to do. It's hard on them. There's an awful lot of sacrifice. That goes both ways."

If Kearney had his way, military families would be getting a medal of their own.

"They're getting a hero's welcome and it's what they deserve," said Corey.

It was a deployment made easier by the support the community displayed for soldiers and their families.

Soldiers, families begin anew

That was particularly evident in Oromocto where yellow ribbons dotted the landscape, firmly tied into bows on every lamp post and street sign in the town.

"Even as Canadians, I think we surprised ourselves," Corey said Thursday night.

Soldiers from the current tour will continue to return every second day over the next six weeks as 2,500 Canadian troops are rotated out of Afghanistan.

With files from The Canadian Press

'I know how it feels to hurt'; Army chaplain will use difficult past as tool in Afghanistan

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SOURCE: CP
BYLINE: Jonathan Montpetit
PHOTO: The Canadian Press
DATELINE: MONTREAL
ILLUSTRATION: Canadian chaplain Capt. Charles Deogratias went theroundabout way of becoming an army chaplain, but he says he will use his challenging past experience as a healing tool when he leaves for Afghanistan this weekend.
WORD COUNT: 630

Capt. Charles Deogratias re-members that his first dream of freedom came to him in the form of women dressed in white walking amid a squalid refugee camp in Tanzania.

Deogratias was just five, but he has never been able to shake the memory of those nurses who braved infection and disease to immunize the camp where he was raised.

It's an image the Canadian Forces chaplain recalls again as he prepares to take part in the military mission in Afghanistan.

"I dreamed about seeing those nurses again," he said in an interview ahead of his departure for Kandahar this weekend.

"I dreamed of leaving, of going somewhere. I can say now it wasn't just a dream, the dream has come true."

The vision of the nurses set in motion a remarkable series of events that are marked by the violence in his ancestral Rwanda, yet also marked by the goodwill of strangers. All of it gives Deogratias, 44, a unique perspective about the work facing Canadian troops in Afghanistan.

"Everybody who doesn't know the absence of freedom, doesn't know how it feels to be free," he said from his home in Quebec City.

Before leaving for Afghanistan, young Quebec soldiers of the Royal 22nd Regiment spoke often about helping rebuild and secure a country as they tried to counter rising antiwar sentiment in the province.

Deogratias was schooled under a tree, didn't use a pen until he was 16 and didn't wear shoes until he was 20. He has watched a friend get eaten by a crocodile, saved his father from being attacked by a lion and fled the spectre of the Rwandan genocide.

He can only shrug at the controversy over the deployment.

"Whether the mission succeeds or not, there is something we can be sure of, we will change the life of someone," he says. "It can be 20 years later. The people who came to help us [in Tanzania] don't even know

that I survived. And here I am now participating among others to bring hope to the hopeless."

Deogratias left the refugee camp when he was 20 and ended up at a youth mission in Kenya. There he met a young volunteer from Colorado who sent him \$60 when she returned home.

That he received the money at all through a postal system that often relieves recipients of the burden of opening their own mail, Deogratias considers a small miracle. He used the lowly sum to take college classes in Kenya, and did well enough to earn a scholarship to study in the United States.

After graduating from a seminary in Denver as a Presbyterian minister, Deogratias returned to Africa in 1993 with the intention of teaching in Rwanda. But as the country spiralled toward genocide, he decided to leave again and eventually ended up in Canada.

It was another chance meeting, this time with retired Lt.-Gen. Romeo Dallaire in 1997, that prompted Deogratias to join the military.

"When genocide was happening in my country and people were being killed, Dallaire stood to plead the case of the people of Rwanda," he says, adding he was deeply affected upon learning of Dallaire's subsequent mental anguish over being powerless to stop the killing. "I thought of becoming a chaplain to help people like him who come from a mission hurting because they went to do a good thing."

Throughout the remarkable series of events that make up the chaplain's life, there emerges a sense of the power that one person, or even a single deed, can have on the lives of others.

"The sense of this mission is doing good things and we have to keep on doing them. So even when we lose our friends and comrades, we have to carry on the mission they have died for."

While he does share some of the apprehension of his fellow soldiers over the dangers facing Canadian troops in Afghanistan, Deogratias likes to refer to the "privilege" of taking part in the mission. In many ways, he sees it as a chance to use his experiences as a guide for others.

"I want to go not because I am immune to tragedy, but because I can say I have been there," he says. "I know how it feels to be at a crossroads, I know how it feels to hurt."

Shortage of materials may delay tank upgrades; Armoured vehicles meant to be deployed overseas next year

PUBLICATION: Kingston Whig-Standard (ON)

DATE: 2007.08.03

SECTION: National/World

PAGE: B2

SOURCE: CP

BYLINE: Murray Brewster

DATELINE: OTTAWA

WORD COUNT: 524

A worldwide shortage of specially tempered armour could delay next year's deployment to Afghanistan of newly purchased Dutch Leopard tanks – unless the Canadian army moves quickly to finalize an upgrade contract, says a defence industry executive.

It could take up to 18 months to get the steel necessary to reinforce the hulls of as many as 40 Leopard 2A4s, says a senior official with Rheinmetall Canada, the Montreal company vying for the roughly \$200-million improvement contract.

"Armoured steel today is very difficult to get fast," said Jean-Claude Rollier, who oversees the company's land defence arm.

"You might be ready to do the work and have prepared your vehicle, but you won't have the steel you need in order to put additional armour on the vehicle."

He said it's critical National Defence decide within a couple of months precisely what upgrades it wants to make to the tanks and to have a contract in place, Rollier said in an interview.

Improvements on the slightly used Dutch tanks are required in order for them to withstand increasingly powerful Taliban roadside bombs. That and installing some form of air conditioning are considered the key priorities of the upgrade plan.

The army is currently borrowing 20 Leopard 2 A6M tanks from the Germans – vehicles that have built-in mine protection. It hopes to swap those tanks with the upgraded ones by the end of next year.

The war in Iraq and the widening conflict in Afghanistan have led a number of countries to either purchase new armoured vehicles or buy armoured plating kits to upgrade their existing tanks and troop carriers.

"There is such a demand today worldwide for armoured steel that they're just not able to supply," said Rollier.

Canada's planned purchase of 16 CH-47 Chinook helicopters from Chicago-based Boeing is facing a similar problem. A scarcity of titanium used in constructing airframes, combined with a glut of orders, created an assembly line backlog that means the new choppers likely won't arrive until 2012.

Last week, a senior official at National Defence said one of the biggest hurdles facing the tank refurbishment project was the fact that there was no one company with the capability to quickly carry out the work. Until a

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few years ago, the Forces maintained its own ability to do major overhauls on tanks.

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Rollier's company has been in talks with both the federal government and Krauss–Maffei–Wegmann, the Leopard's German manufacturer.

Rheinmetall would have to subcontract the automotive portion of the upgrade to another company, said Rollier, but he insisted it is fully capable of carrying out the necessary electrical, fire–control and air–conditioning improvements.

In order to meet a December 2008 deadline, a contract would have to be finalized by the end of the summer, he said.

"The longer it takes, the less the likelihood it's going to happen." Whether the Conservative government and the Defence Department bureaucracy is prepared to move that quickly is another matter.

Since Prime Minister Stephen Harper's government began its rearmament program, it has been regularly criticized for sole–sourcing multi–billion dollar contracts.

In April, Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor announced Canada would spend \$650 million to modernize the army's tanks. It was later revealed that an additional \$650 million will be spent on long–term support contracts.

Rollier said winning the short–term upgrade would put his company in a good position to bid on the 20–year maintenance program.

Soldier charged in exercise shooting

PUBLICATION: Kingston Whig–Standard (ON)

DATE: 2007.08.03

SECTION: National/World

PAGE: B1

COLUMN: In brief

WORD COUNT: 105

A corporal was charged yesterday in the shooting of a fellow soldier during a live–fire training exercise at Canadian Forces Base Shilo. The victim, a reservist from the Winnipeg–based Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders of Canada, was shot at least twice during small arms practice last May for an upcoming tour in Afghanistan.

The man, who was not identified, is still recovering from his wounds.

Cpl. Dylan Nash with 2 Battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, faces charges of criminal negligence causing bodily harm and careless use of a firearm under the Criminal Code.

He was also charged with one count of negligent performance of duty under the National Defence Act.

Armour shortage may delay tank plan

PUBLICATION: Kingston Whig–Standard (ON)

DATE: 2007.08.03

SECTION: National/World

PAGE: B1

COLUMN: In brief

WORD COUNT: 37

A world–wide shortage of special armour could delay the deployment of new army tanks to Afghanistan unless the military moves quickly with a required upgrade, says an industry executive.

Afghan war is about control of pipeline route

PUBLICATION: Kingston Whig–Standard (ON)

DATE: 2007.08.03

SECTION: Editorial page

PAGE: 6

COLUMN: Letters

WORD COUNT: 333

Bravo to Gordon McGlynn for telling it as it is ("Afghan mission likely to fail," July 26). The war in Afghanistan is not about altruism. It's about energy – specifically, natural gas. Afghanistan's location between central and south Asia makes it a transit country, and that's what the U.S. has been working toward for more than 15 years.

Afghanistan is a key part of the "great game" for control of the immense natural gas reserves of central Asia. Right now, this gas flows out through Russia. Afghanistan offers an alternative route to the south. The ongoing pressures from the United States to create a pipeline to the south have been well–reported in south Asian newspapers. The proposal is well–documented; it's the Turkmenistan–Afghanistan–Pakistan–India pipeline, and the Asian Development Bank has presented a feasibility study.

Canada attended a major donor meeting last November at which countries vowed to accelerate work on the pipeline and help Afghanistan become a regional energy bridge. I've worked for two oil companies and two international development banks and am familiar with the thinking.

The proposed pipeline route goes through Kandahar and Helmand provinces, where Canadian and British forces are supporting Americans under the NATO umbrella. Kandahar has been at odds with the capital of Kabul for ages. It and Peshawar, Pakistan, are the main cities of the Pashtun people, who number 25 million or more and straddle the Afghan–Pakistani border that was imposed willy–nilly by British India. Is it realistic to believe that NATO can create and maintain peace and security for the life of the pipeline?

The irony is that Turkmenistan has just done a deal to sell its gas to Russia for shipment to Europe. Meanwhile, Pakistan and India are close to finalizing a deal to obtain gas from Iran, despite strong U.S. opposition. This would leave the Afghan pipeline stranded. And our troops?

John Foster

Kingston

South Korea, hostage-takers aim for direct talks

PUBLICATION: The
Chronicle-Herald
DATE: 2007.08.03
SECTION: World
PAGE: A10
SOURCE: The Associated
Press
WORD COUNT: 194

GHAZNI, Afghanistan – Officials searched Thursday for a neutral meeting place that would be safe for both South Korean negotiators and Taliban captors to hold face-to-face talks about the release of 21 South Koreans held hostage in Afghanistan.

At an Asian security conference in the Philippines, South Korean Foreign Minister Song Min-soon and U.S. Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte agreed to place top priority on safely freeing the hostages, ruling out a military option for ending the standoff, a South Korean official said.

But in Washington, senior State Department official Richard Boucher said the United States is not ruling out military force to free the hostages.

A delegation of South Korean legislators left for Washington in the latest diplomatic effort to urge the United States to help end the 15-day crisis.

Afghan officials said the Taliban captors have agreed to meet with South Korea's ambassador, but they had not yet agreed on a venue.

"If the Taliban want to come to the area where we are for the sake of these hostages, 100 per cent, they will be safe," Ghazni Gov. Marajudin Pathan told a news conference.

But both sides have proposed places that could put them at risk, including the office of the provincial reconstruction team, which is run by international troops.

Armour shortage could delay new tanks

PUBLICATION: The
Chronicle–Herald
DATE: 2007.08.03
SECTION: Front
PAGE: A1
SOURCE: The Canadian Press
BYLINE: Murray Brewster
WORD COUNT: 612

OTTAWA – A worldwide shortage of specially–tempered armour could delay next year's deployment to Afghanistan of newly purchased Dutch Leopard tanks unless the Canadian army moves quickly to finalize an upgrade contract, says a defence industry executive. It could take up to 18 months to get the steel necessary to reinforce the hulls of as many as 40 Leopard 2 A4s, says a senior official with Rheinmetall Canada, the Montreal company vying for the roughly \$200–million improvement contract.

"Armoured steel today is very difficult to get fast," said Jean–Claude Rollier, who oversees the company's land defence arm.

"You might be ready to do the work and have prepared your vehicle, but you won't have the steel you need in order to put additional armour on the vehicle."

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The war in Iraq and the widening conflict in Afghanistan have led a number of countries to either purchase new armoured vehicles or buy armoured– plating kits to upgrade their existing tanks and troop carriers.

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Canada's planned purchase of 16 CH–47 Chinook helicopters from Chicago, Ill.–based Boeing is facing a similar problem. A scarcity of titanium used in constructing airframes, combined with a glut of orders, created an assembly line backlog that means the new choppers likely won't arrive until 2012.

Last week, a senior official at National Defence said one of the biggest hurdles facing the tank refurbishment project was the fact that there was no one company with the capability to quickly carry out the work. Until a few years ago, the Canadian Forces maintained its own ability to do major overhauls on tanks.

Dan Ross, the assistant deputy minister of material, said the department has been focused primarily on getting the borrowed tanks into Afghanistan and would soon turn its attention to the upgrade project.

Rollier's company has been in talks with both the federal government and Krauss–Maffei–Wegmann, the Leopard's German manufacturer.

Rheinmetall would have to subcontract the automotive portion of the upgrade to another company, said Rollier, but he insisted it is fully capable of carrying out the necessary electrical, fire control and air conditioning improvements.

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The purchase of 100 slightly used Leopards from the Dutch – 40 of which are destined for upgrades and combat operations – is expected to be finalized soon.

Steel armour shortage could delay new tanks

PUBLICATION: The
Chronicle–Herald
DATE: 2007.08.03
SECTION: Front
PAGE: A1
SOURCE: The Canadian Press
BYLINE: Murray Brewster
WORD COUNT: 612

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Soldiers return to steamy N.B. after tour in Afghanistan

PUBLICATION: The Guardian (Charlottetown)

DATE: 2007.08.03

SECTION: Canada

PAGE: A8

COLUMN: Across the country

SOURCE: CP

DATELINE: FREDERICTON

WORD COUNT: 103

A lone bagpiper greeted about 60 Canadian soldiers as they arrived in Fredericton Thursday after serving six gruelling months in the Afghan desert.

As the troops from nearby Canadian Forces Base Gagetown emerged from an Air Transat chartered jet, the were met with stifling heat on the tarmac – not unlike the sticky conditions they left behind in central Asia. With the humidity factored in, it was 36 C when the jet touched down just after 5 p.m. local time.

This was the second group of soldiers to return home after wrapping up their rotation.

The first, small contingent of Gagetown troops to return landed late Tuesday, but with little fanfare.

Tories lacking a consistent message

PUBLICATION: The Guardian (Charlottetown)

DATE: 2007.08.03

SECTION: Opinion

PAGE: A7

COLUMN: National Affairs

BYLINE: Travers, James

DATELINE: Charlottetown

WORD COUNT: 570

Shooting the messenger is a feel-good reflex that does nothing to fix the problem. Except when the messenger muddles the message so often confusion becomes the problem.

Stephen Harper is in Prince Edward Island this week guiding caucus hands as they rewrite a Conservative message voters aren't receiving clearly or well. At precisely the moment when most federal minority governments are expiring, the ruling party is stagnant in public opinion and searching for momentum to lift it toward majority.

How that's to be done divides Conservatives. For some it's back to the basics of tax cuts, family values and a muscular military – issues the prime minister revisited in an evening stump-style speech. Others argue that fresh priorities coupled with an anticipated cabinet shuffle are required to revive a government now too old for its "new" branding.

Both have merit. One served the party well immediately after last year's election victory while the other shares its appeal with applying voltage to a flagging heart. Neither is a substitute for the stories this government can't believably tell.

Blame it in part on the controlling nature that surfaced here in a revealingly authoritarian confrontation over press freedom that turned potentially good news into more bad publicity. Blame it too on ideological certainty that Canadians will eventually accept superior Conservative wisdom if it's just repeated often enough.

Maybe, but to recruit more than one in three Canadians to their cause Conservatives must rediscover the power of frank explanation. Afghanistan and Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor's latest effort to convince the country that he and his top general agree on the mission is just one of many instructive examples.

In morphing toward an exit strategy and away from the prime minister's promise not to "cut and run," O'Connor and Rick Hillier are sowing confusion over when the suspect Afghan army might be ready to replace Canadians now in harm's way. Stretching the short spin-control leash held by the Prime Ministers Office, O'Connor offered a refreshingly articulate explanation that began shrinking the gaps.

Still, it's just another episode in a long-running serial. An administration that can't decide if it wants to be in Afghanistan to revenge 9/11, kill "scumbags" or build a model democracy is now struggling to explain how it will leave.

Inconsistency is a Conservative communications constant. Strong policy or weak, this government can't figure out what it wants to say or how to say it persuasively.

The result is a necklace of millstones dragging the prime minister down. Here in Atlantic Canada a sound Conservative repair to the equalization system Liberals broke is, thanks to a precipitous campaign promise,

making the prime minister and his party pariahs. Across the country the party is losing arguments on income trusts, the environment and, most of all, the war.

Sometimes substance is the problem. Sometimes the audience refuses to suspend suspicion. Of the two, the second is most damaging.

As Mike Harris demonstrated twice in Ontario, voters will give majorities to parties that tell a straight story even when its appeal is limited. But as Harper must now know, voters don't give the benefit of the doubt to ones that mumble even as they equivocate.

Whatever strategy Conservatives choose here, their tactics will have to change this fall if they are to regain public confidence. In an information age, a government that can't deliver a clear message is just a messenger waiting to be shot.

James Travers is a national affairs columnist. Copyright 2007 Torstar Syndication Services.

Several dozen soldiers back in N.B. after six-month tour of Afghanistan

DATE: 2007.08.02
KEYWORDS: DEFENCE INTERNATIONAL POLITICS
PUBLICATION: cpw
WORD COUNT: 502

FREDERICTON (CP) _ The latest Canadian soldiers returning from Afghanistan say the support of Canadians at home helped them deal with the loss of comrades during their six-month tour.

A lone bagpiper greeted about 60 Canadian soldiers as they arrived Thursday in Fredericton after serving six gruelling months in the Afghan desert.

As the troops from nearby Canadian Forces Base Gagetown emerged from an Air Transat chartered jet, they were met with stifling heat on the tarmac _ not unlike the sticky conditions they left behind in central Asia.

With the humidity factored in, it was 36 C when the jet touched down just after 5 p.m.

This was the second group of soldiers to return home after wrapping up the rotation.

Tears, hugs and broad smiles greeted them once they were bused from the airport to the base.

They marched in formation through the doors of the headquarters of the Second Battalion, The Royal Canadian Regiment, and into the arms of anxious family and friends.

Many of the soldiers expressed mixed emotions _ thrilled to see their loved ones, but feeling the sadness of knowing not everyone made it home.

Seven soldiers from CFB Gagetown were killed during the rotation.

“I knew the six RCR that died in the LAV accident,” said Pte. Dallas Curran of Fredericton.

“It's pretty hard because a couple of them I knew before we went over and I got to know them pretty well.”

Cpl. Brian Bannister from Newfoundland and Labrador described the six months in Afghanistan as difficult at times, especially because of the casualties, but he said support from home helped him cope.

“The support we got from people back here in Canada was unreal. It was great,” said Bannister.

“We couldn't ask for any better and I just want to say thank you for supporting us while we were over there ... all the letters and e-mails, they were great.”

Even before Master Cpl. Chris Lawrence of Fredericton marched through the doors at the base, his first duties had already been mapped out days before in conversation with his wife, Ashley White _ he was going to hug and hold his three-week-old son, Aiden.

Lawrence had been home for the birth, but had to return to Afghanistan for the remainder of his tour.

“That was the most difficult thing,” he said.

White said Lawrence had some diaper duty at home, but had expressed an eagerness to get involved.

“He gets the night off but I know he wants to be involved, and wants to jump right back into things,” she said.

The transition from the battlefield back into family life can be difficult.

The soldiers were given two days of “decompression training” before returning, and spouses at home were offered help as well.

The base's Military Family Resource Centre has been conducting reunion briefings.

“That's educating spouses and partners and family members what it's like over in theatre and what has been going on in their life, and giving them tips about homecoming and avoiding some of the stresses about how to become a couple again and become a family again,” said executive director Beth Corey.

She said they tell families not to plan too many homecoming activities in the first week.

And she said families are encouraged to discuss the mission and the casualties.

“It's OK to be honest with your feelings about that,” she said.

Acting base commander Lt.-Col. Paul Kearney greeted each soldier and welcomed them back to Canada.

He commended them on their work to rebuild in the area near Kandahar and consoled them on the loss of comrades.

“We're going to make sure that everyone who comes home understands what we did to try and make things easy for not only the families of the fallen soldiers, but also the families of those who were here who were dealing with this in their own way,” he said.

Soldiers from the current tour will continue to return home over the next six weeks.

Of the nearly 2,500 Canadian troops in Afghanistan, over 650 were from CFB Gagetown.

Shortage of armour plating could delay Leopard tank upgrade: industry exec

DATE: 2007.08.02

KEYWORDS: BUSINESS DEFENCE INTERNATIONAL

PUBLICATION: cpw

WORD COUNT: 604

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Soldier faces charges in shooting during training on Manitoba base

DATE: 2007.08.02
KEYWORDS: DEFENCE JUSTICE
PUBLICATION: cpw
WORD COUNT: 95

SHILO, Manitoba (CP) _ A soldier has been charged in the shooting of a fellow soldier during training exercises at the military base in Shilo, Man.

Cpl. Dylan Nash faces charges of criminal negligence causing bodily harm, careless use of a firearm and negligent performance of duty.

The charges go back to May when a reservist with the Winnipeg-based Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders of Canada was shot at least twice during small arms practice.

The training was with members of the Shilo-based 2 Battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry.

The victim, whose name was not released, was taken to hospital in stable condition.

Military police investigated the shooting of the soldier, who was being deployed to Afghanistan.

Afghan-Cda-Tanks

DATE: 2007.08.02

KEYWORDS: DEFENCE BUSINESS INTERNATIONAL

PUBLICATION: bnw

WORD COUNT: 155

OTTAWA — A world-wide shortage of specially-tempered armour could delay next year's deployment to Afghanistan of newly-purchased Dutch Leopard tanks, unless the Canadian army moves quickly to finalize an upgrade contract.

A defence industry executive says it could take up to 18 months to get the steel necessary to reinforce the hulls of as many as 40 Leopard 2A4s.

Jean-Claude Rollier, of Montreal-based Rheinmetall Canada, says armoured steel is difficult to obtain quickly.

His company vying for the roughly 200 (m) million dollar improvement contract.

Rollier says it's important National Defence decide within a couple of months precisely what upgrades it wants to do.

Improvements on the slightly-used Dutch tanks are required in order for them to withstand increasingly powerful Taliban roadside bombs.

Installing armour and air conditioning are considered the key priorities of the upgrade plan.

The Canadian army is currently borrowing 20 Leopard 2 A6M tanks from the Germans — vehicles that have built-in mine protection and hopes to swap those tanks with the upgraded ones by the end of next year.

(BN)

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Afghanistan Hostages–Update (looking for meeting place)

DATE: 2007.08.02

KEYWORDS: INTERNATIONAL DEFENCE POLITICS RELIGION

PUBLICATION: bnw

WORD COUNT: 138

GHAZNI, Afghanistan — Efforts are under way in Afghanistan to find a neutral meeting place — for talks about the fate of 21 South Koreans being held hostage there.

Officials are looking for a site that would be safe, both for South Korean negotiators and for the Taliban members who are holding the hostages.

A South Korean official says a top U–S State Department official has ruled out a military option for ending the standoff.

But a senior State Department official in Washington says that's not true.

Afghan officials say the Taliban captors have agreed to meet with South Korea's ambassador, but that they haven't agreed on a location.

Meanwhile, a delegation of South Korean lawmakers is headed to Washington to urge the U–S to help end the 15–day crisis.

A purported Taliban spokesman says the remaining 21 hostages are still alive, but that two of the women are very sick.

The Taliban have demanded the freedom of some of their own prisoners in Afghanistan in exchange for the South Koreans.

(AP)

ScH

O'Connor–Afghanistan

DATE: 2007.08.02
KEYWORDS: DEFENCE POLITICS
PUBLICATION: bnw
WORD COUNT: 154

CHARLOTTETOWN — Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor says there isn't an iota of difference between him and General Rick Hillier on the future of the Afghanistan mission.

O'Connor has been under fire recently for appearing to be at odds with his chief of defence staff on the Afghanistan mission's timetable.

Two weeks ago, O'Connor suggested Canadian troops would be in reserve by the end of the current six-month rotation of Van Doos. That was an assertion quickly contradicted by Hillier, among others, who said adequate training of Afghan soldiers will take much longer.

O'Connor clarified his remarks yesterday to emphasize that a training role for Canadian troops isn't a holiday and will consume the remaining 18 months of Canada's current military commitment.

He says even though Canada's military focus in Afghanistan is shifting toward training, that won't stop Canadian soldiers from being killed or injured on the front lines.

O'Connor made the comments in Charlottetown while in town for a summer strategy meeting of the Conservative caucus.

(CP)

NMC

Soldier faces charges in shooting during training on Manitoba base

DATE: 2007.08.02
KEYWORDS: DEFENCE JUSTICE
PUBLICATION: bnw
WORD COUNT: 96

SHILO, Manitoba – A soldier has been charged in the shooting of a fellow soldier during training exercises at the military base in Shilo, Man.

Cpl. Dylan Nash faces charges of criminal negligence causing bodily harm, careless use of a firearm and negligent performance of duty.

The charges go back to May when a reservist with the Winnipeg-based Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders of Canada was shot at least twice during small arms practice.

The training was with members of the Shilo-based 2 Battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry.

The victim, whose name was not released, was taken to hospital in stable condition.

Military police investigated the shooting of the soldier, who was being deployed to Afghanistan.

(BN)

Army urged to act soon on overhauling tanks; Shortage of armour plating could delay upgrade needed for Afghan mission

IDNUMBER 200708030127
PUBLICATION: The Toronto Star
DATE: 2007.08.03
EDITION: Ont
SECTION: News
PAGE: A21
ILLUSTRATION: David Smith CP Melissa Hunt gives a welcome-home kiss to Pte. Andrew Ward yesterday at CFB Gagetown. Ward was among some 50 soldiers who returned home yesterday after being deployed to Afghanistan for a six-month tour of duty. ;
BYLINE: Murray Brewster
SOURCE: Canadian Press
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 381

A worldwide shortage of specially tempered armour could delay next year's deployment to Afghanistan of newly purchased Dutch Leopard tanks – unless the Canadian army moves quickly to finalize an upgrade contract, says a defence industry executive.

It could take up to 18 months to get the steel necessary to reinforce the hulls of as many as 40 Leopard 2A4s, says an official with Rheinmetall Canada, the Montreal company vying for the roughly \$200 million improvement contract.

"Armoured steel today is very difficult to get fast," said Jean-Claude Rollier, who oversees the company's land defence arm.

Improvements on the slightly used Dutch tanks are required in order for them to withstand increasingly powerful Taliban roadside bombs. That, and installing some form of air conditioning are considered the key priorities.

The army is currently borrowing 20 Leopard 2 A6M tanks from Germany – vehicles that have built-in mine protection. It hopes to swap those tanks with the upgraded ones by the end of next year.

The war in Iraq and the widening conflict in Afghanistan have led a number of countries to either purchase new armoured vehicles or buy armoured plating kits to upgrade their existing tanks and troop carriers.

"There is such a demand today worldwide for armoured steel that they're just not able to supply," said Rollier.

Canada's planned purchase of 16 CH-47 Chinook helicopters from Boeing, based in Chicago, Ill., is facing a similar problem. A scarcity of titanium used in constructing airframes, combined with a glut of orders, created an assembly line backlog that means the new choppers likely won't arrive until 2012.

Last week, a National Defence official said one of the biggest hurdles facing the tank refurbishment project was the fact that there was no one company with the capability to quickly carry out the work.

Army urged to act soon on overhauling tanks; Shortage of armour plating could delay upgrade needed for A

Until a few years ago, the Canadian Forces maintained its own ability to do major overhauls on tanks.

Dan Ross, assistant deputy minister of materiel, said the department has been focused primarily on getting the borrowed tanks into Afghanistan and would soon turn its attention to the upgrade project.

Rollier's company has been in talks with both the federal government and Krauss–Maffei–Wegmann – the Leopard's German manufacturer. In order to meet a December 2008 deadline, a contract would have to be finalized by the end of the summer, he said. "The longer it takes, the less the likelihood it's going to happen."

Whether the Conservative government and defence department bureaucracy is prepared to move that quickly is another matter.

Applying lessons of Northern Ireland

IDNUMBER 200708030033
PUBLICATION: The Toronto Star
DATE: 2007.08.03
EDITION: Ont
SECTION: Editorial
PAGE: AA06
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 412

An army that entered Northern Ireland 38 years ago, bayonets fixed, ended operations at midnight Tuesday. A garrison of just over 5,000 soldiers remains, but from Wednesday they will have the same legal status as troops in England, Scotland or Wales.

No bugle sounded the end of Operation Banner, and no flag was lowered: A moment that should have been one for celebration was muted by events in Iraq and Afghanistan, where British forces are discovering the limits of peacemaking. In Afghanistan six soldiers died in action last month.

The Northern Ireland campaign encouraged the army – and politicians – to think of soldiers as a new kind of force, able to act within civil society, building confidence and responding to terrorism and political chaos as well as old threats from opposing nations and armies.

An internal military review of Operation Banner, released recently under the Freedom of Information Act, skirts over Bloody Sunday but shows just how much military habits had to change. Troops learned tactics that it was hoped later would help pacify Basra and Afghanistan's Helmand province: a respect for good intelligence, for personal contact and a recognition that military action could never in itself secure any kind of settlement.

As the army review of Operation Banner points out, in Northern Ireland "the army did not 'win' in any recognizable way; rather it achieved its desired end state."

No such end state has been reached in either Iraq or Afghanistan, and none is in sight.

Instead in both countries British forces who arrived expecting to deploy skills learned in Northern Ireland have found themselves facing a much more extreme form of conflict.

This is a long way from the battle for hearts and minds, and a long way too from the hoped-for reconstruction of the country that was supposed to underpin political stability.

British military operations are expanding and troop numbers are rising, from 6,000 now to 7,700 and perhaps more by the end of the year.

"There are few concrete and directly exportable lessons from Operation Banner," the army report on Northern Ireland concludes. But relative success in Northern Ireland did create optimism about the power of military force to stabilize societies.

Peace, in Afghanistan and Darfur as in Northern Ireland, can require the intelligent use of troops. But even with such forces in place it cannot be guaranteed. A sense of both the possibilities and the limits of using force

to repair broken societies is appropriate as Britain ends one operation and goes deeper into another, in Afghanistan.

This is an edited version of an editorial that appeared Wednesday in the Guardian, London.

Dump O'Connor from defence role

IDNUMBER 200708030032
PUBLICATION: The Toronto Star
DATE: 2007.08.03
EDITION: Ont
SECTION: Editorial
PAGE: AA06
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 589

Canadian troops battling Al Qaeda and its ilk in Afghanistan deserve to know that the shop back home in Ottawa is in steady hands.

Sadly, it is not. Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor is a poor communicator who has failed repeatedly to shore up fading public confidence in the mission. He has misled Parliament, has appeared to be openly at odds with Chief of Defence Staff Gen. Rick Hillier and has been inadequately briefed on significant matters.

That has left opposition Members of Parliament calling for O'Connor's head for months. None of this inspires confidence.

As the Star argued in this space in April, Prime Minister Stephen Harper should replace O'Connor in the defence portfolio with a stronger figure as the Conservatives prepare for Parliament's fall session. If anything, O'Connor's performance has grown weaker since April.

Canada has no more important foreign commitment at this moment than Afghanistan. We have 2,500 troops there, and are taking more than our share of casualties with 66 dead so far. As well, we are investing \$1.2 billion in aid. Yet public support for the mission is eroding.

As Ottawa weighs its next move, Harper urgently needs a defence minister who commands Parliament's respect, is a good communicator, is firmly in charge of his department and is in step with its command. O'Connor is shaky on all counts.

In the latest Afghan-related mishap, O'Connor and Hillier have recently appeared to be openly at odds over the Afghan army's combat ability. A week ago O'Connor made headlines when he seemed to tell CTV news that the weak Afghan army may be ready to take over much of the fighting from Canadian troops by the time Quebec's Royal 22nd Regiment, the Van Doos, end their rotation in February. Then, in another CTV interview, Hillier appeared to contradict his boss. "That would certainly be a significant challenge for them," he said.

In fact, O'Connor and Hillier weren't at odds. They just seemed to be.

What O'Connor said was that by the time the Van Doos move out, Ottawa hopes to have 3,000 Afghan army troops operating in Kandahar, which will let the Canadians "continue to withdraw ... put more emphasis on training and at some stage basically be in reserve." No mention of February there. Hillier's assessment is much the same.

Still, this latest public relations mishap is only the latest in a string of Afghan-related gaffes, confusions and questionable decisions by O'Connor that have forced Harper to rush to his embattled minister's defence rather

than admit he goofed in appointing him.

O'Connor has also misled Parliament on the role the Red Cross plays monitoring detainees in Afghanistan, and was slow to ensure detainees are humanely treated. He was stung when the grieving parents of a soldier killed in Afghanistan contradicted his claim that families were fully compensated for funerals. He claimed, wrongly, that lightly armoured G-wagon vehicles were restricted from risky convoy duty.

And O'Connor has yet to deliver the long-awaited "Canada First Defence Strategy" to guide defence policy and investment. But that has not stopped Ottawa from feverishly increasing base spending to \$20 billion a year, boosting personnel to 75,000, and investing \$20 billion in new Arctic vessels, supply ships, aircraft, helicopters, tanks and other equipment. Rather than guide forward-looking investments, the defence strategy is limping in behind, and may do little more than legitimize past procurement.

Canada needs a credible military vision for the 21st century, with appropriate spending. And Afghanistan is a huge challenge. The defence minister must make sense of it all. O'Connor has come up short.

Soldier charged

SOURCETAG 0708030332
PUBLICATION: The Winnipeg
Sun
DATE: 2007.08.03
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: 4
BYLINE: CP
DATELINE: SHILO
WORD COUNT: 71

A corporal was charged yesterday in the shooting of a fellow soldier during a live-fire training exercise at Canadian Forces Base Shilo.

The victim, a reservist from the Winnipeg-based Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders of Canada, was shot at least twice during small arms practice last May for an upcoming tour in Afghanistan.

Cpl. Dylan Nash faces charges of criminal negligence causing bodily harm and careless use of a firearm under the Criminal Code. KEYWORDS=NATIONAL

'Goodbye, my love' Candlelight vigil for slain soldier

SOURCETAG 0708030449

PUBLICATION: The Toronto Sun

DATE: 2007.08.03

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: 30

ILLUSTRATION: 1. photo by Tracy McLaughlin, Sun Media Military officials join Darryl Caswell's sister, Jolene, and mother Darlene Cushman as they place a wreath during a ceremony in Bracebridge. The soldier would have been 26 on Tuesday. 2. photo of DARRYL CASWELL Killed June 11

BYLINE: TRACY MCLAUGHLIN, SPECIAL TO SUN MEDIA

DATELINE: BRACEBRIDGE

WORD COUNT: 212

With tears streaming down her cheeks, the mother of a fallen soldier whispered one last "goodbye, my love" as she lit a candle for her son.

It should have been his birthday party, but instead it was a candlelight vigil Wednesday in honour of Trooper Darryl Caswell, who would have turned 26 the day before. Caswell was killed in a roadside bomb attack in Afghanistan June 11.

"He was a hero," military padre Lee Lambert told a small crowd gathered at the Memorial Gardens in Bracebridge, where Darlene Cushman, Caswell's mother, lives.

"He sacrificed his life for a people he never even knew so that they could have a better life," Lambert said.

As he spoke about her son, the mother gently smiled, but the tears continued.

"Darryl was not there to conquer, or dictate, or plant the Canadian flag," he said. "He was there to allow the people to be Afghani people, as is their birthright. The Taliban may not have wanted him there, but the people did. And that's what Darryl died for."

As bagpipes played, Cushman clutched hands with her daughter, Jolene, and Cpl. Wade Wick, who was the gunner of the Coyote armoured vehicle when it was hit in the deadly attack.

"He was a great guy. He was my buddy," Wick said. He joked about how Caswell was almost child-like when he received a care package from his mom with flavoured drink mix he would share with the soldiers to add to warm, over-treated drinking water.

"In 40-degree temperatures, it was like a Christmas present," Wick said. KEYWORDS=CANADA

TALKS SITE SOUGHT

SOURCETAG 0708030532

PUBLICATION: The London Free Press

DATE: 2007.08.03

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: A5

ILLUSTRATION: photo by Reuters **PROTEST:** A protester in Seoul seeks talks for the return of South Korean hostages in Afghanistan.

BYLINE: SUN MEDIA NEWS SERVICES

WORD COUNT: 174

– Officials searched yesterday for a neutral meeting place that would be safe for South Korean negotiators and Taliban captors to hold face-to-face talks about the release of 21 South Koreans held hostage in Afghanistan. In Washington, senior State Department official Richard Boucher said the United States is not ruling out military force.

– Capt. Charles Deogratias remembers that his first dream of freedom came to him in the form of long-haired women dressed in white walking amid a squalid refugee camp in Tanzania. Deogratias was just five, but he has never been able to shake the memory of those nurses who braved infection and disease to immunize the camp where he was raised. It's an image the Canadian Forces chaplain recalls again as he prepares to take part in the military mission in Afghanistan. "I dreamed about seeing those nurses again," he said in an interview ahead of his departure for Kandahar this weekend. **KEYWORDS=WORLD**

Upgrade of tanks threatened A shortage of specially-tempered armour may delay deployment of Leopards to Afghanistan.

SOURCETAG 0708030529
PUBLICATION: The London Free Press
DATE: 2007.08.03
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A5
BYLINE: MURRAY BREWSTER, CP
DATELINE: OTTAWA
WORD COUNT: 344

A world-wide shortage of specially-tempered armour could delay next year's deployment to Afghanistan of newly-purchased Dutch Leopard tanks -- unless the Canadian army moves quickly to finalize an upgrade contract, says a defence industry executive.

It may take up to 18 months to get the steel necessary to reinforce the hulls of as many as 40 Leopard 2A4s, says an official with Rheinmetall Canada, the Montreal company vying for the about \$200-million improvement contract.

"Armoured steel today is very difficult to get fast," said Jean-Claude Rollier, who oversees the company's land defence arm. "You might be ready to do the work and have prepared your vehicle, but you won't have the steel you need in order to put additional armour on the vehicle."

He said it's critical National Defence decide within a couple of months precisely what upgrades it wants to make to the tanks and to have a contract in place.

Improvements on the slightly-used Dutch tanks are required in order for them to withstand increasingly powerful Taliban roadside bombs. That, and installing some form of air conditioning are considered the key priorities of the upgrade plan.

The army is borrowing 20 Leopard 2 A6M tanks from the Germans -- vehicles that have built-in mine protection. It hopes to swap those tanks with the upgraded ones by the end of next year.

The war in Iraq and the widening conflict in Afghanistan have led a number of countries to either purchase new armoured vehicles or buy armoured plating kits to upgrade their existing tanks and troop carriers.

"There is such a demand today world-wide for armoured steel that they're just not able to supply," said Rollier.

Canada's planned purchase of 16 CH-47 Chinook helicopters from Chicago, Ill.-based Boeing is facing a similar problem. A scarcity of titanium used in constructing airframes, combined with a glut of orders, created an assembly line backlog that means the new choppers likely won't arrive until 2012.

Last week, a National Defence official said one of the biggest hurdles facing the tank refurbishment project is there is no one company with the capability to quickly carry out the work.

Upgrade of tanks threatened A shortage of specially-tempered armour may delay deployment of Leopards to Afghanistan.

Dan Ross, the assistant deputy minister of materiel, said the department has been focused primarily on getting the borrowed tanks into Afghanistan and would soon turn its attention to the upgrade project.

KEYWORDS=WORLD

Spit and politics

SOURCETAG 0708030766
PUBLICATION: The Edmonton Sun
DATE: 2007.08.03
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Editorial/Opinion
PAGE: 11
BYLINE: LYN COCKBURN
WORD COUNT: 584

I am crossing the street carrying a copy of her autobiography, Daughter of the East.

It's got a large picture of her on the back cover. I am thinking about my upcoming interview with Benazir Bhutto, the first woman to lead a modern Muslim nation.

I hear a hacking sound and something vaguely wet whistles past my ear. Turning, I see a couple of men staring angrily at me, then at the book. One of them snarls at me in some Eastern language perhaps Urdu, perhaps Arabic. It takes me a second to realize that, for the first time in my life, I have just been spat at.

Bhutto is gracious and tough, highly intelligent (Radcliffe, Harvard and Oxford) and given to small glimpses of humour. Obviously aware of the continual criticism from Muslim critics that she is careless with her scarf, she pulls it firmly around her face when a male photographer enters the room.

Since that interview in Vancouver a number of years ago, Bhutto has been ousted twice as Pakistan's prime minister, accused of corruption and incompetence, put under house arrest and has gone into exile. She is now 54 and lives in the United Arab Emirates and London. She's the mother of three children and the wife of Asif Ali Zardari who did eight years in jail on corruption charges.

Bhutto says the more than 90 charges against her were trumped up with forged documents and false accusations. Her detractors insist she stole millions of dollars while prime minister. Extremist Muslims want her dead.

Meanwhile, Pervez Musharraf, Pakistan's current military leader who took power in a 1999 coup, has declared on numerous occasions that if Bhutto dares return to Pakistan, he will immediately throw her in jail.

But last week, the beleaguered Musharraf and Bhutto held not-so-secret talks in Abu Dhabi, capital of the UAE.

With elections scheduled for November, with his local and international support dwindling and with Musharraf still in all sorts of hot water over the Red Mosque attack in Islamabad, he has become increasingly desperate.

Moreover, he cannot control the border with Afghanistan, so the Taliban slip in and out of Pakistan at will. The United States, long a Musharraf ally, is now suspicious because of his inability to curtail Taliban activity or, some say, his willingness to play on both teams.

In fact, so precarious is Musharraf's hold on power that U.S. presidential candidates are using him as part of their platform. In a speech on Wednesday, Barack Obama stated unapologetically that if there were a crisis with the Taliban and Musharraf refused to take action, he, as president, would.

So Musharraf is looking at a different kind of manoeuvre – namely Bhutto. He's considering letting her back in the country to serve as prime minister while he remains as president. In other words, he thinks they can share power. He as president, she as prime minister. After being elected – he by assembly, she in a general election.

Love her or hate her, Bhutto is no fool. She knows the military in Pakistan is the real ruler. She knows there are problems within its ranks with a number of officers and men supporting the Taliban.

So one of her conditions, supported by the U.S., is that Musharraf step down as head of the military, something that will be difficult for him since he calls his uniform his "second skin." And Bhutto insists that the upcoming elections be held in a democratic manner.

Yet Musharraf may be so hungry to retain power that he agrees to these terms. On the other hand, he may throw caution out the window and declare military law.

"I plan to return to Pakistan irrespective of whether Gen. Musharraf and my party are able to reach an understanding," said Bhutto in a recent interview.

Fine, Benazir, but I have a word or two of advice for you: Be careful what you wish for. You may get it and be spat upon. For the third time.

Returning soldiers laud support

SOURCETAG 0708030651
PUBLICATION: The Calgary Sun
DATE: 2007.08.03
EDITION: Early
SECTION: News
PAGE: 21
BYLINE: CP
DATELINE: FREDERICTON
WORD COUNT: 193

The latest Canadian soldiers returning from Afghanistan say the support of Canadians at home helped them deal with the loss of comrades during their six-month tour.

A lone bagpiper greeted about 60 Canadian soldiers as they arrived yesterday in Fredericton after serving six gruelling months in the Afghan desert.

As the troops from nearby Canadian Forces Base Gagetown emerged from an Air Transat chartered jet, they were met with stifling heat on the tarmac — not unlike the sticky conditions they left behind in central Asia.

This was the second group of soldiers to return home after wrapping up the rotation.

They marched in formation through the doors of the headquarters of the Second Battalion, The Royal Canadian Regiment, and into the arms of anxious family and friends.

Many soldiers expressed mixed emotions — thrilled to see loved ones, but sad knowing not everyone made it home.

Seven soldiers from CFB Gagetown were killed.

Cpl. Brian Bannister from Newfoundland and Labrador described the six months in Afghanistan as difficult at times, especially because of the casualties, but he said support from home helped him cope.

"The support we got from people back here in Canada was unreal. It was great," said Bannister. "We couldn't ask for any better and I just want to say thank you for supporting us while we were over there ... all the letters and e-mails, they were great." **KEYWORDS=NATIONAL**

Council troops out plan to pay reservists

SOURCETAG 0708030649
PUBLICATION: The Calgary Sun
DATE: 2007.08.03
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: 21
BYLINE: SHAWN LOGAN, CALGARY SUN
WORD COUNT: 218

City council is set to consider a plan next month to pay full salary and benefits to its employees who serve in the Canadian Forces, a perk they don't currently enjoy while serving abroad or training.

Mayor Dave Bronconnier and Ald. Diane Colley–Urquhart will come to council Sept. 10 with a notice of motion ahead of fall budget talks that would see the estimated 100 civic employees who serve as reservists eligible for their full pay and benefits while on leave to fulfil their military responsibilities.

Colley–Urquhart said reservists who work for the city should be recognized for their contributions to both their country and employer.

"You really have to walk the walk about how you treat your reservists," she said.

The Ward 13 alderman, who two years ago was appointed the regional director of the Canadian Forces Liaison Council, said municipalities have been asked to give more recognition for reservists and the proposal, which must be approved by council, will be an important first step.

While a declaration to support reservists was signed by the city shortly after the council was created, Colley–Urquhart said Canada's involvement in Afghanistan, which has so far resulted in 60 deaths, has lent more importance to properly acknowledging those who serve.

"Until we got involved in a war, no one really looked at it the same way," she said.

Council became embroiled in a tense debate over placing yellow ribbon stickers on city vehicles last month, an issue set to be on the agenda again in September. KEYWORDS=ALBERTA

Hostages still alive but two very sick: Taliban

IDNUMBER 200708030099
PUBLICATION: The Hamilton Spectator
DATE: 2007.08.03
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Canada/World
PAGE: A3
DATELINE: GHAZNI, Afghanistan
SOURCE: The Associated Press
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 137

Officials searched yesterday for a neutral meeting place that would be safe for both South Korean negotiators and Taliban captors to hold face-to-face talks about the release of 21 South Koreans held hostage in Afghanistan.

Purported spokesman Qari Yousef Ahmadi said the Taliban "want to negotiate directly with the Koreans because the Kabul administration is not sincere about releasing the Taliban prisoners."

A South Korean Embassy official in Kabul would not confirm any Korean efforts to hold face-to-face talks with Taliban.

Speaking by telephone from an undisclosed location, Ahmadi said the remaining 21 hostages are still alive, but two of the women were very sick.

Meanwhile, Newsweek magazine reported a regional Taliban commander — claiming to be the mastermind behind the abductions — said the militants might prolong the crisis to embarrass President Hamid Karzai.

The government has said it is opposed to a prisoner swap fearing it could encourage more kidnappings.

Koreans in Canada appeal for support

IDNUMBER 200708030067
PUBLICATION: The Hamilton Spectator
DATE: 2007.08.03
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Opinion
PAGE: A12
BYLINE: Jae Y. Rhee, Hamilton, pastor, McMaster Community
ChristianChurch
SOURCE: The Hamilton Spectator
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 305

Re: Korean hostages in Afghanistan

The 23 South Koreans kidnapped by the Taliban in Afghanistan is the largest group of foreign hostages taken in Afghanistan since the 2001 U.S.–led invasion.

These young men and women, mostly nurses, were in this war–torn country to help sick people in desperate need of medical care. Although members of a Korean Protestant church in Seoul, they did not go there with an aggressive mission strategy to convert Muslim people. They were simply called to help the poor and the sick in Afghanistan with Christian love.

This matter does not involve any conflict such as religion or ethnicity, not even military. Korea's government had already clarified the withdrawal plan of its troops by the end of this year, so this kidnapping has nothing to do with even the presence of 200 Korean soldiers who have been perspiring mainly to provide medical care and help rebuild this ruined land.

When the second hostage was killed even after the Korean special presidential envoy started leading the Korean negotiation team, this shows the Korean government does not have the power to comply with Taliban demands to release prisoners.

The key is in the hands of the U.S., who strongly criticized Afghanistan's government when in March it agreed to free five captive Taliban fighters in exchange for the release of an Italian reporter. President Karzai called the trade a one–time deal after he was criticized by U.S. and European allies over the exchange.

Koreans in Canada appeal to peace–loving Canadian and Muslim parents, who have their own children the same age as the Korean hostages, to support the innocent people. Canada has sacrificed many precious lives of Canadian soldiers. If Canada is really concerned about peace and innocent lives, this is an opportunity to show it to the world with active support to save the 21 innocent lives.

Muddled message leads to confusion

IDNUMBER 200708030064
PUBLICATION: The Hamilton Spectator
DATE: 2007.08.03
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Opinion
PAGE: A13
COLUMN: James Travers
DATELINE: Ottawa
BYLINE: James Travers
SOURCE: Toronto Star
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 525

Shooting the messenger is a feel-good reflex that does nothing to fix the problem. Except when the messenger muddles the message so often confusion becomes the problem.

Stephen Harper was in Prime Edward Island this week guiding caucus hands as they rewrite a Conservative message voters aren't receiving clearly or well. At precisely the moment when most federal minority governments are expiring, the ruling party is stagnant in public opinion and searching for momentum to lift it towards majority.

How that's to be done divides Conservatives. For some it's back to the basics of tax cuts, family values and a muscular military — issues the prime minister revisited in an evening stump-style speech.

Others argue that fresh priorities coupled with an anticipated cabinet shuffle are required to revive a government now too old for its "new" branding.

Both have merit. One served the party well immediately after last year's election victory, while the other shares its appeal with applying voltage to a flagging heart. Neither is a substitute for the stories this government can't believably tell.

Blame it in part on the controlling nature that surfaced here in a revealingly authoritarian confrontation over press freedom that turned potentially good news into more bad publicity. Blame it too on ideological certainty that Canadians will eventually accept superior Conservative wisdom if it's just repeated often enough.

Maybe, but to recruit more than one in three Canadians to their cause Conservatives must rediscover the power of frank explanation.

Afghanistan, and Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor's latest effort to convince the country that he and his top general agree on the mission, is just one of many instructive examples.

In morphing towards an exit strategy and away from the prime minister's promise not to "cut and run," O'Connor and Rick Hillier are sowing confusion over when the suspect Afghan army might be ready to replace Canadians now in harm's way.

Stretching the short spin–control leash held by the prime minister's office, O'Connor offered a refreshingly articulate explanation that began shrinking the gaps.

Still, it's just another episode in a long–running serial. An administration that can't decide if it wants to be in Afghanistan to revenge 9/11, kill "scumbags" or build a model democracy is now struggling to explain how it will leave.

Inconsistency is a Conservative communications constant. Strong policy or weak, this government can't figure out what it wants to say or how to say it persuasively.

The result is a necklace of millstones dragging the prime minister down. Here in Atlantic Canada a sound Conservative repair to the equalization system Liberals broke is, thanks to a precipitous campaign promise, making the prime minister and his party pariahs.

Across the country the party is losing arguments on income trusts, the environment and, most of all, the war.

Sometimes substance is the problem. Sometimes the audience refuses to suspend suspicion.

Of the two, the second is most damaging.

As Mike Harris demonstrated twice in Ontario, voters will give majorities to parties that tell a straight story even when its appeal is limited. But as Harper must now know, voters don't give the benefit of the doubt to ones that mumble even as they equivocate.

Whatever strategy Conservatives choose here, their tactics will have to change this fall if they are to regain public confidence. In an information age, a government that can't deliver a clear message is just a messenger waiting to be shot.

Columnist James Travers writes on national affairs.

jtravers@thespec.com

A future more uncertain than the present

IDNUMBER 200708030063
PUBLICATION: The Hamilton Spectator
DATE: 2007.08.03
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Opinion
PAGE: A13
COLUMN: Haroon Siddiqui
BYLINE: Haroon Siddiqui
SOURCE: The Hamilton Spectator
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 506

Prime Minister Gordon Brown's assertion that Britain's "strongest bilateral relationship" is with the United States is a statement of the obvious.

That he is less chummy with President George W. Bush than Tony Blair was maybe more than a matter of political calculation. The current prime minister, unlike his predecessor, is not a sycophant — just as Canada's Jean Chretien was not but Brian Mulroney was.

More notably, Brown is recalibrating the war on terror, which he doesn't consider a war at all.

Blair's cabinet had been divided between those who did not want to alienate Britain's two million Muslims (considering their co-operation is essential in combatting terrorism), and those who dismissed that position as politically correct.

The first camp is now in charge.

On the eve of Blair's departure, Hilary Benn, a junior minister who was an ally of Brown, travelled to New York to say that Britain was abandoning the phrase "war on terror." There's no single enemy, and inflating the importance of the many only strengthens them.

Douglas Alexander, Britain's new trade secretary, went to Washington to say that overwhelming destructive military power alone is not enough in the 21st century.

"We need to demonstrate by our deeds, words and our actions that we are internationalist, not isolationist, multilateralists, not unilateralist," and that "we recognize the importance of a rule-based international system." (A Canadian sentiment not heard in Stephen Harper's Canada.)

Brown has also abandoned the Bush-Blair formulation of "Good Muslim/BadMuslim," "Good Islam/Bad Islam."

Both would say Islam means peace and Muslims are peaceful; but a handful are twisting Islam to "bring about Armageddon" (Blair's words); and since we are championing the "true voice of Islam," all good Muslims must support us.

This self-serving fatwa by Mullahs Blair and Bush did not cut much ice with Muslims, either in Britain and the U.S. or in the Islamic world. Brown has abandoned this theology altogether.

In the wake of the two botched terrorist plots in London and Glasgow, he and his ministers refrained from implicating Muslims. They zeroed in instead on "al-Qaeda-inspired terrorism."

As sensible as it is, the new approach is still full of flaws. Governments cannot pretend that terrorists are not Muslims when they are, just as in other times they were Christians, Jews, Hindus, etc.

al-Qaeda may be the most well-known terrorist outfit, but it's just one of 30 around the world. And not all terrorists, especially those born or raised in the West, are taking orders from al-Qaeda or like-minded groups.

By attributing terrorism to al-Qaeda, Brown makes the same mistake, or indulges in the same trickery, as Blair and all those who harp about "Islamic terrorism," or "Islamic-inspired radicalism," or the "Islamic threat."

In doing so, they gloss over the real causes of Muslim terrorism: Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine, Chechnya and contemporary Western collusion with oppressive Muslim dictators.

Brown's security package -- increasing border police and biometric screening, holding suspects for 56 days instead of 28 without charge, allocating \$144 million to teach English and citizenship skills to British imams, and subsidizing the BBC's proposed Arabic and Farsi TV services -- as useful as it may be -- will not end Muslim terrorism, whether it comes shrouded in Islamic terminology or not.

There's no not dealing with the killing fields of our making in Muslim lands. Otherwise, we condemn ourselves to a future more uncertain and fearful than the present.

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The end is near! An appreciation

IDNUMBER 200708030062
PUBLICATION: The Hamilton Spectator
DATE: 2007.08.03
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Opinion
PAGE: A13
ILLUSTRATION: Photo: THE ASSOCIATED PRESS / When Weekly World News stopspublishing later this month, who will cover stories about aliens in the White House and Elvis sightings? ;
BYLINE: Larry Williams
SOURCE: The Hamilton Spectator
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 562

The Weekly World News will cease publication later this month. It will be missed, being the only newspaper that covers Sasquatch, space aliens, ghosts, Elvis sightings and Bat Boy, among other vitally important things.

You might remember the WWN for breaking the story about space aliens in the U.S. Senate. Chris Dodd was one of them, the paper said.

Holy cow! What if he gets elected president? Well, it won't be that big a deal, because space aliens have been advising our presidents for years.

In its 28 years of publication, the Weekly World News has gotten many scoops, leaving the rest of the mainstream media so far back in the dust that they didn't even try to catch up.

Who can forget the revelation that the CIA was keeping Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden prisoners in the same cell, and that they'd fallen in love? You didn't see that anywhere else.

Not to mention: "Hell is on the planet Venus, says Bible expert!" That seems like something everyone would want to know.

True, the WWN didn't get much respect in the journalism world. But the Men in Black knew better. In the 1997 movie, when Agent K is showing rookie Agent J the ropes, one of the first tips is that the Weekly World News is must reading for any alien hunter.

In the 1990s, I was a reporter on an investigative-projects desk, staffed by people with a deep and abiding appreciation for the WWN. So we bought a subscription, thus ensuring we'd have some laughs every week, no matter what else was going on.

We took to taping the best WWN covers on the walls, and one of my favourites was "Farmer Says: ELVIS IS HAUNTING MY COWS!" Next to it was a story about Elvis being seen alive somewhere, making me wonder: Don't these guys ever check their old clips? Both stories can't be true.

I could imagine the reporter writing the cows story going to his editor. "Boss, I got some bad news. We've carried about 50 stories recently saying Elvis is alive. So he can't very well be haunting cows then, can he?"

The boss's response: "Maybe he JUST died. Didja ever think of that?"

One of our favourite WWN moments, though, was the day it published in the back pages, next to the psychic ads, a tiny story saying that in the next month, time would start to go backward.

I don't remember what the cover story was, but how could time going backward not lead the paper?

Upon hearing the news about the News this week, one of my colleagues on that desk said, "It's a sad day for pretend journalism."

"Pretend journalism?"

Well, yes. Everyone knew that, right?

We thought it was self-evident, but lately the WWN had started publishing a notice on Page 2 admitting that it made up most of the stories. It was in tiny print, though, so I doubt it was read by anyone who could benefit from it.

Another innovation has been the publication of corrections.

One recent gaffe was in a story about the discovery of the actual Valley of the Jolly Green Giant, where, it turned out, more than one giant resided.

The correction said the paper got the giants' heights slightly wrong.

Like every newspaper, the WWN has been covering the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. As usual, it has had some exclusives, such as "VAMPIRES ATTACK U.S. TROOPS: Army of undead taking over mountains of Afghanistan!" and "SATAN CAPTURED BY GIs IN IRAQ!"

Where will we get stories like these after the WWN is gone?

Well, according to publisher American Media Inc.'s announcement, the website www.weeklyworldnews.com will continue to operate after the final print issue Aug. 27 — but who knows for how long?

The WWN's circulation might have been down, but at least people paid for it. Nobody pays for the website, and American Media has been losing money by the barrel.

Speaking of the web, for a selection of great WWN headlines, go to www.chiprowe.com/articles/weekly-long.html.

There are hundreds more at www.citynewsstand.com/TopTen.htm.

If you can't open that page (I couldn't), Google it, and open the cached version.

Williams is a writer for The Hartford Courant

CIDA one of Canada's great success stories

IDNUMBER 200708030034
PUBLICATION: The Windsor Star
DATE: 2007.08.03
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A9
BYLINE: Kim Malcolm
SOURCE: Windsor Star
WORD COUNT: 357

Don Martin's report from Afghanistan (Canadian aid helps defeat polio in Afghanistan) brings to light another of Canada's — and CIDA's — successes in development aid for children.

Canada is already known as a leader in providing cost-effective prevention and treatment for preventable disease and illness, especially pneumonia, malaria and diarrhea, which are the top three killers of children under five. For example, Canada's efforts to distribute vitamin A supplements that ward off disease and blindness have saved the lives of 2.1 million children since 1998, at a cost of only four cents per dose.

Another example: child mortality was reduced by 20 per cent in 11 West African countries as the result of a three-year CIDA–UNICEF pilot project begun in 2003.

This program, which brought immunizations, micronutrient supplements, oral rehydration therapies, and bed nets to local communities, along with appropriate interventions for pregnant women, cost a mere \$500 per life saved.

Since then, Mali and Ghana have adopted the program on a national basis, and the African Union has asked for it to be implemented across sub-Saharan Africa where a staggering five million children, almost half of the worldwide total, die every year from preventable and treatable illnesses.

With successes like these, one wonders why Canada doesn't concentrate its efforts on reducing child mortality. Focusing on proven, cost-effective solutions to basic health problems would confirm Canada's leading role in child survival initiatives and provide an example to others in achieving the UN's Millennium Development Goal of reducing child mortality by two-thirds — a goal that, at the present pace, will only be reached 100 years after the target date of 2015.

If Canada invested \$100 million a year (less than one per cent of our annual aid budget) every year for five years, a total of one million children's lives would be saved. At the same time, Canada might well initiate an international campaign to save five million children's lives over the same five years. Let's build on our successes and restore hope to parents, and potential to children, everywhere.

Kim Malcolm

Ottawa

SOUTH KOREAN HOSTAGES Taliban agree to discuss end to crisis

PUBLICATION: GLOBE AND MAIL

IDN: 072150283

DATE: 2007.08.03

PAGE: A13 (ILLUS)

BYLINE: AMIR SHAH

SECTION: International News

SOURCE: AP

EDITION: Metro

DATELINE: GHAZNI, AFGHANISTAN

WORDS: 359

WORD COUNT: 338

AMIR SHAH Associated Press GHAZNI, AFGHANISTAN Officials searched yesterday for a neutral meeting place that would be safe for both South Korean negotiators and Taliban captors to hold face-to-face talks on the release of 21 South Koreans held hostage in Afghanistan.

At an Asian security conference in the Philippines, South Korean Foreign Minister Song Min-soon and U.S. deputy secretary of state John Negroponte agreed to place top priority on safely freeing the hostages, ruling out a military option for ending the standoff, a South Korean official said.

But in Washington, senior State Department official Richard Boucher said the United States is not ruling out military force to free the hostages.

A delegation of South Korean legislators left for Washington in the latest diplomatic effort to urge the United States to help end the 15-day crisis.

Afghan officials said the Taliban captors have agreed to meet with South Korea's ambassador, but they had not yet agreed on a venue.

"If the Taliban want to come to the area where we are for the sake of these hostages, 100 per cent, they will be safe," Ghazni Governor Marajudin Pathan told a news conference.

But both sides have proposed places that could put them at risk, including the office of the provincial reconstruction team, which is run by international troops.

"The Koreans told the Taliban to come to the PRT, and the Taliban told the Koreans to come to their base," Mr. Pathan said after the news conference.

Purported Taliban spokesman Qari Yousef Ahmadi said the South Koreans had not requested direct talks with the militants, but the insurgents would be willing to hold such a meeting in Taliban-controlled territory.

The Taliban "want to negotiate directly with the Koreans because the Kabul administration is not sincere about releasing the Taliban prisoners," Mr. Ahmadi said by telephone from an undisclosed location.

A South Korean embassy official in Kabul would not confirm any Korean efforts to hold face-to-face talks with Taliban.

Meanwhile, Newsweek magazine reported that a regional Taliban commander claiming to be the mastermind behind the abductions said the militants might prolong the crisis to embarrass Afghan President Hamid Karzai.

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Afghanistan

SUBJECT TERM: strife; terrorism; kidnapping; hostages; south koreans

ORGANIZATION NAME: Taliban

THE MILITARY AND AFGHANISTAN Commander in chief? Hillier v. O'Connor: The confusion about who's in command can't continue

PUBLICATION: GLOBE AND MAIL

IDN: 072150234

DATE: 2007.08.03

PAGE: A15 (ILLUS)

BYLINE: EUGENE LANG

SECTION: Comment

EDITION: Metro

DATELINE:

WORDS: 837

WORD COUNT: 877

EUGENE LANG Chief of staff to two Liberal defence ministers, 2002–2006 The Minister of National Defence, Gordon O'Connor, and the Chief of the Defence Staff, General Rick Hillier, are publicly at odds on at least three key files: the readiness of the Afghan National Army to replace the Canadian Forces in Kandahar in 2009, the appropriate level of funeral coverage for fallen soldiers, and whether Canada should establish "territorial defence units" across Canada. These issues fall into both the realms of military operations (the responsibility of the CDS) and defence policy (the purview of the minister). A public rift between the chief military officer and the civilian authority is unprecedented. It is also untenable. The disputes send mixed messages to Canadians, to Parliament, to our allies, to our enemies and to troops in the field. It is not clear who is in charge.

The confusion cannot be allowed to continue.

To be sure, previous defence ministers and chiefs of the defence staff have been on different sides of key issues. John McCallum, Jean Chretien's last defence minister, disagreed with the day's chief of the defence staff on several files – notably on some major military procurements and the scope for eliminating inefficiencies in the Defence Department. Yet, not once did their disagreements spill over into the public domain. Paul Martin's last defence minister, Bill Graham, saw eye to eye with Gen. Hillier on most issues. However, there were two or three occasions when the general's public utterances, on the subjects of military funding and the nature of the Afghanistan mission, made life awkward for Mr. Graham and Mr. Martin. Not once, however, did this result in a public dispute or even an acrimonious exchange behind closed doors.

Had any of these tensions produced open divides between the minister and the CDS, their relationship, and those of their staffs, would have been compromised, to the detriment of the functioning of the defence portfolio. All parties understood this and conducted themselves accordingly. Disputes were sorted out behind closed doors, not unlike how a cabinet functions.

While public rows between military leaders and civilian authorities are rare in Canada, they are common in the United States, where senior generals often act like politicians, creating their own personas through the media. Gen. Hillier has embraced the American model.

He speaks out bluntly and loudly on a wide range of issues. Indeed, Rick Hillier is better known than any CDS this country has ever had. He has a higher profile than virtually any member of Stephen Harper's cabinet, and he is a superior communicator. Any defence minister would find it challenging to establish his or her

dominance while standing next to the formidable and talented Gen. Hillier.

But the serial missteps of Gordon O'Connor – particularly his failure to understand and communicate accurately the government's policy on detainees taken in Afghanistan – has made his task of emerging from the Hillier shadow that much harder. Mr. O'Connor lacks the confidence of Parliament, the Canadian public and the military rank and file.

Gen. Hillier, at a minimum, retains the solid confidence of the latter, which is his main responsibility.

The two men are tripping over one another. Mr. O'Connor, a retired brigadier-general, is out of step with the military leadership on a key operational matter – the Afghan National Army's readiness to replace the Canadian Forces in Kandahar. And Gen. Hillier, who was given unprecedented influence over defence policy in the Martin government, still treads heavily in that domain. The lines of authority between the minister and the CDS are blurred and conflicted. They need clarifying – fast. Many believe the Prime Minister can solve the problems in the defence portfolio by replacing Mr. O'Connor.

That is a necessary, but probably insufficient, condition to get things back on track at this point.

The central objective must be nothing short of re-establishing competent civilian control over defence policy, oversight of the military, and effective ministerial communications with the public, all of which are woefully lacking.

Unfortunately, the Prime Minister's failure to replace Mr. O'Connor earlier, when it was clear he was out of his depth, has resulted in these public contradictions between the general and the minister.

This situation has made the Prime Minister's challenge greater, and might put Gen. Hillier's tenure at risk – which would undermine the military transformation agenda the general has spearheaded.

Given the public rift between the minister and the CDS, the dismissal of Mr. O'Connor at this late stage would be attributed to Gen. Hillier taking him on in public and winning. That perception would hamstring any incoming minister. The new minister would have, in the back of his or her mind, the fact that the CDS publicly challenged the minister – a retired general and author of the government's defence platform – resulting in the minister's dismissal. The subliminal message would be: "Hillier is in charge and getting offside the general is career limiting." These circumstances present a serious dilemma for the Prime Minister.

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Canada; Afghanistan

SUBJECT TERM: government; political; foreign policy; defence

PERSONAL NAME: Gordon O'Connor; Rick Hillier

ORGANIZATION NAME: Armed Forces

Our Kandahar operation is missing opportunities

PUBLICATION: GLOBE AND MAIL

IDN: 072150231

DATE: 2007.08.03

PAGE: A15

BYLINE: RICK SALUTIN

SECTION: Comment

EDITION: Metro

DATELINE:

WORDS: 674

WORD COUNT: 682

RICK SALUTIN With the current rotation of Canadian troops in Afghanistan, I'd like to grab the chance to carp on some neglected issues.

"Our" side is the only one where foreigners run the show: What do Afghan farmers see as fighters move in and out of their areas? On one side, there are the Canadians and others, who first attacked, then invaded and now occupy their country. They profess noble motives and make some positive changes. On the other side, they see people who look like themselves and speak their language. This is not a question of who has better intentions or who can do more for you; it's about who you are and where you recognize yourself.

This may be particularly poignant in Afghanistan. John C. Griffiths, in his most recent book on Afghanistan, says any Afghan "resents one thing more than internal tyranny – and that is a foreign invasion . . . as the Russians found . . . and the Americans are also likely to . . . Afghans of all races will oppose . . . any foreign invader . . . and reject any 'Afghan Solution' imposed from outside." But I don't think it's primitive or unique, it's universal. Consider even Canada. We've had generations of our elites tell us that foreigners know better. In the recent past, we had free-trade propaganda and the self-hatred of the National Post in its early years. Now, editorials tell us not to worry if all our big companies are sold elsewhere.

Yet surveys consistently show that Canadians care anyway; they don't just want to be Canadian, they want to control their country. It's not anti-Americanism; it's anti-American control. The Taliban advantage has nothing to do with fundamentalism, which may be a liability.

Nationality works for them. They're at home. This is what probably makes the Canadian mission unachievable. Think of it this way: Their army doesn't seem to need Canadian trainers.

Aid and security do not – repeat, not – go together: I am really tired of hearing this one. Ask the South Korean missionaries being held hostage. When your aid team is co-ordinated with and under the protection of an occupying army, you are perceived as part of the occupation. You become a piece in the plan to win hearts and minds, an essentially cynical, calculated strategy. And the locals know it, even as they accept the goodies. "There's a fine line between effective aid and making a local population look like lackeys to a foreign army," Paul Koring wrote in The Globe recently.

I don't think the line is fine; I think it's unmissable. NGOs succeed by separating themselves from political and military agendas.

It may take a lot longer, but it has the benefit of working. You want your aid to succeed? Withdraw the troops; if not, withdraw the aid.

The Taliban are not the problem; they're part of the solution: If that sounds shocking, it's what most players, including President Hamid Karzai's government, have said. A foreign solution cannot be imposed; it has already failed. The Taliban, like most political movements, are split. You can always find someone to talk to. It's the past rhetoric and demonization that get in the way. It doesn't help when your own generals did a lot of the demonizing.

Endnote: I'll finish by mentioning a "missed opportunity" in Afghanistan that Mr. Griffiths says was there right after 9/11.

He says the Taliban were imploding and had lost much of their internal and external support. Then, by invading, the United States did the one thing that could "ease the Taliban's internal stresses and unite behind them the great majority of Afghans." The alternative would have been not war, but an intense international police action against the individuals responsible for 9/11 – in the manner that Britain's Gordon Brown, in Washington this week, called terrorism a crime rather than a cause. Imagine the difference to the world in which we now shudder.

rsalutin@globeandmail.com

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Canada; Afghanistan,

SUBJECT TERM:foreign policy; foreign aid; strife; terrorism

ORGANIZATION NAME: Taliban; Armed Forces

The Afghan/Outremont factor

PUBLICATION: GLOBE AND MAIL

IDN: 072150166

DATE: 2007.08.03

PAGE: A14

BYLINE: HAROLD CHOMEY

SECTION: Letter to the Edit

EDITION: Metro

DATELINE: Montreal PQ

WORDS: 84

WORD COUNT: 119

Harold Chomey professor of political science, Concordia University Montreal Norman Spector's view of the battlefield in Outremont seems clouded by the smoke and dust from previous elections (The Battleground Shifts To Quebec – Aug. 2). In the 2006 federal election, the Conservatives received only 12.7 per cent of the vote in Outremont. More than 80 per cent of the electorate picked parties that now want the Afghan mission ended by 2009 or earlier. Afghanistan may be an issue in next month's by-election, but it's unlikely the Conservatives will benefit.

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Outremont; Quebec; Canada

SUBJECT TERM:by-elections; political

IN BRIEF Soldier charged over shooting at base

PUBLICATION: GLOBE AND MAIL
IDN: 072150145
DATE: 2007.08.03
PAGE: A6
BYLINE:
SECTION: National News
SOURCE: CP
EDITION: Metro
DATELINE: Shilo, Man.
WORDS: 116
WORD COUNT: 93

CP Shilo, Man.

A soldier has been charged in the shooting of a fellow soldier during training exercises at the military base in Shilo.

Corporal Dylan Nash faces charges of criminal negligence causing bodily harm, careless use of a firearm and negligent performance of duty.

The charges go back to May when a reservist with the Winnipeg-based Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders of Canada was shot at least twice during small-arms practice.

The training was with members of the Shilo-based 2 Battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry.

The victim, whose name was not released, was taken to hospital in stable condition.

Military police investigated the shooting of the soldier, who was being deployed to Afghanistan.

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Manitoba; Canada

SUBJECT TERM:defence; professional misconduct; shootings

PERSONAL NAME: Dylan Nash

ORGANIZATION NAME: Armed Forces

THE AFGHAN MISSION Steel shortage hampers tanks DND warned to move quickly in upgrading Leopards bought from Dutch

PUBLICATION: GLOBE AND MAIL

IDN: 072150064

DATE: 2007.08.03

PAGE: A6 (ILLUS)

BYLINE: MURRAY BREWSTER

SECTION: National News

SOURCE: CP

EDITION: National

DATELINE: Ottawa ONT

WORDS: 612

WORD COUNT: 598

MURRAY BREWSTER Canadian Press OTTAWA A worldwide shortage of specially tempered armour could delay next year's deployment to Afghanistan of newly purchased Dutch Leopard tanks – unless the Canadian army moves quickly to finalize an upgrade contract, a defence industry executive says.

It could take up to 18 months to get the steel necessary to reinforce the hulls of as many as 40 Leopard 2A4s, says a senior official with Rheinmetall Canada, the Montreal company vying for the roughly \$200-million improvement contract.

"Armoured steel today is very difficult to get fast," said Jean-Claude Rollier, who oversees the company's land defence arm. "You might be ready to do the work and have prepared your vehicle, but you won't have the steel you need in order to put additional armour on the vehicle." He said it's critical that National Defence decide within a couple of months precisely what upgrades it wants to make to the tanks and to have a contract in place, Mr. Rollier said in an interview.

Improvements on the slightly used Dutch tanks are required in order for them to withstand increasingly powerful Taliban roadside bombs. That, and installing some form of air conditioning, are considered the key priorities of the upgrade plan.

The army is currently borrowing 20 Leopard 2 A6M tanks from Germany – vehicles that have built-in mine protection. It hopes to swap those tanks with the upgraded ones by the end of next year.

(Germany, which has been criticized for not allowing its troops to take part in the fighting in southern Afghanistan, has refused to take any money for the tanks Canada has borrowed.) The war in Iraq and the widening conflict in Afghanistan have led a number of countries to either purchase new armoured vehicles or buy armoured plating kits to upgrade their existing tanks and troop carriers.

"There is such a demand today worldwide for armoured steel that they're just not able to supply," Mr. Rollier said.

Canada's planned purchase of 16 CH-47 Chinook helicopters from Chicago-based Boeing is facing a similar problem. A scarcity of titanium used in constructing airframes, combined with a glut of orders, created an assembly-line backlog that means the new choppers likely won't arrive until 2012.

THE AFGHAN MISSION Steel shortage hampers tanks DND warned to move quickly in upgrading Leopards

Last week, a senior official at National Defence said one of the biggest hurdles facing the tank refurbishment project was the fact that there was no one company with the capability to quickly carry out the work. Until a few years ago, the Canadian Forces maintained their own ability to do major overhauls on tanks.

Dan Ross, the assistant deputy minister of materiel, said the department has been focused primarily on getting the borrowed tanks into Afghanistan and would soon turn its attention to the upgrade. Mr. Rollier's company has been in talks with both the federal government and Krauss-Maffei-Wegmann – the Leopard's German manufacturer.

Rheinmetall would have to subcontract the automotive portion of the upgrade to another company, Mr. Rollier said.

In order to meet a December of 2008 deadline, a contract would have to be finalized by the end of the summer, he said. "The longer it takes, the less the likelihood it's going to happen." Whether the Conservative government and the Defence Department bureaucracy are prepared to move that quickly is another matter.

Since Prime Minister Stephen Harper's government began its rearmament program, it has been regularly criticized for sole-sourcing multibillion-dollar contracts.

In April, Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor announced Canada would spend \$650-million to modernize the army's tanks. It was later revealed that an additional \$650-million will be spent on long-term support contracts.

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Afghanistan; Canada

SUBJECT TERM: defence contracts; armaments; strife; equipment; steel; political

ORGANIZATION NAME: Armed Forces

Steel crunch could delay deployment

PUBLICATION: WINNIPEG FREE PRESS

DATE: 2007.08.03

PAGE: A17

SECTION: Canada Wire

WORD COUNT: 364

CP Wire Murray Brewster OTTAWA — A worldwide shortage of specially tempered armour could delay next year's delivery to Afghanistan of newly purchased Dutch Leopard tanks — unless the Canadian army moves quickly to finalize an upgrade contract, a defence industry executive says.

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— Canadian Press

A pudgy white cat ships out; Comic-book creator sends his cartoon kitty Perogy Cat to join our troops in Afghanistan

IDNUMBER 200708030119
PUBLICATION: Times Colonist (Victoria)
DATE: 2007.08.03
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Life
PAGE: D5 / FRONT
ILLUSTRATION: Photo: Bruce Stotesbury, Times Colonist / Gareth Gaudin, owner of Legends Comics and Books and creator of the Perogy Cat comic book, which he'll be shipping to Canadian troops in Afghanistan. ;
BYLINE: Leah Collins
SOURCE: Times Colonist
WORD COUNT: 847

A Perogy Cat doesn't look much like Bob Hope. Or Marilyn Monroe, for that matter. But the doughy, wide-eyed cartoon kitten that resembles, well, a perogy, is embarking on his own USO-style tour. And he's got orders to ship out from his creator, Victoria artist Gareth Gaudin.

Gaudin has published a comic book especially for the Canadian Forces in Afghanistan called The Perogy Cat for the Troops. On Wednesday, he sent 2,000 copies to Afghanistan where he hopes they'll "spread like gossip."

The character might not have the same international cachet as other cartoon cats; you won't find one in your Happy Meal, it doesn't hate Mondays. But since appearing in Gaudin's self-published comic, Magic Teeth Dailies, the character has found a cult following. It has its own Facebook group, it has appeared (indirectly) on national TV and at least 11 people (that Gaudin knows of) have its pillowy likeness tattooed on their bodies.

It's also easily spotted in downtown Victoria. Or at least in Gaudin's Johnson Street comic shop, Legends.

Perogy Cat has certainly marked his territory throughout the shop. He peeps out from the picture window in paintings and sharpie sketches. There's even a stuffed doll prowling among the graphic novels on display. One painting hangs over the till with the proud tag: "as seen on Letterman."

No joke. Ed Robertson from the Barenaked Ladies sported a Perogy Cat button on the show. He has been a fan since Gaudin traded some issues of Magic Teeth for tickets to BNL's Victoria show.

Gaudin says demand from passersby, intrigued by the cute kitty in the shop window, led him to compile a family-friendly Perogy Cat comic this spring, made up of the character's appearances in Magic Teeth. He knows he's entertaining readers, and that's enough for him.

So why not reach readers who could use the entertainment more than most?

He credits his wife for suggesting the project. (Coincidentally, she also inspired the character. While taking the same UVic class, he hoped to catch her eye with some cute cartoons.) The two were reminiscing about the

A pudgy white cat ships out; Comic-book creator sends his cartoon kitty Perogy Cat to join our troops in Afg76

re-runs of Bob Hope USO shows they had watched while growing up in the '70s. A Perogy Cat comic, they figured, could be just as amusing as old Bob whacking golf balls in the dunes.

And Gaudin had a hunch the troops would appreciate it. Taking a seat on stacks of comic catalogues, two years worth of his own comic covers peeking out from the rack behind him, Gaudin tries to recall how many subscribers he gets in his shop. He figures it's 200 overall. More than a quarter of those, he says, are in the army and navy.

He half-jokes that a few of them will pass through the shop in the next 10 minutes. Many, he hasn't seen in months. "The people who've mysteriously gone missing are probably still there [in Afghanistan]," he says.

"Knowing these guys who are all happy-go-lucky cool guys that come in the store, and these are friends of mine. And it's hard to think they're in the desert bored out of their minds. That's a job I don't envy. What I can do is send some comics," he says.

About a month ago, he started asking his military customers if they thought it was a good idea.

Leading seaman Jason Aucoin was one of those guys. His emphatic response: "Oh, yeah."

"Those poor guys don't have a lot of entertainment. Anything helps." Aucoin regularly brings a stack of comics with him when at sea, including Gaudin's titles.

"You don't get a lot of time to yourself. If you can climb in with a book and escape from everything else, it's a nice little vacation, even if it's only for 20 or 30 minutes."

"It'll add some humour to their lives. Instead of a run-of-the-mill day, they can have a good chuckle. And a good chuckle is good for anybody."

Gaudin's printer, South Island Print Services in Sidney, was also impressed by the idea. They agreed to make up the order, gratis.

As for the content, it's a compilation of previously run Magic Teeth comic strips. The naughty bits he couldn't include in this spring's Perogy Cat collection made the cut, as did a few surreal strips involving the cat and a tank (included for some light military flavour). Gaudin had plenty of material to choose from. He writes a comic a day, and hit the three-year mark July 27.

Civilians can't get their hands on a copy, but Gaudin is keeping a few issues at his shop for Armed Forces customers in town.

It's the first time in Sandra Pinard's memory that anyone has shipped comic books to Afghanistan. Pinard is the deployment co-ordinator at the Military Family Resource Centre in Victoria. Her organization doesn't normally ship gifts from people without a relative serving overseas, but when Gaudin approached her Tuesday with his idea, she decided to make an exception.

"I thought it was great. Unique, as well ... They love things to read, things that are quick. We couldn't send Harry Potter, for instance," she says with a chuckle. "A comic, though, they can lose themselves for five or 10 minutes and go back."

In the meantime, Gaudin will wait to find out how The Perogy Cat is welcomed in Afghanistan. The comics should reach the country within the next four to six weeks, where they'll be taken to Canada House.

"I would like it distributed like a propaganda bomb," says Gaudin. "Drop them here and there. As long as I

A pudgy white cat ships out; Comic-book creator sends his cartoon kitty Perogy Cat to join our troops in Afg

entertain."

S. Korea, Taliban hint at talks on hostages

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DATE: 2007.08.03
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A9
DATELINE: GHAZNI, Afghanistan
BYLINE: Mohammad Yaqob
SOURCE: Agence France–Presse
WORD COUNT: 214

GHAZNI, Afghanistan – South Korean officials scrambled today to free 21 aid workers held by Afghanistan's Taliban, who said they had been told their key demand for a release of captured fighters would be met.

With two other aid workers already shot dead and the rest under threat of death, Afghan provincial officials and the hardline Islamic militia said there were plans for a face-to-face meeting between the Taliban and a South Korean delegation.

That was not confirmed by the South Korean government, but Seoul — backed by relatives of the hostages — has repeatedly stated its stiff opposition to any attempt to free them by military action.

South Korea's Yonhap news agency, citing "informed sources," said that the Taliban had agreed to meet Ambassador Kang Sung–Zu, although they had not yet agreed on a venue.

With most of the hostages sick, including two women reportedly in critical condition, the talks are likely to be held later today, the sources said.

Presidential spokesman Oh Young–Jin had no comment on the report The abduction highlights growing insecurity in Afghanis–tan.

The crisis may overshadow Afghan President Hamid Karzai's summit Sunday and Monday with U.S. President George W. Bush outside Washington.

A Taliban spokesman said late yesterday that they had been "assured" by South Korean officials that captured fighters would be released in exchange for the Christian aid workers, who are members of a church in suburban Seoul.

U.S., Britain told to plan exit from Afghanistan; Urged By Pakistan

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PUBLICATION: National Post
DATE: 2007.08.03
EDITION: National
SECTION: World
PAGE: A10
DATELINE: ISLAMABAD
BYLINE: Isambard Wilkinson
SOURCE: The Daily Telegraph
NOTE: Obama goes to war, Page A13
WORD COUNT: 393

ISLAMABAD – Britain and the United States have been urged to prepare an exit strategy from Afghanistan by sources within the Pakistan government as the number of fatalities among NATO forces fighting the Taliban grows.

The remarks, by a senior Foreign Ministry official, reflect the growing belief in Islamabad that NATO is as much to blame for the endurance of the Islamic rebel army as Pakistan, which has been accused by the United States of failing to destroy Taliban training camps on its border.

NATO has had to review tactics after a series of blunders in which large numbers of civilians were killed in raids intended to hit Taliban fighters.

The Afghan government has claimed that the attacks acted as a recruiting sergeant for the rebels seeking to restore a hardline Islamic regime.

Khurshid Kasuri, Pakistan's Foreign Minister, said yesterday that NATO should consider holding talks with Taliban leaders.

"They should take a holistic approach — the military is an essential component but it has to be coupled with a political process and development," he said.

Mr. Kasuri added that the upper house of the Afghan parliament had shown the way "by speaking about the need to talk to some of the people who have taken up arms."

Mr. Kasuri said Britain in particular should know the limitations of a purely military approach in Afghanistan.

"Britain has a good experience of the country, after all they fought three Afghan wars," he said. "Surely they have learned from that."

In recent weeks, Pakistani and U.S. officials have been embroiled in an angry row sparked by an American intelligence report that claimed that al-Qaeda had begun regrouping in Pakistan's border region with Afghanistan.

Relations between the U.S. and Pakistan, a key ally in the war on terror, have also been soured by the refusal of a U.S. counterterror official to rule out military strikes in Pakistan.

This week Barack Obama, the Democratic presidential contender, threatened to launch U.S. military strikes against al-Qaeda on Pakistani soil if he were elected president.

Mr. Kasuri accused Mr. Obama of "trying to advance a political career by indulging in inflammatory rhetoric."

The diplomatic rift has also widened since President George W. Bush said that a peace agreement signed between pro-Taliban tribesmen and the Pakistan government in North Waziristan had been a "failure."

Mr. Kasuri admitted that the deal had not been a total success but said it was weaning some people from the extremists. "We are still trying to isolate extremists by talking," he said.

A peace jirga, or council, of Afghan and Pakistani tribal leaders and politicians is due to be held next week in Kabul in an attempt to resolve differences between the Afghan government of Hamid Karzai and Pakistan.

KEYWORDS: TERRORISM; WAR

SOUTH KOREAN POLITICIANS LEAVE FOR U.S. IN BID TO END HOSTAGE CRISIS

IDNUMBER 200708030115
PUBLICATION: National Post
DATE: 2007.08.03
EDITION: National
SECTION: News
PAGE: A14
COLUMN: World Report
DATELINE: GHAZNI, Afghanistan
SOURCE: Agence France–Presse
WORD COUNT: 254

GHAZNI, Afghanistan –Twenty–one South Koreans captured by Afghanistan's Taliban began a third week in captivity yesterday, most of them said to be ill, with Seoul pushing Washington to help free them. The Taliban, which have shot dead two of the group and threatened to kill more, said they have been assured by South Korean officials that captured Taliban fighters would be released. This has been the key demand of the extremists, who seized the South Koreans on July 19. It could not be confirmed by the Afghan government, however, which has so far refused to release Taliban fighters, wary of encouraging kidnapping after criticism from the United States over a similar deal in March. Eight South Korean parliamentarians meanwhile left for the United States to persuade Washington to help end the crisis. They said they hoped to speak to U.S. and UN officials "to appeal for the quick and safe return of our people in Afghanistan." Seoul has called for "flexibility," a comment analysts say is directed at the United States to sway the Afghan government to strike a deal with the kidnappers. Washington insists it makes no concessions to terrorists. But lawmakers are hoping the United States will make an exception and help an ally that sent troops to Afghanistan and Iraq.

KEYWORDS: WAR; IRAQ; ARMED FORCES; UNITED STATES

PM's party is mired in Minorityland; But Stephen Harper keeps trying the same old unpalatable recipe

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DATE: 2007.08.03
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Editorial / Op-Ed
PAGE: A19
COLUMN: Josee Legault
KEYWORDS: PREMIERS; POLITICIANS; POLITICAL PARTIES; QUEBEC
BYLINE: JOSEE LEGAULT
SOURCE: The Gazette
WORD COUNT: 598

Try as he might – and he does try – Stephen Harper just can't extricate his Conservative government from minority–government territory in the polls.

Still far from the 40 per cent he needs for a majority win but blessed with the near certainty that there's no election in sight, the prime minister seems intent on doing more of what's obviously not working.

With his hyperactivity, his almost constant visibility – even during this summer – Harper is starting to look like the proverbial husband who tries everything to get the attention of his increasingly indifferent wife, but to no avail.

It's as if he hasn't noticed yet that the recipe he follows almost religiously remains unpalatable to a majority of Canadians. This week's summer retreat with his caucus in Charlottetown confirmed that he still doesn't get it.

There, in all its glory, he displayed again his obsessive control of his caucus and of short, simple and sometimes simplistic messages – something that helped him get elected, but that has started to put off more and more voters.

When reporters were "escorted" by RCMP officers from the hotel where the Tory caucus was meeting, allegedly because the families felt intimidated, it was just another embarrassing episode of Harper's continued paranoia about the media.

Still keeping his MPs and his ministers on a painfully short leash, Harper seems to feel that even after 18 months in office, most members of his government can't be trusted, or aren't smart enough, to have a conversation with a reporter without risking derailing his tightly controlled messages.

Whether that reflects worse on the PM or the members of his government is hard to tell.

In Charlottetown, national caucus chairman Rahim Jaffer was among the sacred chosen who could actually talk to journalists without being instantly struck by lightning.

Asked about the decision to keep reporters at bay by putting them in a different building than the hotel where the caucus was meeting, Jaffer said the cutest thing:

"I think we have a civil relationship with the media and we're asking to at least have that respect." If that's what Tories call a "civil relationship," I sure wouldn't want to see what them at work when they have a nasty one.

Besides the obsessive control issue, it's a safe bet that with the unpopular mission in Afghan-

istan, many voters are also put off by Harper's foreign policy and the increasing visibility and cost of the Canadian army that come with it.

As the government keeps pumping billions of tax dollars into the army and now the navy, it's no wonder that chief of defence staff Rick Hillier feels warranted to weigh in more and more publicly on Afghanistan, to the point where the minister of defence will surely be axed if there's a cabinet shuffle this fall.

The increased role of the army in Canada's foreign policy and its growing cost are all Harper's doing. But it's a choice that he'll keep making at his own electoral risk.

In typical conservative fashion, Harper also seems intent on cutting taxes instead of negotiating tax point transfers with the provinces. Industry Minister Maxime Bernier stated that cutting taxes is a "very popular idea, especially in Quebec."

Really? Where was he at the last provincial election when Jean Charest's similar promise was rejected by a majority of Quebecers and in every poll done since? With advice like that, no wonder Harper's support is stalling in Quebec, too.

Another bad omen for Harper is that although Tories do stand a good chance of winning the soon-to-be called by-election in Roberval-Lac-St. Jean, polls show that in most regions, they haven't much benefited from the popularity of their ideological twin, Mario Dumont's Action démocratique.

Voters might not be impressed, either, if the Tories continue to push a law-and-order agenda during the fall session.

But even if the PM keeps repeating his tired recipe, he could still pull off another minority if Liberal leader Stéphane Dion doesn't get his own act together in a more serious fashion.

Defence department needs a new minister, but who?; PM has three possible candidates to replace the faltering O'Connor

IDNUMBER	200708030070
PUBLICATION:	Montreal Gazette
DATE:	2007.08.03
EDITION:	Final
SECTION:	Editorial / Op-Ed
PAGE:	A19
COLUMN:	L. Ian MacDonald
ILLUSTRATION:	Photo: Maxime Bernier would be a great advocate for Afghanistan. ; Photo: Jim Prentice: the prime minister's go-to guy. ; Photo: Peter MacKay looks good in a flak jacket. ;
BYLINE:	L. IAN MACDONALD
SOURCE:	Freelance
WORD COUNT:	730

We're now in August, and to mark the official start of the silly season, here's the first of many offerings on a cabinet shuffle in Ottawa.

Why? Because it's August, and that's reason enough. There's another reason – Gordon O'Connor. He's a cabinet shuffle waiting to happen. And here's the fun part – while only Stephen Harper can make it happen, everyone gets a free kick at the can.

After his encounter with the media at the Conservative caucus in Charlottetown on Wednesday, O'Connor's effectiveness as defence minister is pretty much kaput. For his own sake, as well as for the sake of the mission in Afghanistan, he needs to be taken off the firing line. He has become the story, or rather, the space between Rick Hillier, the chief of defence staff, and O'Connor, the defence minister, has become the story. Yesterday's Globe and Mail headline, "O'Connor insists he and Hillier of like mind," pretty much makes this point.

There comes a time when perception is reality, and the perception of cleavage between the defence minister and his top general has become reality.

When O'Connor tried to blow it off as media hype, insisting "it's the way you interpret our words," that became the story, too. The media have pegged him as an easy mark. How the media breached the wall of the Conservative Party's private caucus space is immaterial. They were looking for a story and found one in O'Connor. Have a nice day.

When a minister becomes the story, a storm is usually survivable. When he becomes the issue, it isn't. Beyond a certain point, the only way to change the message track is to change the messenger. Such was the case with Rona Ambrose in Environment last January, when John Baird was brought in as the relief. A tough file needed a strong communicator who knew the hard rules of the political game, and Baird has served that purpose.

And so O'Connor figures to become the trigger of a summer cabinet shuffle. And trigger is the word for it. The thing about a cabinet shuffle is that all the pieces have to fit together, and only the prime minister has all the pieces. If someone is being moved, as opposed to being dumped, there has to be a place for him. More

Defence department needs a new minister, but who?; PM has three possible candidates to replace the faltering

important, there has to be someone to replace him and, unless that someone is being promoted from the backbench, someone to replace the replacement.

Assuming that Harper decides to ease O'Connor out of defence, but keep him in cabinet, there are several places he could land, such as Veterans Affairs, where as a retired brigadier he could bring a lot of knowledge to files in a key Tory demographic.

Or, as an Ottawa-area MP, he might be a good fit at Treasury Board, which could be viewed as a lateral shuffle rather than a demotion. Problem is, there are already people in those jobs, Greg Thompson at Veterans Affairs, and Vic Toews at Treasury Board.

But who would be the new defence minister? Someone who could manage the mission in Afghanistan, and sell it.

Here's a prospective short list:

Peter MacKay. He's currently minister of Foreign Affairs, is also senior minister for the Atlantic, and has important defence bases in his region, notably the navy in Halifax and the army at Gagetown, N.B. He also looks good in a helmet and flak jacket.

But after a shaky start at Foreign Affairs last year, he has worked hard to learn an array of complex files, and has networked with other foreign affairs ministers from Washington to Jerusalem.

In moving him to Defence, Harper would be giving up what MacKay has learned at Foreign Affairs. And who would move to Foreign Affairs?

See? It's not that easy.

Maxime Bernier. No doubt about it, he's the rising star from Quebec. He's telegenic. He gives good sound bite in both languages. He drives the Bloc Québécois crazy in the House. He would be an articulate advocate for Afghanistan in Quebec, at a time when Quebec's Van Doos are the relief in Kandahar.

Yet Bernier is also managing important files as industry minister, including competition policy and new telecom platforms.

Jim Prentice. Here's the guy, Harper's go-to guy as chairperson of the cabinet operations committee, chief operating officer of the government.

As minister of Indian and Northern Affairs, he's also managed to win the respect of stakeholders while changing expectations in a very sensitive portfolio.

He's thoughtful, he's discreet, and known for having the best staff on Parliament Hill. Managing the mission, not his relationship with Hillier, would be the story.

So, prime minister, think about it. There are only four weeks left in August.

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U.S., U.K. share blame

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SECTION: Editorial / Op-Ed
PAGE: A18
KEYWORDS: 0
SOURCE: The Gazette
WORD COUNT: 103

In "Taliban and Al-Qa'ida are doing the killing" (Letters, July 29), the author says that "Islamic extremists killed about 20,000 innocent civilians in 2006."

The Washington Post in 2004 said that by some estimates, there were more than 100,000 civilian deaths in Iraq alone from U.S. bombardments. That was three years ago; many more have died since, and this does not include the thousands killed in Afghanistan.

Sectarian violence started after the U.S. and its allies illegally attacked Iraq despite being warned about exactly that from intelligence agencies and countries like France.

By violating international law, the U.S. and ally Britain are partly responsible for terrorist violence.

Hany Aoude

Pointe Claire

Clinton, Obama clash over using nuclear weapons against terrorists; Policy sniping continues between senators over foreign policy

IDNUMBER 200708030028
PUBLICATION: Edmonton Journal
DATE: 2007.08.03
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A10
ILLUSTRATION: Colour Photo: AFP/Getty images / New York Senator Hillary Clinton speaks with Illinois Senator Barack Obama after the July 23 CNN/YouTube Democratic presidential candidates debate in Charleston, S.C. ;
KEYWORDS: POLITICIANS; PRESIDENTS; SENATORS
DATELINE: WASHINGTON
BYLINE: Anne E. Kornblut
SOURCE: Washington Post
WORD COUNT: 465

WASHINGTON – Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton refused Thursday to rule out use of nuclear weapons against Osama bin Laden or other terrorists in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The declaration marked another distinction between herself and Senator Barack Obama.

Clinton's comments came in response to Obama's remarks earlier in the day that nuclear weapons are "not on the table" in dealing with ungoverned territories in the two countries, and continued a steady tug-of-war among the Democratic candidates for president over foreign policy.

"I think it would be a profound mistake for us to use nuclear weapons in any circumstance" in Afghanistan or Pakistan, Obama said. He then added that he would not use such weapons in situations "involving civilians." "Let me scratch that," he said. "There's been no discussion of nuclear weapons. That's not on the table." The Illinois senator was responding to a question from the Associated Press about whether there was any circumstance in which he would be prepared or willing to use nuclear weapons in Afghanistan and Pakistan to defeat terrorism and bin Laden.

"There's been no discussion of using nuclear weapons and that's not a hypothetical that I'm going to discuss," Obama said.

When asked whether his answer also applied to the possible use of tactical nuclear weapons, he said it did.

By the afternoon, Clinton had responded with an implicit rebuke of her Democratic rival.

"Presidents should be careful at all times in discussing the use and non-use of nuclear weapons," said Clinton.

"Presidents since the Cold War have used nuclear deterrents to keep the peace, and I don't believe any president should make blanket statements with regard to use or non-use," Clinton said.

At a debate last week in South Carolina, Clinton directly criticized Obama for saying he would meet with leaders traditionally hostile to the U.S. Obama responded and the sniping went on most of the week.

But when Obama said in a speech on terrorism on Wednesday that he would use military force to go after terrorists in Pakistan without President Pervez Musharraf's permission, Clinton did not join in the criticism of Obama by other Democrats.

That criticism only intensified Thursday.

"Over the past several days, Senator Obama's assertions about foreign and military affairs have been, frankly, confusing and confused," said Senator Chris Dodd.

"He has made threats he should not make and made unwise categorical statements about military options," Dodd said.

Yet for Obama, who opposed the Iraq invasion, the episode offered an opportunity for him to present his approach as entirely different from the rest of his colleagues.

In a letter to supporters entitled, "The war we need to win," Obama called for the country to "stop fighting the wrong war" and to focus on the al-Qaida threat that became a lower priority after the Iraq war began.

"We are overdue for a major change of course in our foreign policy," the letter read.

U.S. officials rarely rule out nuclear attacks as a matter of diplomacy, preferring to keep the threat as a deterrent.

Michael O'Hanlon, a Brookings Institution scholar who recently wrote that the war in Iraq is getting better, said Obama is "certainly right to say you would never use a nuclear weapon to get Osama bin Laden."

U.S., Pakistan urged to help free hostages

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PUBLICATION: Edmonton Journal
DATE: 2007.08.03
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A4
KEYWORDS: FOREIGN AID; ARMAMENTS; PAKISTAN; AFGHANISTAN; UNITED STATES; SOUTH KOREA
DATELINE: GHAZNI, Afghanistan
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 95

GHAZNI, Afghanistan – Twenty-one South Koreans captured by Afghanistan's Taliban began a third week of captivity Thursday, most of them said to be ill, with Seoul pushing Washington and Islamabad to help free them.

The hardline militia, which has shot dead two of the group of aid workers and threatened to kill more, meanwhile said late Thursday it had been "assured" by South Korean officials that captured Taliban fighters would be released.

This has been the key demand of the extremists, which seized the mostly female aid workers on July 19 as they travelled in the insurgency-hit south.

Ailing South Koreans face Week 3 as captives

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PUBLICATION: Calgary Herald
DATE: 2007.08.03
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A16
COLUMN: Next: Trends – Discoveries – What's New
KEYWORDS: ARMAMENTS; ASYLUM; NUCLEAR REACTORS; NUCLEAR WEAPONS;
FAMILYREUNIONS; FOREIGN RELATIONS
DATELINE: GHAZNI, Afghanistan
SOURCE: Agence France–Presse
WORD COUNT: 147

Twenty-one South Koreans captured by Afghanistan's Taliban began a third week of captivity Thursday, most of them said to be ill, with Seoul pushing Washington and Islamabad to help free them.

The Taliban, which has shot dead two of the group of aid workers and threatened to kill more, meanwhile said late Thursday it had been "assured" by South Korean officials that captured Taliban fighters would be released.

This has been the key demand of the terrorist group, which seized the aid workers on July 19.

It could, however, not be confirmed by the Afghan government, which has so far refused to release Taliban fighters, wary of encouraging kidnapping, and after heavy criticism from the United States over a similar deal in March.

Eight senior South Korean legislators travelled to Washington on Thursday to enlist U.S. support while Foreign Minister Song Min–Soon met U.S. Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte in Manila for talks on the dragging crisis.