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Bush awaits 'intelligence' to take out al-Qaida

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U.S. President George W. Bush said yesterday that with the right intelligence, U.S. and Pakistani authorities can take out al-Qaida leaders, but he wouldn't say whether he would consult first with Pakistan before ordering U.S. forces to act.

"With real actionable intelligence, we will get the job done," Bush said.

He was asked whether he would wait on permission from Pakistani President Gen. Pervez Musharraf before committing the U.S. military to move on "actionable intelligence" on the whereabouts of terrorist leaders in Pakistan. He did not answer directly.

Bush was at the presidential retreat at Camp David for two days of meetings with Afghan President Hamid Karzai. The two held talks on a rash of crises confronting Afghanistan: civilian killings, a booming drug trade and the brazen resurgence of the Taliban.

Karzai said he and Musharraf would discuss how to tackle the lawlessness and extremist hideouts along Pakistan's border with his country.

Afghanistan has a distrustful relationship with neighbouring Pakistan, yet top tribal leaders from both countries are expected to meet this week to try to lessen tensions. Musharraf and Karzai are likely to attend, with Karzai sure to bring up his concern about the flow of foreign fighters into his country from Pakistan.

Bush and Karzai put a positive spin on Afghanistan's progress since the 2001 defeat of the repressive Taliban, but they stressed that serious problems remain.

"There is still work to be done," Bush said. "But progress is being made, Mr. President, and we're proud of you."

Karzai acknowledged a resurgent Taliban but said it is not a threat to his government. Karzai is Afghanistan's first democratically elected president.

"We have a long journey ahead of us but what we have travelled so far has given us greater hope for a better future, for a better life," Karzai said at a news conference with Bush.

Bush and Karzai differed noticeably in their views about Iran's influence in Afghanistan.

Karzai had said in advance of his visit to Camp David that Iran is a partner in the fight against terrorism and narcotics.

"So far, Iran has been a helper," he said over the weekend.

Bush didn't agree. "I would be very cautious about whether or not the Iranian influence there in Afghanistan is a positive force," he said.

U.S. officials contend Tehran is fomenting violence in Afghanistan by sending in weaponry such as sophisticated roadside bombs. More broadly, Bush said Iran thumbs its nose at the international community and denies its citizens the rights they deserve.

The issue of a theoretical U.S. military incursion into Pakistan is a sensitive one.

Bush has said before that he would order the U.S. to act inside the Muslim– majority country if there were firm intelligence on the whereabouts of Osama bin Laden or other terrorist leaders.

Bin Laden, the 9/11 mastermind, is believed to be living in the tribal border region of Pakistan. His ability to avoid capture remains a political sore spot for Bush.

Returning troops face period of adjustment; Psychologist says nightmares of combat, feelings of anger natural in first few months

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Though soldiers are returning home from the conflict in Afghanistan, a psychologist says many should expect to take on a battle of the mind.

Over the next six weeks, the 700 soldiers from the Atlantic area, most from CFB Gagetown, will return home from a six-month tour in Afghanistan. The first handful returned last Tuesday with others expected to follow every second day through to September.

Psychologist Dr. Harvey Smith, who manages the Carewest Operational Stress Injury Clinic in Calgary, says most soldiers go through an adjustment period when they come back from combat. "Coming back, the adjustment is just to be able to relate to others — without that sense of urgency, that sense of unsafeness around them," Smith says.

"For example they've been sleeping with weapons all the time, they have to be vigilant and on guard at all times."

Smith said dreams and nightmares of combat and feelings of anger are natural in the first few months.

Former CFB Gagetown commander Ryan Jestin said though many of the soldiers will look forward to getting back to their families and routines at home, it's difficult for them to switch gears after being in a war zone for months.

With the constant threat of improvised explosive devices, rocket attacks, heavy fighting, Jestin says emotions run high.

"Really that adrenaline is running pretty well six months straight and then all of a sudden the adrenaline stops," he said. "Having (returned from tours in war zones) myself, the toughest part is going from literally running over there probably 12, 14, 16 hours a day, seven days a week, for 6-1/2 months straight. The challenge is honestly to slow down."

But Jestin said during his two years as commanding officer (which ended June 22), the base focused a great deal of effort on ensuring soldiers had the support they needed when they came back from their tour. "There's just a fantastic support system through the Military Family Resource Centre and through all the community resources," he said.

Both the soldiers and their families need the support, he said, to get through a period of anxiety and tension as they re-integrate after the soldier is away for so long. The base also increased the number of mental health professionals to help soldiers and their families from four to 18 in two years.

Numbers obtained by The Canadian Press show that of 1,300 Forces members who served in Afghanistan since 2005 and underwent a post-deployment screening, 28 per cent had symptoms suggestive of one or more mental health problems. Of those, 16 per cent showed signs of high-risk drinking and just over six per cent were possibly suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. Five per cent showed symptoms of major depression.

All returning Canadian soldiers are stopping in Cyprus for a three-day decompression program before returning home. There, they are taught how to transfer survival skills they learnt on duty into skills for everyday life back home. Once they arrive on the base in Gagetown, soldiers are asked to fill out paperwork detailing any physical or mental conditions they are suffering from.

Though most soldiers cope relatively well with their return from combat, Smith said there are 10,000 known veterans of all ages with psychological disorders on the books of Veterans Affairs.

Smith said the military recognizes the legitimacy of operational stress injuries and now provides many more resources for soldiers than they have in the past.

"There's so much more willingness to acknowledge (psychological problems) without stigma," he said.

Afghanistan heroin finds way to Canada

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The Mounties have warned at least two federal agencies that Afghan heroin is "increasingly" making its way to Canada and poses a direct threat to the public despite millions of dollars from Ottawa to fund the war-torn country's counter-narcotics efforts, newly released documents reveal.

"The RCMP informs us that Afghan heroin is increasingly ending up on, or is destined for Canadian streets," say Foreign Affairs and Defence Department briefings, obtained separately by The Canadian Press under the Access to Information Act.

The Afghan-produced heroin "directly threatens" Canadians, say the identically worded briefings.

Paul Nadeau, the director of the RCMP's drug branch in Ottawa, said about 60 per cent of the heroin on Canadian streets comes from Afghanistan.

"Keep in mind, though, that when we seize it, it doesn't have a stamp on it that says where it came from," he said.

Rather, it's the investigative tracing of smuggling routes that reveals the drug's country of origin.

Until a few years ago, most heroin came from an opium-producing region in Southeast Asia called the "golden triangle," a mountainous area of around 350, 000-square kilometres overlapping Myanmar, Laos, Vietnam and Thailand.

In recent years, organized crime groups from Southeast Asia have taken to trafficking synthetic drugs, such as ecstasy, which have more users — and more profitability — than heroin, Nadeau said.

New traffickers, who Nadeau said are often, but not always, of Indian origin, have stepped in, bringing with them new shipping methods.

The Southeast Asian traffickers were notorious for brazen heroin shipments, sometimes totalling up to 100 kilograms a haul. The new traffickers typically prefer smaller, but more frequent, shipments, Nadeau said.

The strategy, it seems, is akin to throwing as much as possible against the wall to see what sticks.

"It seems to be involving the classic couriers, suitcases at the airport, smaller amounts, but no doubt, more shipments coming in," he said.

Roughly 92 per cent of the world's heroin comes from opium poppies grown in Afghanistan, according to the 2007 World Drug Report, released in June by the United Nations Office on Drugs.

Afghan heroin typically flows into Canada through two main trafficking arteries, Nadeau said: via the porous border between Afghanistan and Pakistan, and then onto India and, finally, Canada; and, from Afghanistan to western Africa, then through the United States into Canada.

Foreign Affairs spokeswoman Ambra Dickie said Ottawa has pledged about \$57 million to fund Afghan counter-narcotics efforts, including an \$18.5-million program to promote alternate livelihoods in the country's volatile

Kandahar province, where Canadian troops are stationed.

The Afghan counter-narcotics programs are co-ordinated by that country's national drug control strategy. But the drug control strategy is badly flawed, said Thomas Pietschmann, a researcher who authored the UN drug report.

"It's clear: there is a disaster there. Nobody can say that it's working. It's not working," Pietschmann said from his office in Vienna, Austria.

Afghanistan's counter-narcotics minister stepped down last month after the country's opium poppy crop ballooned under his watch. Habibullah Qaderi's resignation came as western embassies and the Afghan government hold closed door meetings about how to fight the country's growing drug problem.

Pietschmann said it's "extremely logical" that there's more Afghan heroin on Canadian streets because of a spike in the central Asian nation's opium poppy production.

"It would be the most logical thing to expect, on the Canadian market, that you would see far more Afghan heroin landing on the shores of Canada," he said.

At first glance, Canada doesn't seem to have a heroin problem. Less than one per cent of Canadians have used the drug at some point in their lives, according to the latest report from Health Canada and the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse.

But it's difficult to gauge the real prevalence of heroin use in Canada, since most users don't partake in national surveys, said a Centre on Substance Abuse spokeswoman.

The RCMP says it seized 60 kilograms of heroin in Canada in 2003, 77 kilograms in 2004, and 83 kilograms in 2005.

Bush believes al-Qaida leaders vulnerable

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Musharraf and Karzai are likely to attend, with Karzai sure to bring up his concern about the flow of foreign fighters into his country from Pakistan.

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"There is still work to be done," Bush said. "But progress is being made, Mr. President, and we're proud of you."

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"We have a long journey ahead of us but what we have traveled so far has given us greater hope for a better future, for a better life," Karzai said at a joint news conference here with Bush.

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"So far, Iran has been a helper," he said over the weekend.

Bush didn't agree. "I would be very cautious about whether or not the Iranian influence there in Afghanistan is a positive force," he said.

U.S. officials contend that Tehran is fomenting violence in Afghanistan by sending in weaponry such as sophisticated roadside bombs.

More broadly, Bush said Iran thumbs its nose at the international community and denies its citizens the rights they deserve.

Hostages' fate rests with Bush, Karzai, Taliban spokesman says; Two of 23 South Koreans have been killed

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BYLINE: Rahim Faiez
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GHAZNI, Afghanistan – The Taliban will keep kidnapping foreigners in Afghanistan, a purported spokesman for the group said Monday, as the Afghan and U.S. presidents ruled out making any concessions for the release of 21 South Korean hostages.

Qari Yousef Ahmadi, who claims to speak for the Taliban, said the lives of the 21 hostages rest in the hands of Afghan President Hamid Karzai and President George W. Bush, who met at Camp David, Md., on Monday.

"Karzai and Bush will have responsibility for whatever happens to the hostages," Ahmadi said.

The Taliban have demanded the release of 23 militant prisoners held by Afghanistan and at the U.S. base at Bagram but the Afghan government has all but ruled out that option.

At Camp David, Karzai and Bush agreed "there should be no quid pro quo" that could embolden the Taliban, said Gordon Johndroe, a Bush spokesman.

Ahmadi said the government's refusal to negotiate would not stop the Taliban from seizing more foreigners.

"Whether the Kabul administration will do the (prisoner) exchange or not, it will not have any effect on our side. The process of kidnapping (foreigners) will be ongoing," he said.

Twenty-three South Koreans from a church group were kidnapped by the Taliban on July 19 while travelling from Kabul to Kandahar to work on medical and other aid projects. Two men in the group have been killed. Among the remaining 21 hostages, 16 are women.

The husband of one of the captives posted a video message on YouTube Monday, telling his wife not to give up hope because they will see each other soon.

"We must be patient for a bit longer. For the sake of our children, stay strong and healthy. Please, hold on to positive thoughts," Ryu Hang-sik told his wife, Kim Yun-yeong.

"We will see each other soon."

In the letter, read out in Korean with English subtitles, he expressed guilt about carrying on normal life while she was suffering.

"I can't be more hateful of myself for eating and drinking at a time when you must be really sick and going through so much hardship," he said, weeping.

"The children are really proud of you for helping people living in poverty and distress."

In a telephone interview with Voice of America, a woman identified as one of the hostages said all of the captives are ill – two of them seriously – and "cannot eat and sleep well."

The woman, who was speaking under the control of her captors, said the hostages are being kept in groups of four.

"We really want to go home, we are all sick and weak," said the woman, who spoke both in English and the Afghan language Dari.

"We are all innocent people. We came here to help these people but now we are all sick."

Two of the hostages have been said to be extremely sick and an Afghan doctor who heads a private clinic said he dropped off US\$2,000 worth of antibiotics, vitamins and first aid kits in rural Ghazni province Sunday intended for the captives.

Dr. Mohammad Hashim Wahwaj said the Taliban told him they had picked up the medicine.

A spokesman for the families said they have little faith the Camp David summit would end the crisis.

"The families of the hostages don't seem to expect much from the summit meeting between Afghanistan and the United States," Lee Jeong-hoon, the father of one of the captives, said.

The South Korean government has urged Afghanistan to be flexible about its policy of not negotiating with terrorists. But a presidential spokesman cautioned against expecting too much from the summit.

Bush: 'Actionable intelligence' needed to take out al-Qaida

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CAMP DAVID, Md. – U.S. President George W. Bush said Monday that with the right intelligence U.S. and Pakistani authorities can take out al-Qaida leaders, but he wouldn't say whether he would consult first with Pakistan before ordering U.S. forces to act.

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Right intelligence will lead U.S. forces to al-Qaida leaders in Pakistan: Bush

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Afghanistan has a distrustful relationship with neighbouring Pakistan, yet top tribal leaders from both countries are expected to meet this week.

Pakistan: forecasts of disaster

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COLUMN: Global view

BYLINE: Dyer, Gwynne

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There's going to be a civil war." You heard it all the time in the old Soviet Union at the end of the 1980s. People fretted about it constantly in South Africa in 1994. They have been worrying about it in Lebanon for the past year. Now they're predicting it for Pakistan – but nine times out of 10, the forecast is false.

The Soviet Union broke up with remarkably little violence, although there were some nasty little wars in various non-Russian republics down south. Apartheid's end in South Africa was astonishingly non-violent, given all that had gone before. There was a ghastly civil war in Lebanon in the late '70s and '80s, but the odds are better than even that there will not be another. And there probably won't be a disaster in Pakistan either.

"We are very scared," Senator Enver Baig of the opposition Pakistan People's Party told the Guardian last week. "If we don't mend our ways, it could spell the end of the country. The Islamists have sleeper cells in every city. We could have a civil war." And if the "Islamists" won that civil war, then people with a world view not dissimilar to Osama bin Laden's would control a country with 165 million people, an army of 600,000 men, and an estimated 50 nuclear weapons.

But the civil war hasn't happened yet, and it may never come to that. In fact, there are as many hopeful signs as frightening ones in the current turmoil in Pakistan, although it is getting hard to read the tea leaves.

Pakistan is certainly becoming unstable. The government has effectively lost control in the tribal belt along the frontier with Afghanistan, which is increasingly dominated by pro-Taliban militants. The week-long siege of radical Islamists holed up in the Red Mosque in Islamabad, the capital, in mid-July culminated in the deaths of over 100 militants and soldiers.

The military dictator who has ruled Pakistan since 1999, General Pervez Musharraf, is a living incarnation of the phrase "one-bullet regime": he has already survived four assassination attempts. More than 200 Pakistani soldiers and civilians have died in terrorist attacks since the Red Mosque incident, and the alarmists are predicting civil war and Islamist takeover.

On the other hand, there is a thriving free press in Pakistan, including (at last) independent television stations that actually report the news. The economy has been growing fast in recent years, and at least a bit of the new prosperity is trickling down to the impoverished majority.

President Musharraf is the fourth general to seize power in Pakistan's 60-year history, but the country always returns to civilian rule in the end. And late last month Pakistan's supreme court, in an act of defiance against military rule, threw out Musharraf's accusations of corruption against the chief justice, Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry.

The charges were fabricated to ensure that the chief justice did not interfere with the general's plans for another five-year presidential term. (He planned to have himself re-appointed by very same national and regional assemblies, chosen in rigged elections in 2002, that obediently voted to appoint him five years ago –

without any new election to renew their membership.) What actually happened, however, was that the charges turned Chaudhry into a national hero and a focus for resistance to the continuation of thinly disguised military rule.

There is a good chance that this crisis could end in a restoration of civilian democracy in Pakistan: that is how all three previous bouts of military rule ended. The fanatics and the extremists dominate the sparsely populated areas along the Afghan frontier because the population there is identical to the Pashtuns across the border who are the main base of the Taliban in Afghanistan, and they have been radicalized by 28 years of foreign occupation and civil war in that country. But the vast majority of Pakistanis live down in the flat, fertile lands along the rivers, and what they want is not martyrdom but peace, justice and prosperity.

They stand a better chance of getting those things if democracy returns, even if previous intervals of democracy in Pakistan have usually ended in massive corruption and paralysis as the political class fought over the spoils. Musharraf is probably on the way out unless he declares martial law under the pretext of fighting the Islamists – and it is not certain that the army would follow him if he did.

So he is trying for fake democratisation. Twice, in January and again last month, he has met secretly in Abu Dhabi with Benazir Bhutto, the exiled head of the largest opposition party, trying to make a deal that would let her return as prime minister (for the third time) but leave him as president. That would be a big mistake on Bhutto's part, but it wouldn't be the first.

Despite the highly publicised violence in Pakistan, there is little chance that it will fall under Taliban-style rule. There is perhaps a one-in-three probability that Musharraf will cut a deal with Bhutto that leaves him in power for a while, but that wouldn't really end the crisis.

And the odds on a return to real democracy within the year are probably better than even.

It would be nice if Pakistan's fractious and venal politicians could make it work this time.

Gwynne Dyer is a London-based independent journalist whose articles are published in 45 countries.

Reflecting on our role in Afghanistan

PUBLICATION: The Guardian (Charlottetown)

DATE: 2007.08.07

SECTION: Editorial

PAGE: A6

COLUMN: Letters to the editor

WORD COUNT: 183

Editor:

Supporting the war in Iraq was a mistake, Liberal MP Michael Ignatieff has written in an article for the New York Times Magazine. Now it is time for reflection on everyone's part about Canada's role in neighbouring Afghanistan, objective, non-partisan, unemotional planning for an orderly withdrawal of our troops before more lives are lost.

Critics of Mr. Ignatieff may claim it is political expediency on his part, in preparation for another run for the leadership of the Liberal Party of Canada. More time will be wasted debating the messenger than the message. I admit openly I wonder about Mr. Ignatieff because of his extended sabbatical from Canada, but his choice of a foreign media outlet instead of, for instance, The Guardian on the Island with four sitting MPs and four senators which would be helpful in any future leadership bid, may indicate he wrote based on his own ethics and conscience, not merely to garner political support. If so, we need more people like him in Ottawa.

Dan MacInnis, Brampton, Ont.

Afghan heroin destined for Canada's streets: Mounties

PUBLICATION: The Guardian (Charlottetown)

DATE: 2007.08.07

SECTION: Canada

PAGE: A5

COLUMN: Across the country

SOURCE: The Canadian Press

WORD COUNT: 131

The Mounties have warned at least two federal agencies that Afghan heroin is "increasingly" making its way to Canada and poses a direct threat to the public despite millions of dollars from Ottawa to fund the war-torn country's counter-narcotics efforts, newly released documents reveal.

"The RCMP informs us that Afghan heroin is increasingly ending up on, or is destined for Canadian streets," say Foreign Affairs and Defence Department briefings, obtained separately by The Canadian Press under the Access to Information Act.

The Afghan-produced heroin "directly threatens" Canadians, say the identically worded briefings.

Paul Nadeau, the director of the RCMP's drug branch in Ottawa, said about 60 per cent of the heroin on Canadian streets comes from Afghanistan.

"Keep in mind, though, that when we seize it, it doesn't have a stamp on it that says where it came from," he said.

Taliban threaten more kidnappings, say hostage fates up to U.S., Afghan leaders

DATE: 2007.08.06

KEYWORDS: INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE DEFENCE POLITICS

PUBLICATION: cpw

WORD COUNT: 672

GHAZNI, Afghanistan (AP) _ The Taliban will keep kidnapping foreigners in Afghanistan, a purported spokesman for the group said Monday, as the Afghan and U.S. presidents ruled out making any concessions for the release of 21 South Korean hostages.

Qari Yousef Ahmadi, who claims to speak for the Taliban, said the lives of the 21 hostages rest in the hands of Afghan President Hamid Karzai and President George W. Bush, who met at Camp David, Md., on Monday.

“Karzai and Bush will have responsibility for whatever happens to the hostages,” Ahmadi said.

The Taliban have demanded the release of 23 militant prisoners held by Afghanistan and at the U.S. base at Bagram but the Afghan government has all but ruled out that option.

At Camp David, Karzai and Bush agreed “there should be no quid pro quo” that could embolden the Taliban, said Gordon Johndroe, a Bush spokesman.

Ahmadi said the government's refusal to negotiate would not stop the Taliban from seizing more foreigners.

“Whether the Kabul administration will do the (prisoner) exchange or not, it will not have any effect on our side. The process of kidnapping (foreigners) will be ongoing,” he said.

Twenty-three South Koreans from a church group were kidnapped by the Taliban on July 19 while travelling from Kabul to Kandahar to work on medical and other aid projects. Two men in the group have been killed. Among the remaining 21 hostages, 16 are women.

The husband of one of the captives posted a video message on YouTube Monday, telling his wife not to give up hope because they will see each other soon.

“We must be patient for a bit longer. For the sake of our children, stay strong and healthy. Please, hold on to positive thoughts,” Ryu Hang-sik told his wife, Kim Yun-yeong.

“We will see each other soon.”

In the letter, read out in Korean with English subtitles, he expressed guilt about carrying on normal life while she was suffering.

“I can't be more hateful of myself for eating and drinking at a time when you must be really sick and going through so much hardship,” he said, weeping.

“The children are really proud of you for helping people living in poverty and distress.”

In a telephone interview with Voice of America, a woman identified as one of the hostages said all of the captives are ill _ two of them seriously _ and ``cannot eat and sleep well."

The woman, who was speaking under the control of her captors, said the hostages are being kept in groups of four.

``We really want to go home, we are all sick and weak," said the woman, who spoke both in English and the Afghan language Dari.

``We are all innocent people. We came here to help these people but now we are all sick."

Two of the hostages have been said to be extremely sick and an Afghan doctor who heads a private clinic said he dropped off US\$2,000 worth of antibiotics, vitamins and first aid kits in rural Ghazni province Sunday intended for the captives.

Dr. Mohammad Hashim Wahwaj said the Taliban told him they had picked up the medicine.

A spokesman for the families said they have little faith the Camp David summit would end the crisis.

``The families of the hostages don't seem to expect much from the summit meeting between Afghanistan and the United States," Lee Jeong-hoon, the father of one of the captives, said.

``They don't think that the meeting will secure the hostages' release."

The South Korean government has urged Afghanistan to be flexible about its policy of not negotiating with terrorists. But a presidential spokesman cautioned against expecting too much from the summit.

``It is our government's standpoint that we should work separately from the summit to resolve the hostage issue. It is inappropriate to have any premature expectations or to overly interpret the summit," Cheon Ho-sun said.

Ahmadi said the militants and South Korean officials remain in contact over the phone but have not yet agreed on a location where they can hold negotiations over the fate of the captives.

If an agreement is not reached for face-to-face talks, the Taliban will not be responsible for ``anything bad" that happens to the hostages, Ahmadi said.

In Seoul, an official said Monday that South Korean diplomats had made contact with the captives. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, declined to give further details about the conversation with at least one of the captives, citing safety concerns.

About 150 people demonstrated at the U.S. Embassy in Seoul, praying for the hostages' release and demanding U.S. help.

Meanwhile, foreign and Afghan troops killed 13 suspected militants in Zabul province after they tried to attack the checkpoint on the main road linking Kabul to the southern city Kandahar, said Ali Kheil, the spokesman for Zabul's governor.

South Korean diplomat has phone chat with hostage in Afghanistan

DATE: 2007.08.06

KEYWORDS: INTERNATIONAL DEFENCE JUSTICE POLITICS

PUBLICATION: cpw

WORD COUNT: 512

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan (AP) _ As the Taliban and South Korean officials negotiated a possible face-to-face meeting, a South Korean diplomat in Afghanistan spoke by telephone with one of the 21 captives being held by the militant group, an official said Monday.

The Foreign Ministry official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because of the issue's sensitivity, declined to give further details about the conversation, citing safety concerns.

The Taliban has agreed to meet face-to-face with a South Korean delegation but has not agreed on a venue. A purported Taliban spokesman expressed concerns militants could be detained by the Afghan military and proposed either a meeting in Taliban territory or a United Nations-hosted meeting elsewhere.

The spokesman, Qari Yousef Ahmadi, said the militants had talked with the Korean officials "many times" over the phone the last three days but there had been "no results."

"We gave them two choices: either come to Taliban-controlled territory or meet us abroad," Ahmadi said from an unknown location.

"They accepted these options and told us: 'We are trying to persuade the UN to give you a guarantee to meet us in another country.'"

"The Koreans also said if the UN did not agree to give the Taliban a guarantee we will come to your areas to meet. They have not done any of the above promises yet," he said.

A UN spokesman said the international body is "fully supporting" efforts by the South Korean and Afghan governments to resolve the crisis.

"We are obviously aware of the unconfirmed reports suggesting that those holding the aid workers have requested our assistance to meet with the South Korean delegation at a neutral venue but we have not been approached directly on this issue," said Dan McNorton of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan.

Twenty-three South Koreans from a church group were kidnapped by the Taliban on July 19 while travelling from Kabul to Kandahar to work on medical and other aid projects. Two of the male hostages have been executed. Among the remaining 21 hostages, 16 are women.

The Taliban have demanded 23 militant prisoners held by Afghanistan and at the U.S. base at Bagram be freed in exchange for the Koreans' lives but the Afghan government has all but ruled out that option, saying it would encourage more kidnappings.

An official at the Korean Embassy in Kabul said the location of a potential meeting between the Koreans and the Taliban was not important. Asked if paying a ransom is an option, he declined to comment. He spoke on condition he not be identified in line with embassy rules.

The Afghan government has all but ruled out the hostage-prisoner swap after it came under strong criticism earlier this year for making a deal to secure the release of an Italian citizen.

“We will not do anything that will encourage hostage-taking, that will encourage terrorism. But we will do everything else to have them released,” Karzai said in a CNN interview broadcast Sunday.

Meanwhile in Seoul, relatives of the hostages planned to stage rallies at the U.S. and Afghan embassies.

Ahmadi said the Taliban have been waiting for negotiations to start and have extended many deadlines for the Koreans' lives.

If an agreement is not reached for in-person negotiations, then the Taliban will not be responsible for “anything bad” that happens to the hostages, Ahmadi said.

Canada's Royal 22nd Regiment penetrates hostile Afghan territory

DATE: 2007.08.06
KEYWORDS: DEFENCE INTERNATIONAL
PUBLICATION: cpw
WORD COUNT: 302

DISTRICT SHAH VALI KOWT, Afghanistan (CP) _ Canadian soldiers from the Royal 22nd Regiment moved deep into hostile territory over the weekend, patrolling a vast region of Afghanistan known to be sympathetic to the Taliban.

Canadian troops did not confront insurgents during this trek but they are convinced the territory is guided by a ``phantom Taliban government."

Along roads, through fields and mountains, the soldiers cut a wide swath across a region north of Kandahar in light armoured vehicles. They continued their patrol on foot through punishing 50 degree C heat.

At best, the reception from local villagers was polite and lukewarm, as most men and children _ women are absent from public spaces in Afghan villages _ watched the soldiers march with a mix of fear, mistrust and sometimes hostility in their eyes.

The troops are often seen as invaders.

One youth, who hid a sickle behind his back was told by a soldier to drop his weapon. An elder intervened and persuaded the young man to get rid of the object before the situation deteriorated.

Elsewhere, residents in a hamlet acknowledged the troops with indifference. The locals spoke among themselves and drank tea, while an officer tried to persuade citizens to show the soldiers around the village.

``The Americans came here and they promised to build a school," said Chalam Abad, an elder claiming to be the town's mayor.

``They never did it."

Abad, speaking through an interpreter, said he had not seen NATO soldiers in the community for at least three years.

Villagers said they have never had a problem with the Taliban. Some said the Taliban have never set foot in the region.

The International Security Assistance Force, of which Canada is a member, thinks otherwise.

``There is a phantom Taliban government here," said one officer.

``That's why we have to be present here, checking over the terrain to counter infiltration by the Taliban."

For his part, Sgt. Steve Dufour says there is still a lot of work to be done in Afghanistan before winning over the local population.

“There are people who are frightened and we see that there is still lots of information to send to the villages to explain to people that we are here to help,” he said.

Bush says intelligence will lead U.S. forces to al-Qaida leaders in Pakistan

DATE: 2007.08.06

PUBLICATION: cpw

WORD COUNT: 721

CAMP DAVID, Md. (AP) _ U.S. President George W. Bush said Monday that with the right intelligence U.S. and Pakistani authorities can take out al-Qaida leaders, but he wouldn't say whether he would consult first with Pakistan before ordering U.S. forces to act.

``With real actionable intelligence, we will get the job done," Bush said.

He was asked whether he would wait on permission from Pakistani President Gen. Pervez Musharraf before committing the U.S. military to move on ``actionable intelligence" on the whereabouts of terrorist leaders in Pakistan. He did not answer directly.

Bush was at the presidential retreat at Camp David for two days of meetings with Afghan President Hamid Karzai. The two held talks on a rash of crises confronting Afghanistan: civilian killings, a booming drug trade and the brazen resurgence of the Taliban.

Karzai said that he and Musharraf would discuss how to tackle the problem of lawlessness and extremist hideouts along Pakistan's border area with his country.

Afghanistan has a distrustful relationship with neighbouring Pakistan, yet top tribal leaders from both countries are expected to meet this week to try to lessen tensions. Musharraf and Karzai are likely to attend, with Karzai sure to bring up his concern about the flow of foreign fighters into his country from Pakistan.

Bush and Karzai put a positive spin on Afghanistan's progress since the 2001 defeat of the repressive Taliban, but they stressed that serious problems remain.

``There is still work to be done," Bush said. ``But progress is being made, Mr. President, and we're proud of you."

Karzai acknowledged a resurgent Taliban but said it is not a threat to his government. Karzai is Afghanistan's first democratically elected president.

``We have a long journey ahead of us but what we have traveled so far has given us greater hope for a better future, for a better life," Karzai said at a joint news conference here with Bush.

Bush and Karzai differed noticeably in their views about Iran's influence in Afghanistan.

Karzai had said in advance of his visit to Camp David that Iran is a partner in the fight against terrorism and narcotics. ``So far, Iran has been a helper," he said over the weekend.

Bush didn't agree. ``I would be very cautious about whether or not the Iranian influence there in Afghanistan is a positive force," he said.

U.S. officials contend that Tehran is fomenting violence in Afghanistan by sending in weaponry such as sophisticated roadside bombs. More broadly, Bush said Iran thumbs its nose at the international community

and denies its citizens the rights they deserve.

The issue of a theoretical U.S. military incursion into Pakistan is a sensitive one.

Bush has said before that he would order the U.S. to act inside the Muslim-majority country if there were firm intelligence on the whereabouts of Osama bin Laden or other terrorist leaders.

Bin Laden, the mastermind of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, is believed to be living in the tribal border region of Pakistan. His ability to avoid capture remains a political sore spot for Bush.

But Musharraf has objected to any unilateral action by Washington.

Over the weekend, U.S. Defence Secretary Robert Gates was equally careful in describing how U.S. officials would handle such a situation.

"I think we would not act without telling Musharraf what we were planning to do," he said on NBC's "Meet the Press."

Bush said the leaders spent "more than a fair amount of time" talking about the fact that Afghanistan now accounts for 95 per cent of the world's poppy production used to make heroin.

Profits from the drug trade are aiding the Taliban. Aggressive counter-drug proposals by some U.S. officials _ including tying development aid to benchmarks such as mandatory poppy field destruction _ have met fierce resistance.

"He knows full well that the United States is watching, measuring and trying to help," the president said of Karzai.

For his part, Karzai said his government in Kabul is "committed to fighting it because this evil is first hurting us."

The deteriorating security in Afghanistan has been underscored by the ongoing captivity of 21 South Korean volunteers kidnapped in Afghanistan. The crisis has put considerable pressure on Karzai.

The Taliban took 23 people hostage and have killed two of them. It is seeking the release of prisoners, but the Afghan government has refused. The United States also adamantly opposes any concessions to such demands.

Bush and Karzai agreed "there should be no quid pro quo" that could embolden the Taliban, said Gordon Johndroe, a Bush spokesman.

Karzai said Bush heard and shared his concerns about the mounting number of Afghan casualties as the war there rages on. Militants often wear civilian dress and seek shelter in villagers' homes, making it hard to differentiate the enemy from the innocent.

"I was very happy with that conversation," Karzai said.

Bush said that U.S. forces "do everything we can to protect the innocent."

Karzai defended freeing a 14-old Pakistani boy who was arrested just before he was to carry out a suicide bomb attack against an Afghan governor. Karzai declared the teen an innocent boy who was used by terrorists.

Afghan–Kidnappings–Update (Taliban comment)

DATE: 2007.08.06

KEYWORDS: INTERNATIONAL DEFENCE JUSTICE POLITICS

PUBLICATION: bnw

WORD COUNT: 121

GHAZNI, Afghanistan -- A Taliban spokesman says the group will continue to kidnap foreigners in Afghanistan.

That comes as Afghan doctors sent medicine for ailing South Korean hostages held for nearly three weeks.

Two of the hostages are said to be extremely ill and an Afghan doctor says he dropped off about 15-hundred dollars worth of antibiotics.

A man (Qari Yousef Ahmadi) claiming to speak for the Taliban, says the lives of the hostages are in the hands of Afghan President Hamid Karzai and U-S President Bush.

But a South Korean presidential spokesman is cautioning the summit won't necessarily lead to a resolution of the hostage crisis. Twenty-three South Koreans from a church group were kidnapped by the Taliban and two have been executed.

The Taliban have demanded 23 militant prisoners be freed in return for the Koreans.

(AP)

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Afghan–Kidnappings

DATE: 2007.08.06

KEYWORDS: INTERNATIONAL DEFENCE JUSTICE POLITICS

PUBLICATION: bnw

WORD COUNT: 135

GHAZNI, Afghanistan — Afghan doctors are trying to get desperately needed medicine to the South Korean hostages being held by Taliban rebels.

Two of the hostages who were grabbed on July 19th are said to be extremely ill.

An Afghan doctor says the kidnappers told him they picked up the antibiotics, vitamins and first aid kits he dropped off in Ghazni province yesterday.

A man (Qari Yousef Ahmadi) who claims to speak for the Taliban, says the lives of the 21 hostages are now in the hands of Afghan President Hamid Karzai and U–S President Bush, who are meeting at Camp David, Maryland.

Karzai said in a T–V interview aired yesterday that his government is working to free the hostages, but he indicated it wouldn't agree to Taliban demands to release 23 militants in exchange for the Koreans.

The rebels have executed two of the 23 Christian aid workers they abducted.

Both were men.

Among the remaining hostages, 16 are women.

(AP)

ScH

Rights groups' legal challenge over detainees kept secret; Release of documents sought in Afghan case, but organizations prevented from disclosing action

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PUBLICATION: The Toronto Star
DATE: 2007.08.07
EDITION: Met
SECTION: News
PAGE: A16
ILLUSTRATION: CP file photo Canadian troops in Panjwahi, Afghanistan, detain suspected Taliban insurgents last September. ;
BYLINE: Murray Brewster
SOURCE: Canadian Press
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 468

A new chapter in the legal drama involving the suspected abuse of Afghan detainees has been playing out away from the public eye under strict, court-imposed secrecy, Canadian Press has learned.

Amnesty International and the B.C. Civil Liberties Association applied on July 11 for an order to force the federal government to release as many as 140 pages of documents related to the handling of suspected Taliban prisoners.

A little known provision of the recently revised Canada Evidence Act, which the Crown invoked to block release of the records, also gave federal lawyers the power to keep news of the court challenge a secret. That restriction was lifted last week following a teleconference involving lawyers for Amnesty, the Crown and the chief justice of the Federal Court.

"The Attorney General of Canada has authorized the disclosure of the fact that an application" to challenge the refusal to release records has been made, said a July 30 justice department letter.

The letter was signed by attorney Linda Wall of the department's civil litigation section.

National Defence, the foreign affairs department and the federal justice department claim the documents being sought are protected under national security provisions and that releasing them to human rights lawyers could have grave consequences.

Laws allowing the state to keep documents secret are not new, said Amnesty lawyer Paul Champ.

"Unfortunately, the Canada Evidence Act has some very peculiar provisions that were enacted after 9/11 that prohibited us from even telling anyone that we were challenging them," he said in an interview.

Holding hearings in secret is an affront to the justice system and to anyone who believes in the rule of law, Champ said.

"I think it would offend any Canadian, this whole idea that they can't even know about the existence of a court action."

Rights groups' legal challenge over detainees kept secret; Release of documents sought in Afghan case, but organizations prevented from disclosing action

The civil liberties association has embarked on a separate Charter challenge, hoping to have struck down the provision that allows secret court actions.

A justice department spokesperson defended the secrecy provision, describing it as a national security safeguard that the minister is capable of overriding.

"It was written in the legislation as a precautionary measure to prevent the disclosure of injurious material," said Chris Girouard. "This section is used as a matter of course, but written consent to open proceedings to public scrutiny is usually given by the attorney general."

The two human rights groups petitioned the Federal Court earlier this year for an injunction to halt the Canadian army from handing over captured insurgents to Afghan authorities, who are suspected of torturing prisoners.

Champ had asked for documents from the departments of defence and foreign affairs after officials from both departments testified in the first round of court action.

"It's unfair for the government to say there's no risk of torture without them being required to produce the documents they have," he said.

Allegations of abuse of prisoners surfaced in the media in April, and at the time the Tory government insisted it was not aware of any suspected cases of prisoner mistreatment.

Foreign Affairs Minister Peter MacKay conceded in late May that six cases of suspect mistreatment have been reported to Canadians and investigations are underway.

Defence motion seeks 2004 report

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DATE: 2007.08.07
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: B12
DATELINE: OTTAWA
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 175

OTTAWA — Defence lawyers for Omar Khadr, the young Canadian who has been held for six years in the U.S. compound for suspected terrorists in Guantanamo Bay, filed a motion Monday to see a 2004 report into allegations of misconduct by U.S. military prosecutors without parts of it blacked out.

The defence contends that such an unredacted report will show that Capt. John W. Rolph, now the deputy chief judge of the Court of Military Commission Review, had contacts with military commission prosecutors starting in 2003. The defence also believes it will show Rolph advised prosecutors on how to proceed.

Those military commissions were later struck down by the U.S. Supreme Court.

In a statement, Khadr's defence lawyers do not contend there is anything improper about the contacts at the time. But they say that they have taken on "added significance" since Rolph has been assigned to a review of the military commission.

Khadr, now 20, is accused of throwing a grenade during a firefight 2002 in Afghanistan between U.S. forces and al-Qaida insurgents in which Sgt. Christopher Speer was killed.

Quebec troops taking over key operations

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PUBLICATION: The Leader-Post (Regina)
DATE: 2007.08.07
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: B8
ILLUSTRATION: Colour Photo: CanWest / A Canadian soldier at the firingrange at Kandahar Airfield. Hundreds of soldiers have been arriving as part of Canada's newest rotation here. ;
DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan
BYLINE: Andrew Mayeda
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 604

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan — Helping the Afghan army stand on its own will be a focus of the new military rotation led by Quebec's Van Doos regiment, says the man who will oversee Canada's training and mentoring operations.

The Royal 22nd Regiment, based in Valcartier, Que., and known in English Canada as the Van Doos, has been taking over the bulk of Canada's military operations in this country over the last few weeks.

Quebec soldiers have started combat patrols in the volatile south of Afghanistan, venturing into outlying districts of Kandahar province where the Taliban lurk.

But efforts to train the fledgling Afghan National Army (ANA) will be just as crucial to setting the stage for Canada's planned withdrawal in February 2009, not to mention turning the tide of public opinion in Quebec.

Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor said last month the military would accelerate training of the ANA so Canadian troops could pull back from the front lines.

Lt.-Col. Stephane Lafaut, the incoming commander of the Operational Mentor Liaison Team, echoed that view.

"We want to focus on that. That's part of establishing security in the area, (and) we need the ANA to do that," he said one recent evening as soldiers from the new rotation test-fired their weapons at Kandahar airfield. "There's nothing better than Afghan people solving Afghan problems."

It will not be easy to establish the ANA, built almost from scratch by the United States and its allies after the 2001 overthrow of the Taliban, as a reliable fighting force.

The army presently has more than 50,000 troops, but less than 500 are ready to fight in Kandahar province, where most of Canada's 2,500 troops are stationed.

Compared with Western forces, the ANA is poorly equipped. Soldiers are often wearing little or no body armour and travel around in pickup trucks.

Canada's top military commander, Gen. Rick Hillier, has also indicated that ANA training will be a priority during the coming months.

But he has publicly disagreed with O'Connor on the pace at which training can be accomplished. Hillier said recently it will be a "long while" before ANA troops are self-sufficient.

Lafaut has been impressed by the willingness of the ANA to work with Canadian soldiers. Yet only time will tell how quickly they can be trained, he added.

"I'm not sure where we're going to be in six months from now," he said. "Some units are better than others."

The Van Doos are the first Quebec regiment to command Canadian military operations in Afghanistan.

The regiment has a storied history of fighting alongside anglophone troops, having distinguished itself during the First and Second World Wars, as well as numerous peacekeeping and humanitarian missions.

But there is widespread opposition to the war in Quebec, where anti-war sentiment dates back to the province's resistance to conscription during the two world wars.

According to some polls, seven out of 10 Quebecers oppose the mission.

That has heightened the political risk to Prime Minister Stephen Harper, who is counting on a strong showing in Quebec to win a majority in the next election.

Harper recently softened his stance on the war, saying he would seek a "consensus" from all parties before extending the mission. Canadian troops are scheduled to withdraw in February 2009.

Some observers have interpreted O'Connor's remarks about the emphasis on ANA training as an attempt to shield the Van Doos from heavy fighting.

But Brig.-Gen. Guy Laroche, who assumed the Canadian command here last week, has promised that the Van Doos will receive no special treatment.

Rank-and-file soldiers, meanwhile, are trying not to be distracted by the lack of support in Quebec.

"We're not here to prove anything. We're here to do our job," said Sgt. Sylvain Latulippe, who arrived at Kandahar Airfield last week.

The people of Quebec will better understand the mission once the military shows it is improving the lives of Afghans, he said.

There have been rumblings of tension between anglophone and francophone soldiers during the handover. Most of the soldiers from the previous six-month rotation were based in Gagetown, N.B., Petawawa, Ont., or Edmonton.

But many soldiers downplay the differences between the two cultures.

"They're no different than us. They just speak a different primary language. Canadian soldiers all train to the same standard," said Maj. Alex Ruff, who commanded a combat platoon during the last rotation.

Cabinet shuffle looming?

IDNUMBER 200708070035
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SECTION: News
PAGE: B7
DATELINE: CHARLOTTETOWN
BYLINE: Richard Foot
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 597

CHARLOTTETOWN — When Stephen Harper's government makes big decisions — on the war in Afghanistan, or on income trusts or climate change — the prime minister leads his cabinet, he says, as merely a first among equals.

"On very, very rare occasions would I make a decision on a policy matter — as opposed to just routine, machinery of government issues — would I make a decision on a policy matter unilaterally," Harper said last week in a remarkably frank assessment of how decisions are reached at the highest political levels in Canada. "On all but a very small number of issues, there's been a very, very broad consensus in our cabinet. I don't think I've ever been in a position where I've had to really force a decision through on one group of people or another."

Harper was speaking at a news conference in Prince Edward Island at the end of the Conservatives' annual summer caucus retreat, where he also hinted he might shuffle the cabinet before the summer was out.

But who cares? Is the federal cabinet relevant any longer as a decision-making body, or has it — under a string of recent Liberal and Tory leaders — become a gathering of yes-men and yes-women, simply rubber-stamping the wishes of the prime minister?

Does it matter who's in and who's out, or which MPs occupy which portfolios?

Harper's claims of consensus government are at odds with the growing sense among many political observers and constitutional experts that Canada is run less like a parliamentary democracy in the Westminster model than like a private kingdom, in which the prime minister and a chosen clique of often-unelected advisers dictate federal policy, as long as their term in office allows them.

In Charlottetown last week, Tory cabinet ministers were told to make sure they were in the country, and close to a telephone, in the middle of August, a directive widely interpreted as evidence Harper is ready to shuffle the deck.

Revenue Minister Carol Skelton added to the cabinet shuffle speculation late last week when she announced she would not seek re-election. The Saskatchewan MP's move leaves a hole that would allow Harper to promote a backbencher to the cabinet club, while also shuffling existing ministers.

B.C. MP James Moore and Calgary MP Diane Ablonczy are seen as underemployed and ripe for promotion.

It would be Harper's second change to his cabinet since coming to power in 2006, and the guess game is fiercest over who might be promoted or demoted within the current cabinet ranks.

And the million-dollar question: will beleaguered Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor — saddled with selling an increasingly troublesome war, and seemingly at odds with his chief of defence staff — be moved elsewhere or shuffled out altogether? O'Connor's demotion has been predicted for weeks, and CTV reported on the weekend that he will be bumped to Veterans Affairs in a cabinet shuffle expected in the week of Aug. 13. It said he will be replaced by Indian Affairs Minister Jim Prentice, a respected member of the caucus and a Harper favourite.

For Donald Savoie, the only cabinet question that matters is which ministers, if any, are likely to be members of Harper's "court." Savoie is an internationally respected political scientist from the University of Moncton.

Three years ago, he published *Breaking the Bargain*, a landmark critique of the sidelining of the civil service, and the concentration of power in the prime minister's office. "What we've got today is less cabinet government, and more court government," he said in a recent interview. "Those with influence are those who sit in the prime minister's court."

Afghan official sees reason for hope

IDNUMBER 200708070099
PUBLICATION: The StarPhoenix (Saskatoon)
DATE: 2007.08.07
EDITION: Final
SECTION: World
PAGE: C9
ILLUSTRATION: Colour Photo: Khalid;
DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan
BYLINE: Andrew Mayeda
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 439

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan--The NATO-led coalition is winning the war in Afghanistan and the end of the conflict is "not very far" away, the governor of Kandahar province said Saturday, even as a suicide car bomb killed two civilians in the province's capital.

Police said the attacker drove close to a convoy of coalition troops and detonated the bomb. Four other civilians were injured.

The attack took place on a road used by coalition forces to reach the western Panjwaii and Zhari districts of the province, as well as neighbouring Helmand province.

Canadian military officials said no Canadians were in the convoy, but would not say which country the troops were from.

But Asadullah Khalid, Kandahar's governor, said the province's security is improving "day by day."

"Last year in Kandahar at the same time we had three suicide attacks per day," said Khalid in an interview with CanWest News Service.

"We cannot say that tomorrow all terrorist activity will stop . . . But in general, the security situation is good in Kandahar and it is getting better day by day."

He even suggested the day is drawing near when Canadian troops can hand over security responsibilities to the Afghan army and police force.

"We need them until the end of this war," Khalid said of the Canadian military. "But the end of this war is not very far."

The governor's comments come at a time of considerable debate over the success of coalition operations in southern Afghanistan, as well as the need for Canadian troops to play a leading combat role.

Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor said recently that Canadian troops could be pulled back from the front lines more quickly than expected as the military ramps up training of Afghan soldiers.

But Canada's top soldier, Gen. Rick Hillier, says it will be a "long while" before the army is ready to take control.

Opinion on the Afghan side has also been split. Kandahar's new police chief and a federal minister in charge of rural rehabilitation recently urged Canadian troops to stay beyond February 2009, the withdrawal date set by the Canadian government.

Khalid conceded that some areas of the province are still "hostage" to Taliban influence.

But he said the province, aided by Canadian military support and aid money, has been pushing forward with a number of reconstruction projects, such as the rebuilding of a dam that supplies water to seven districts.

"If you saw where we were five years ago and where we are today, you will see a big difference," the governor said.

This month, the province announced 72 reconstruction projects, including the construction of schools, mosques and irrigation systems.

Khalid said reforms of the Afghan National Police, widely viewed as corrupt and susceptible to Taliban infiltration, are coming along.

"We started to rebuild the army four years ago, and the police are four years behind, but the police are getting better."

Canadian troops have been engaged in less toe-to-toe fighting with the Taliban than last summer, but suicide attacks and roadside bombs remain a persistent threat.

Last month, a roadside bomb killed six Canadian soldiers and an Afghan interpreter traveling in a convoy about 20 kilometres southwest of Kandahar City.

Military commanders said the bomb, which ripped through a heavily armoured RG-31 Nyala vehicle, was the biggest they had ever seen.

(Ottawa Citizen)

Pundits wonder if cabinet shuffle matters

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PUBLICATION: The StarPhoenix (Saskatoon)
DATE: 2007.08.07
EDITION: Final
SECTION: National
PAGE: A7
ILLUSTRATION: Photo: Gordon O'Connor;
DATELINE: CHARLOTTETOWN
BYLINE: Richard Foot
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 482

CHARLOTTETOWN — When Stephen Harper's government makes big decisions — on the war in Afghanistan, or on income trusts or climate change — the prime minister leads his cabinet, he says, as merely a first among equals.

"On very, very rare occasions would I make a decision on a policy matter — as opposed to just routine, machinery of government issues — would I make a decision on a policy matter unilaterally," Harper said on Thursday in a remarkably frank assessment of how decisions are reached at the highest political levels in Canada.

Harper was speaking at a news conference in Prince Edward Island at the end of the Conservatives' annual summer caucus retreat, where he also hinted he might shuffle the cabinet before the summer was out.

Harper's claims of consensus government are at odds with the growing sense among many political observers and constitutional experts that Canada is run less like a parliamentary democracy in the Westminster model than like a private kingdom, in which the prime minister and a chosen clique of often-unelected advisers dictate federal policy, as long as their term in office allows them.

In Charlottetown last week, Tory cabinet ministers were told to make sure they were in the country, and close to a telephone, in the middle of August, a directive widely interpreted as evidence Harper is ready to shuffle the deck.

Revenue Minister Carol Skelton added to the cabinet shuffle speculation Friday when she announced she would not seek re-election. The Saskatchewan MP's move leaves a hole that would allow Harper to promote a backbencher to the cabinet club, while also shuffling existing ministers.

B.C. MP James Moore and Calgary MP Diane Ablonczy are seen as underemployed and ripe for promotion.

It would be Harper's second change to his cabinet since coming to power in 2006, and the guess game is fiercest over who might be promoted or demoted within the current cabinet member ranks.

And the million-dollar question: Will beleaguered Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor — saddled with selling an increasingly troublesome war, and seemingly at odds with his chief of defence staff — be moved elsewhere or shuffled out altogether? O'Connor's demotion has been predicted for weeks, and CTV reported on the weekend that he will be bumped to Veterans Affairs in a cabinet shuffle expected the week of Aug. 13. It said he will be replaced by Indian Affairs Minister Jim Prentice, a respected member of the caucus and a

Harper favourite.

For Donald Savoie, the only cabinet question that really matters is which ministers, if any, are likely to be members of Harper's "court."

Savoie is an internationally respected political scientist from the University of Moncton.

But outside of a few individuals, "it doesn't matter a great deal who's in cabinet today, except that they get formal access to the court once a week — access to the king, the prime minister and his courtiers," says Savoie. "Generally, the cabinet no longer matters as a decision-making body."

Pakistan on spot in Afghan talks

SOURCETAG 0708070375

PUBLICATION: The Winnipeg Sun

DATE: 2007.08.07

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: 10

ILLUSTRATION: photo by J. Scott Applewhite, AP Bush and Karzai arrive for a joint press conference yesterday at Camp David, Md.

BYLINE: AP

DATELINE: CAMP DAVID, Md.

WORD COUNT: 280

U.S. President George W. Bush said yesterday that with the right intelligence U.S. and Pakistani authorities can take out al-Qaida leaders, but he wouldn't say whether he would consult first with Pakistan before ordering U.S. forces to act.

"With real actionable intelligence, we will get the job done," Bush said.

He was asked whether he would wait on permission from Pakistani President Gen. Pervez Musharraf before committing the U.S. military to move on "actionable intelligence" on the whereabouts of terrorist leaders in Pakistan. He did not answer directly.

Bush was at the presidential retreat at Camp David for two days of meetings with Afghan President Hamid Karzai. The two held talks on a rash of crises confronting Afghanistan: civilian killings, a booming drug trade and the resurgence of the Taliban.

Karzai said that he and Musharraf would discuss how to tackle the problem of lawlessness and extremist hideouts along Pakistan's border area with his country.

POSITIVE SPIN

Afghanistan has a distrustful relationship with neighbouring Pakistan, yet top tribal leaders from both countries are expected to meet this week to try to lessen tensions. Musharraf and Karzai are likely to attend.

Bush and Karzai put a positive spin on Afghanistan's progress since the 2001 defeat of the repressive Taliban, but they stressed that serious problems remain.

"There is still work to be done," Bush said. "But progress is being made, Mr. President, and we're proud of you."

Karzai acknowledged a resurgent Taliban but said it is not a threat to his government.

"We have a long journey ahead of us but what we have travelled so far has given us greater hope for a better future, for a better life," Karzai said at a joint news conference here with Bush.

Bush and Karzai differed noticeably in their views about Iran's influence in Afghanistan.

Karzai had said in advance of his visit to Camp David that Iran is a partner in the fight against terrorism and narcotics. "So far, Iran has been a helper," he said over the weekend.

U.S. officials contend that Tehran is fomenting violence in Afghanistan by sending in weaponry such as sophisticated roadside bombs. KEYWORDS=WORLD

Bush praises Karzai But U.S. president doesn't rule out striking Pakistan terror targets

SOURCETAG: 0708070441

PUBLICATION: The Toronto Sun

DATE: 2007.08.07

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: 10

ILLUSTRATION: 1. photo of GEORGE W. BUSH High praise 2. photo of HAMID KARZAI Work to do

BYLINE: AP

DATELINE: CAMP DAVID, Md.

WORD COUNT: 201

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She's their ticket out

SOURCETAG 0708070436
PUBLICATION: The Toronto Sun
DATE: 2007.08.07
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: 9
ILLUSTRATION: photo of WENDY JONES Popular
BYLINE: CP
DATELINE: ST. JOHN'S, N.L.
WORD COUNT: 221

Wendy Jones is not a member of the military, but often felt like she was the most popular person in Kandahar.

That's because as part of her job with the Canadian Forces Personnel Support Agency (CFPSA), the 27-year-old from St. John's, N.L., was in charge of booking flights for soldiers stationed in southern Afghanistan to return home or vacation in other parts of the world.

For the troops, getting time away from the war zone was something they looked forward to the most.

"We were the most-liked people on the base," Jones said laughing. "We'd get the guys out of there, so they would love to see us."

The CFPSA is a civilian organization that supports the soldiers, providing them with various programs and services. Employees do everything from operating the Tim Hortons coffee shop and retail stores to running the travel office and hosting concert performers.

Jones worked in the CFPSA's travel office as a travel co-ordinator, arranging the soldiers' three-week vacation time. Soldiers chose to either return to Canada or travel elsewhere in the world for a getaway.

"They all had to go through our office," said Jones, who studied travel and tourism in St. John's, "so we got to meet every person."

Jones also helped host musical acts for the soldiers, including Newfoundland's own Karla Pilgrim and The Fables, along with other Canadian acts, such as J.P. Cormier.

"I was looking for an adventure. It was something out of the ordinary," said Jones, who also got to travel to Italy and Greece. I knew I would have a great time." **KEYWORDS=CANADA**

Bush praises Karzai But U.S. president doesn't rule out striking Pakistan terror targets

SOURCETAG: 0708070011

PUBLICATION: The Ottawa Sun

DATE: 2007.08.07

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: 5

ILLUSTRATION: 1. photo of GEORGE W. BUSH High praise 2. photo of HAMID KARZAI Work to do

BYLINE: AP

DATELINE: CAMP DAVID, MD.

WORD COUNT: 201

U.S. President George W. Bush said yesterday that with the right intelligence, U.S. and Pakistan governments can take out al-Qaida leaders, and wouldn't say whether he would consult first with Pakistan before ordering U.S. forces to act on their own.

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"But progress is being made, Mr. President, and we're proud of you."

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Karzai is Afghanistan's first democratically elected president.

"We have a long journey ahead of us but what we have travelled so far has given us greater hope for a better future, for a better life," Karzai said at a joint news conference here with Bush. KEYWORDS=WORLD

Little more fun would be nice

SOURCETAG 0708070302
PUBLICATION: The London Free Press
DATE: 2007.08.07
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Editorial/Opinion
PAGE: A7
BYLINE: PETER WORTHINGTON
WORD COUNT: 491

Following this Civic Holiday three elections are looming — all different, but all posing similar problems: Next year's U.S. presidential election in which campaigning starts for real this fall; an upcoming Ontario provincial election; a federal election whenever Prime Stephen Harper decides.

Before getting into a brief commentary on similarities and dilemmas that confront the voters in these three elections, a word about the Civic Holiday we enjoyed this past weekend.

The inestimable David Frum, to whom I'm related by marriage, has opined that the name should be changed to something like Canadian Victories Day to honour the war record of Canadians, and especially the First World War battle at Amiens on Aug. 8, 1918. That was the date when Canadian and Australian troops led the rout of the German army to begin the last 100 days that brought victory to the Allies.

Victories Day would be 100 per cent Canadian and more significant, perhaps, than a bland Civic Holiday or calling it John Graves Simcoe Day in Toronto or Colonel By Day in Ottawa or heaven knows what in Moncton.

But that's an irrelevant aside that won't win political approval, even though it would honour today's soldiers in Afghanistan and their forerunners in Korea, Second World War and First World War and the Boer War.

Back to the aforementioned elections: Though the Bush administration is reeling, and conventional wisdom favours the Democrats to win the White House next year, leading candidates for president are not reassuring — especially among Democrats.

There is precious little joy or sense of happiness or cheerfulness among those of the liberal persuasion.

Sad to say, also little of it among conservative candidates.

Hillary Clinton has no joy about her — just relentless ambition and a background as an enabler for her tomcat hubby — who did (and does) have a sense of joy and fun that offsets his promiscuity and self-indulgence.

Barack Obama seems nice, but is hardly a fun guy who exudes an ability to inspire joy in others.

Republican Rudy Giuliani does exude life and joy — but has horrible baggage of poor treatment of the women in his life, not to mention his kids.

John McCain hardly embodies the sense of joy and lust for living that, say, Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher did.

The same goes for Canada. Stephen Harper so yearns for a majority that he's become indistinguishable from a Liberal. Whatever, he isn't a fun guy. Liberal Leader Stephane Dion, of course, is a persuasive reason to vote Conservative. If either projected optimism, convictions and joy or happiness, popularity and trust would follow.

In Ontario, Dalton McGuinty exudes the joy of his look-alike, Norman Bates of the movie Psycho, and John Tory radiates good sense but not much fun.

All this may seem overstressing the fun or joy aspect of political leadership, but it's important, to offset the necessary hunger for power and determination to succeed.

This absence emphasizes, for those who dare see it, how unique Reagan and Thatcher were. Thatcher never lost an election — but her own party dumped her and self-destructed. Reagan, too, was ever an optimist who refused to curb his style, and won Americans by his cheerful resolve and unstoppable ideology.

Canada has never had a true "conservative" leader. They all seem to get sucked into the quicksand of chasing opinion polls when they reach Ottawa and fail to win the confidence of eastern voters. That reality seems unlikely to soon change.

Afghanistan events

SOURCETAG 0708070289
PUBLICATION: The London Free Press
DATE: 2007.08.07
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A3
ILLUSTRATION: photo of HAMID KARZAI
BYLINE: SUN MEDIA NEWS SERVICES
WORD COUNT: 250

– U.S. President George W. Bush and his Afghan counterpart, Hamid Karzai, vowed to finish off the Taliban, which Karzai said was a defeated force that attacks civilians but is not a threat to his government. Karzai, visiting the United States amid renewed concern about worsening violence in Afghanistan and the threat from militant hide-outs across the border in Pakistan, said he was building up his army and police with U.S. help. "Our enemy is still there, defeated but still hiding in the mountains. And our duty is to complete the job." – The Taliban will continue to kidnap foreigners in Afghanistan, a purported Taliban spokesperson said as Afghan doctors sent medicines for ailing South Korean hostages held by the insurgents since July 19. An Afghan doctor who heads a private clinic, meanwhile, said he had dropped off US\$2,000 worth of antibiotics, vitamins and first aid kits in rural Ghazni province Sunday intended for the Koreans, two of whom are said to be extremely ill. Dr. Mohammad Hashim Wahwaj said their Taliban captors told him that they had picked up the medicines. Qari Yousef Ahmadi, who claims to speak for the Taliban, said the lives of the 21 South Korean hostages rest in the hands of Karzai and Bush. KEYWORDS=WORLD

Bush praises Karzai But U.S. president doesn't rule out striking Pakistan terror targets

SOURCETAG 0708070615

PUBLICATION: The Edmonton Sun

DATE: 2007.08.07

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: 17

ILLUSTRATION: 1. photo of GEORGE W. BUSH High praise 2. photo of HAMID KARZAI Work to do

BYLINE: AP

DATELINE: CAMP DAVID, Md.

WORD COUNT: 201

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SOURCETAG: 0708070529
PUBLICATION: The Calgary Sun
DATE: 2007.08.07
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: 10
ILLUSTRATION: 2 photos 1. photo of GEORGE W. BUSH High praise 2. photo of HAMID KARZAI
Work to do
BYLINE: AP
DATELINE: CAMP DAVID, Md.
WORD COUNT: 201

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Afghan mission deserves support

IDNUMBER 200708070049
PUBLICATION: Times Colonist (Victoria)
DATE: 2007.08.07
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Letters
PAGE: A11
BYLINE: Carl Smith
SOURCE: Times Colonist
WORD COUNT: 200

Re: "Following U.S. invites terrorism," letter, Aug. 2.

There are wolves, sheep and sheepdogs: The letter-writer is a sheep, as are most of our decent law-abiding citizens. Sheep wander through life with no concerns or worries because there are sheepdogs willing to protect the sheep with their own lives. These sheepdogs range from police officers, firefighters and soldiers, to name a few.

When a terrorist attack happens here, and it will, the sheepdogs among us will strive to protect our way of life and protect our freedoms that all of us take for granted. The letter-writer does not understand the focus or determination of the "enemy," nor does he understand that Canada does not "follow" the U.S.

There are no Canadian troops in Iraq, but there are many of our brave young service personnel in Afghanistan in response to the 9/11 attack in which many Canadians died. We did not ask for that day, but it was brought upon us and as good citizens we need to support, encourage and wholeheartedly congratulate our troops for the outstanding job they are doing. They believe in what they are doing and so should we.

Carl Smith,

Victoria.

Troops are not the mission

IDNUMBER 200708070041
PUBLICATION: Times Colonist (Victoria)
DATE: 2007.08.07
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Letters
PAGE: A11
BYLINE: William Anderson
SOURCE: Times Colonist
WORD COUNT: 101

Why is it such a bad thing to support Canadian troops? You can support our troops without supporting the mission. I think it's time people understood that.

It is a sign of ignorance and narrow-mindedness to insult the courageous men and women of the Armed Forces simply because you disagree with the purpose of their mission.

I'm glad Alberta has officially announced that it is OK for government employees to display the "support our troops" decal on their vehicles, but sad for the fact permission had to be granted.

If you're against the mission in Afghanistan, good for you, but please remember the troops are not the mission.

William Anderson,

Nanaimo.

Bush, Karzai say they are aligned against Taliban

IDNUMBER 200708070027
PUBLICATION: Times Colonist (Victoria)
DATE: 2007.08.07
EDITION: Early
SECTION: News
PAGE: A9
COLUMN: World Briefing
ILLUSTRATION: Photo: Larry Downing, Reuters / U.S. President George W.Bush speaks at a news conference with Afghan President Hamid Karzai at Camp David. ;
DATELINE: CAMP DAVID, Md.
SOURCE: Reuters
WORD COUNT: 108

CAMP DAVID, Md. — U.S. President George W. Bush and Afghan President Hamid Karzai vowed yesterday to finish off the Taliban, which Karzai said was a defeated force that attacks civilians but is not a threat to his government.

Karzai is visiting the United States amid renewed concern about worsening violence in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Bush, who has been on the defensive about the failure to find al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden, said he was confident U.S. and Pakistani forces would track down the terrorist group's leaders. Bin Laden is believed to be hiding in the rugged tribal region of Pakistan, an area near the border of Afghanistan.

South Korea pursues direct talks with terrorists

IDNUMBER 200708070026
PUBLICATION: Times Colonist (Victoria)
DATE: 2007.08.07
EDITION: Early
SECTION: News
PAGE: A9
COLUMN: World Briefing
DATELINE: GHAZNI, Afghanistan
SOURCE: Agence France–Presse
WORD COUNT: 73

GHAZNI, Afghanistan — South Korea's Embassy said yesterday it had "high hopes" for face-to-face talks with the Taliban terrorists holding 21 of its citizens.

Negotiators in Afghanistan were able to speak briefly with one of the hostages Saturday. The South Korean delegation said a decision was pending on a venue and final agenda.

The Taliban seized 23 church aid workers July 19 and have killed two of them to try to force the Afghan government to release prisoners.

Khadr defence files motion to see report

IDNUMBER 200708070013
PUBLICATION: Times Colonist (Victoria)
DATE: 2007.08.07
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A4
COLUMN: Canada Briefing
DATELINE: OTTAWA
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 128

OTTAWA — Defence lawyers for Omar Khadr, the young Canadian who has been held for six years in Guantanamo Bay, filed a motion yesterday to see a 2004 report into allegations of misconduct by U.S. military prosecutors without parts of it blacked out.

The defence contends that such an unredacted report will show that Capt. John W. Rolph, now the deputy chief judge of the Court of Military Commission Review, had contacts with military commission prosecutors starting in 2003. The defence also believes it will show Rolph advised prosecutors on how to proceed.

Those military commissions were later struck down by the U.S. Supreme Court.

Khadr, 20, is accused of throwing a grenade during a firefight in 2002 in Afghanistan between U.S. forces and al-Qaida insurgents in which Sgt. Christopher Speer was killed.

Bush to Karzai: Don't be too soft on Iran

IDNUMBER 200708070101
PUBLICATION: The Hamilton Spectator
DATE: 2007.08.07
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Canada/World
PAGE: A3
ILLUSTRATION: Photo: Charles Dharapak, the Associated Press /;
DATELINE: Camp David, Md.
SOURCE: Hamilton Spectator wire services
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 189

U.S. President George W. Bush warned Afghan President Hamid Karzai yesterday to be more suspicious of neighbouring Iran, calling the Islamic republic a "destabilizing force."

Capping a two-day visit at the presidential retreat, Bush took issue with Karzai's view that Iran "has been a helper" in Afghanistan. Bush has accused Iran of arming the insurgent Taliban, claims that Karzai largely brushed aside before arriving.

The contrasting assessments of Iran came as the two leaders tried to reconcile their approaches to Afghanistan's neighbour to the east, Pakistan. Karzai has been highly critical of Pakistan for harbouring Taliban and al-Qaeda guerrillas in rugged, largely ungoverned tribal territory along the border. Bush has been more understanding of Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf's dicey political position, calling him a valuable ally in the struggle with terrorists but lately pressing him to do more.

Bush ducked a question about whether he would send U.S. forces into Pakistan without Musharraf's permission to take out top al-Qaeda leadership, saying "we're in constant communications with the Pakistan government" and "it's in their interest that foreign fighters be brought to justice."

Top of the World

IDNUMBER	200708070092
PUBLICATION:	The Hamilton Spectator
DATE:	2007.08.07
EDITION:	Final
SECTION:	Canada/World
PAGE:	A4
ILLUSTRATION:	<p>Photo: Mel Evans, the Associated Press / UNITED STATES Shalga Hightower, right, is consoled by a family friend yesterday as she talks about her 20-year-old daughter, one of three people killed in an execution-style shooting in a Newark, N.J., schoolyard. In a city where gun violence has become an all too common part of daily life, the shootings were enough to chill even the most hardened residents. Two young men also died at the scene. Another young woman is in hospital in fair condition. All four were to attend Delaware State University this fall. Authorities believe the shootings were a random robbery and that some of the victims may have tried to resist their attackers. Friends and family members said the four were not involved in drinking, drugs or gangs. They liked to congregate at the school to hang out and listen to music. ; Photo: Toru Hanai, Reuters / JAPAN People walk past a photograph yesterday showing the time of the 1945 atomic bombing at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum. As Japan marked the 62nd anniversary of Hiroshima's atomic bombing, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe apologized over a former defence minister's suggestion that the U.S. nuclear attacks were justified. Abe said he felt sorry that the remarks by Fumio Kyuma, who was forced to resign in July, "hurt the feelings of the A-bomb survivors," public broadcaster NHK reported. The first atomic bombing on Aug. 6, 1945, killed more than 140,000 people in Hiroshima. A second bombing on Nagasaki three days later killed another 74,000. ; Photo: Allah Uddin, the Associated Press / AFGHANISTAN As a group of Afghans called yesterday for the freeing of South Korean hostages, Taliban and South Korean officials continued to negotiate a possible face-to-face meeting. In a separate development, a South Korean diplomat in Afghanistan reportedly spoke by telephone with one of the 21 captives being held by the militant group. The Taliban have demanded 23 militant prisoners held by Afghanistan and at the U.S. base at Bagram be freed in exchange for the Koreans' lives but the Afghan government has all but ruled out that option, saying it would encourage more kidnappings. ; Photo: Robin Kuniski, the Canadian Press / CANADA Crime scene investigators in Calgary discuss where the body of a young woman was found early Sunday. Police say a woman who they suspect was killed in a sexually-motivated assault may have screamed for help, but her cries were ignored. Staff Sergeant Keith Cain said her screams for assistance were heard but were not relayed to police. "It's difficult to explain why," Cain said. "It may have been an assumption on that person's part that someone else would call it in and they did not want to get involved." ; Photo: Associated Press / UNITED STATES Delta Airlines flight attendant Sarah Mills has been charged with drinking alcohol on the job and threatening a captain. Airport officials said an attendant told the Delta captain, "You're dead," as she was removed from a plane Sunday afternoon at an airport in Lexington, Ky. Court documents said the attendant smelled heavily of alcohol and admitted drinking whisky on board. Mills, 26, was being held</p>

on a \$350 US bond. Mills also faces a civil review by the Federal Aviation Administration on charges of being a crew member of an airplane while drunk. ; Photo: Andrei Sedoff, Toronto Star / ONTARIO Deputy Ontario Premier George Smitherman, right, and his partner Christopher Peloso, 33, exchanged wedding vows Saturday at a rustic and idyllic resort north of Elliot Lake. Smitherman, 43, is Ontario's first openly gay cabinet minister. The ceremony was conducted by an Ojibwa spiritual adviser who referred to the ancient concept of gay or "two-spirited people." In generations past, they often served as tribes' mystics or medicine men. Barrie-area Justice of the Peace Gerry Solursh conducted the civil portion of the wedding. ;

SOURCE:

The Hamilton Spectator

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WORD COUNT:

4

NO TEXT

THE AFGHAN MISSION Karzai dismisses 'defeated' Taliban Islamic insurgency poses no threat to government, President maintains

PUBLICATION: GLOBE AND MAIL

IDN: 072190187

DATE: 2007.08.07

PAGE: A11

BYLINE: PAUL KORING

SECTION: International News

EDITION: Metro

DATELINE: Washington DC

WORDS: 570

WORD COUNT: 556

PAUL KORING WASHINGTON Afghanistan's leader, Hamid Karzai, dismissed the Taliban as "defeated" yesterday, saying the doctrinaire Islamic insurgency poses no threat to his government and has been reduced to terrorizing ordinary Afghans.

Despite the insurgency still raging across much of southern Afghanistan and the more than 40,000 foreign troops currently waging war against them, President Karzai said the Taliban is "a force that's defeated.

It's a force that is frustrated. It's a force that is acting in cowardice by killing children going to school." Standing with Mr. Karzai, President George W. Bush said at a news conference that the United States and Pakistan have the capacity to scout out and kill al-Qaeda leaders. But he avoided saying whether he would ask Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf before sending U.S. troops into that country.

Afghan officials and generals accuse Pakistan of harbouring, or at least turning a blind eye to, Taliban militants who enter Afghanistan from remote villages along the Pakistan side of the border.

In Islamabad yesterday, Pakistan's Foreign Ministry spokesman, Tasnim Aslam, said there are no al-Qaeda or Taliban safe havens in its territory, the Associated Press reported. "Our position is that if there are any terrorist elements hiding in our tribal areas, it is for the security forces of Pakistan to take action against these elements," he said.

Despite the general air of accord between the two leaders, Mr.

Karzai and Mr. Bush broke sharply on Iran's influence there. One day after Mr. Karzai called the Islamic republic a supporter in the fight against terrorism, Mr. Bush vowed to continue efforts to isolate Iran over its nuclear program.

More than 100 foreign soldiers, including 22 Canadians, along with hundreds of Afghan soldiers and even more Afghan civilians, have been killed in Afghanistan this year. Mr. Karzai's upbeat assessment of the insurgent force, echoing claims he made four years ago before the Taliban insurgency ignited, came after two days of talks with Mr. Bush.

"The Taliban do pose dangers to our innocent people, to children going to school, to our clergy, to our teachers, to our engineers, to international aid workers," Mr. Karzai said, but added, "they're not posing any

THE AFGHAN MISSION Karzai dismisses 'defeated' Taliban Islamic insurgency poses no threat to government

threat to the government of Afghanistan.

"They're not posing any threat to the institutions of Afghanistan or to the buildup of institutions of Afghanistan." Perhaps not, but one of his senior ministers, Mohammed Ehsan Zia, warned last week in Kandahar, where 2,500 Canadian troops are deployed, that if foreign forces leave, the security allowing some reconstruction to get under way will collapse.

While the Taliban may be opting to avoid conventional battles with the vastly stronger foreign armies, they have ranged far and wide across Afghanistan this year. Using effective tactics, some borrowed from the insurgency in Iraq, the Taliban have planted hundreds of roadside bombs and sent droves of suicide bombers to sow panic and wreak havoc. Some of those attacks were in the capital Kabul.

A spate of hostage takings has also underscored the government's lack of control over vast swaths of the country. Last month, on the main highway between Kabul and Kandahar, Taliban fighters seized 23 South Koreans. Two have since been executed. Mr. Bush and Mr.

Karzai agreed that no concessions would be made for the release of the remaining hostages.

Yesterday, the Taliban warned that they plan to seize more foreign hostages.

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: United States; Pakistan; Afghanistan

SUBJECT TERM: visits; foreign relations; foreign policy; strife; terrorism; statements

PERSONAL NAME: Hamid Karzai

ORGANIZATION NAME: Taliban

PUBLISHING: MILITARY LIT Publishers fire off a round of Afghan titles this fall

PUBLICATION: GLOBE AND MAIL

IDN: 072190186

DATE: 2007.08.07

PAGE: R1

BYLINE: ALWYNNE GWILT

SECTION: The Globe Review

EDITION: Metro

DATELINE:

WORDS: 938

WORD COUNT: 854

ALWYNNE GWILT With the arrival of Quebec's famed Vandoos on the ground in Kandahar, Canada's fight in Afghanistan appears far from over.

At home, Canada's publishers are facing a different battle: with each other.

A slew of books on the mission are coming to bookstores this fall, as publishers race to beat the clock. "We don't know how long the war is going to go on in Afghanistan and because it's an ongoing story and on people's minds we wanted to release [the book] as soon as possible," said Ruth Linka, publisher at Brindle & Glass, which releases *The Long Walk Home: Paul Franklin's Journey from Afghanistan* in September.

The books range from personal experiences, photo essays and a soldier's long road to recovery, to the political questioning of government policy and the experiences of women living under the Taliban regime.

"Publishers will try to get the book out while the issue is still on people's minds [and this] is an important issue from many aspects of Canadian life," explained Carolyn Wood, head of the association of Canadian publishers.

Perhaps the juiciest tale comes from Penguin Canada, which will release *The Unexpected War: Canada in Kandahar* in October. The book by Eugene Lang, a former chief of staff for two defence ministers, and Janice Gross Stein, the director of the Munk Centre for International Studies, takes the reader into the backrooms of Canada's politicking as decisions were being made about whether or not to go to war.

"Everything about it had appeal," said Yvonne Hunter, the director of publicity and marketing. "I don't know that anyone has been able to have a talk with those directly involved in that decision making, so from a publishing perspective that's kind of irresistible." In October, Doubleday Canada releases *Fifteen Days: Stories of Bravery and Friendship, Life and Death from Inside the New Canadian Army* by Globe and Mail columnist Christie Blatchford. It's based on her trips to Afghanistan in late 2006 and early 2007.

"I'm not preaching a particular position and for me not to preach is very difficult," said Blatchford. "The book is not about what I think, it's about who these soldiers are." The Canadian public is not connected with the soldiers we're sending over, she added.

Adding to the theme of delving deeper into soldiers' lives is *On Assignment in Afghanistan* from East Coast publishers Nimbus.

This one, by two staffers at the Halifax Chronicle Herald, Chris Lambie and photographer Christian Laforce, focuses on soldiers from the Maritime provinces, a group that makes up a large chunk of Canadians stationed in Afghanistan.

"Here there is so much support for the troops, everyone has the bumper stickers and the ribbons. It's such a way of life throughout all parts of our population because everyone knows someone who's gone out there," said Nimbus managing editor Sandra McIntyre.

But even though the issue tops the news in the Maritimes, McIntyre thinks civilians are "looking for a connection" with the soldiers, for stories that might not get in the day's headlines.

The book will have a large appeal countrywide, she added, because many East Coasters are living out West in places like Fort McMurray.

Victoria book publisher, Brindle & Glass decided to take on Edmonton Journal reporter Liane Faulder's book idea earlier this year. The title character in *The Long Walk Home* is Paul Franklin, the soldier driving the vehicle that was blown up in 2006, ending diplomat Glyn Berry's life. Both of Franklin's legs were severed above the knee and the book chronicles his journey to walk again, a feat that few people with that injury ever accomplish. "It's his story from the moment the bomb went off and beyond. It's quite personal," said Linka.

Two photo-based books are also on their way: Pulitzer prize winner Paul Watson's *Where War Lives*, about his time spent in Afghanistan and other war-torn countries will be published by McClelland & Stewart, while Lana Slezic's book *The Forsaken* about women living under the Taliban, will be released by Anansi Press.

"Several years ago you'd hear a lot about what is happening with women in Afghanistan and now I find you hear mostly about the war and insurgents rather than how everyday people are trying to cope," explained Laura Repas at Anansi on why they picked up Slezic's book.

In December, Random House Canada will publish *Outside the Wire*, a compilation of stories from aid workers, doctors and members of the Canadian Forces that is edited by Kevin Patterson and Jane Warren.

The book does not take a political stance, but does show the changes that medical personnel and soldiers have had to contend with since moving out of the peacekeeping role.

"The book doesn't let you engage in rhetoric about the war because you're reading about what is happening on the ground," said Anne Collins, publisher of Random House Canada.

For Canadians, this first-person glimpse is part of understanding the Afghanistan war. It's also likely why Canadian publishers are eating up the manuscripts.

"When the Second World War was going on there weren't very many truly Canadian publishers so it is a relatively new phenomenon," explained Wood.

Linka at Brindle & Glass believes the pattern will continue.

"Writers reflect the concerns of a society and as long as it's in the media and as long as people are talking about it, I think we as publishers are going to continue to see manuscripts about it."

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Canada; Afghanistan

SUBJECT TERM:publishing; defence; war; books

SUSPECTED ABUSE Legal war over secrecy of Afghan detainees case

PUBLICATION: GLOBE AND MAIL
IDN: 072190185
DATE: 2007.08.07
PAGE: A6
BYLINE: MURRAY BREWSTER
SECTION: National News
SOURCE: CP
EDITION: Metro
DATELINE: Ottawa ONT
WORDS: 623
WORD COUNT: 607

MURRAY BREWSTER Canadian Press OTTAWA A new chapter in the legal drama involving suspected abuse of Afghan detainees has been playing out away from the public eye under strict, court-imposed secrecy, The Canadian Press has learned.

Amnesty International and the B.C. Civil Liberties Association applied on July 11 for an order to force the federal government to release as many as 140 pages of documents related to the handling of prisoners suspected of being Taliban.

A little known provision of the recently revised Canada Evidence Act, which the Crown invoked to block the release of the records, also gave federal lawyers the power to keep news of the court challenge a secret.

That restriction was lifted last week after a teleconference involving lawyers for Amnesty International, the Crown and the Chief Justice of the Federal Court.

"The Attorney-General of Canada has authorized the disclosure of the fact that an application" to challenge the refusal to release records has been made, said a July 30 Justice Department letter.

The letter was signed by attorney Linda Wall of the department's civil litigation section.

National Defence, the Foreign Affairs Department and the federal Justice Department assert the documents being sought are protected for national security reasons and releasing them to human-rights lawyers could have grave consequences.

Laws allowing the state to keep documents secret are not new, said Amnesty International lawyer Paul Champ.

"Unfortunately, the Canada Evidence Act has some very peculiar provisions that were enacted after 9/11 that prohibited us from even telling anyone that we were challenging them," he said in an interview.

"They are very strange provisions that don't allow anyone to disclose the existence of a [court] application. The court registry is not allowed to disclose it. The registry has to keep our files segregated from the other court files and not tell anyone about them." Holding hearings in secret is an affront to the justice system and to anyone who believes in the rule of law, Mr. Champ said.

"I think it would offend any Canadian, this whole idea that they can't even know about the existence of a court action." The civil liberties association has embarked on a separate Charter challenge, hoping to get the provision that allows secret court actions struck down. A Justice Department spokesman defended the secrecy provision, describing it as a national security safeguard that the minister is capable of overriding.

"It was written in the legislation as a precautionary measure to prevent the disclosure of injurious material," Chris Girouard said.

"This section is used as a matter of course, but written consent to open proceedings to public scrutiny is usually given by the Attorney-General." The two human-rights groups petitioned the Federal Court earlier this year for an injunction to halt the Canadian army from handing over captured insurgents to Afghan authorities, who are suspected of torturing prisoners.

Mr. Champ had asked for documents from National Defence and Foreign Affairs after officials from both departments testified in the first round of court action.

"It's unfair for the government to say there's no risk of torture without them being required to produce the documents they have," he said.

"We think they do have documents that do demonstrate they know there's a risk of torture or that, in fact, torture is going on in Afghan custody. And they're hiding behind the Evidence Act to refuse to disclose those documents." When The Globe and Mail reported in April that detainees said they had been abused, the Conservative government insisted it was not aware of any suspected cases of prisoner mistreatment.

It renegotiated its prisoner-transfer agreement with the Afghan government, giving Canadian authorities greater access to detainees captured by Canadians.

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Canada; Afghanistan

SUBJECT TERM: justice; human rights; prisoners; strife; civil rights; freedom of information; political

EDUCATION Tales of Afghanistan aim to help students heal Written by Canadians, the series contains lessons about post-traumatic stress disorder, ethnic tolerance and dispute resolution

PUBLICATION: GLOBE AND MAIL

IDN: 072190163

DATE: 2007.08.07

PAGE: A3 (ILLUS)

BYLINE: JILL MAHONEY

SECTION: International News

EDITION: Metro

DATELINE:

WORDS: 707

WORD COUNT: 666

JILL MAHONEY EDUCATION REPORTER The book begins with Jameela waiting in the garden for her little brother to return from school. Life at home has not been happy since "that bad day" when her uncle died and her father lost part of his leg in a land mine explosion.

The story of 10-year-old Jameela and her family is the story of Afghanistan's children. In the course of a year or so, the farming clan is devastated by the land mine, their village is bombed and they flee to a displaced person's camp before finally returning home.

A Journey of Peace, a 16-part series about the family's struggles to cope with the trauma of war, will soon be introduced to all Afghan students as part of a school-based healing and peace-building program.

The series was developed, written and illustrated half a world away in Hamilton, by a group of mental-health experts, peace activists and Afghan refugees.

"We've never had stories this rich here," Susan Wardak, an adviser to Afghanistan's minister of education, said in an interview from Kabul. "It's really reflecting the Afghan reality; it's really meeting their needs." The books, which are illustrated with soothing watercolours and come with hand puppets, convey a positive, Afghan-centred message.

Behind the stories, which are dotted with references to Allah and depict girls and women in head scarves, are lessons about post-traumatic stress disorder, ethnic tolerance, non-violence, equality and dispute resolution.

As part of a pilot program, Ms. Wardak read the books to a group of youngsters in Jalalabad in eastern Afghanistan and asked one girl what she thought. "She told me about the effect of communication in reducing conflict and violence, which to me is quite shocking because an 11-year-old girl really got the message," said Ms. Wardak, an Afghan-Canadian whose husband helped develop the series.

A Journey of Peace was designed to extend far beyond the schoolyard.

Many Afghan adults have lived their entire lives amid war, which has dominated the past 30 years. Teachers will use the books with students of all ages and will assign home and community activities, such as recounting

EDUCATION Tales of Afghanistan aim to help students heal Written by Canadians, the series contains lessons

the stories to their families, talking about their feelings, helping others and planting peace gardens.

"In a way, it's kind of trying to raise peace literacy in a population in the hope of having that contribute to sustaining peace," said Joanna Santa Barbara, a retired child psychiatrist and one of the books' four authors.

Mary-Jo Land, another author, trained teacher-educators in the curriculum last month in Kabul and said she was met with "absolute overwhelming gratitude for bringing this to them." "One woman . . . at the end of the workshop, she just took my hand and her eyes just welled up," said Ms. Land, a child psychotherapist, play therapist and McMaster University psychology student, as tears formed in her own eyes.

Afghanistan's education system is still ravaged by the war. Many schools are closed or damaged. An estimated two million primary-school-age children – especially girls – do not attend class. Literacy rates are low. Resources are scarce, and some teachers have up to 70 pupils of varying ages.

The books, which can be downloaded at www.journeyofpeace.ca, are part of a larger focus on bringing peace to the country by the Hamilton group, which is associated with McMaster's Centre for Peace Studies.

The team began developing the books before the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in the United States and finished them in 2002.

Although Unicef soon agreed to fund an initial print run in Afghanistan of 42,000 sets in both Dari and Pashto, it took until February to produce them because of the continuing instability and limited electricity.

(The group is seeking funding to print more books and pay Afghan widows to sew additional puppets.) As the books start arriving across Afghanistan in the next couple of months – each school is slated to receive three sets – supporters hope they will soon begin sowing seeds of peace.

"With some healing of the emotional status of the entire population," Ms. Land said, "then the capacity for peace-building will be growing from the children up."

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Afghanistan; Canada

SUBJECT TERM: education; schools; children's books; a journey of peace; foreign aid

Talk is cheap

PUBLICATION: GLOBE AND MAIL

IDN: 072190139

DATE: 2007.08.07

PAGE: A14

BYLINE: BILL LONGSTAFF

SECTION: Letter to the Edit

EDITION: Metro

DATELINE: Calgary AB

WORDS: 93

WORD COUNT: 111

Bill Longstaff Calgary Arnie Aberman implies that we shouldn't talk to the Taliban (letters, Aug. 4) because they "executed homosexuals, stoned adulterers, prevented schooling for girls and excluded women from hospitals." A nasty record indeed. But then, Mr. Aberman's list of sins approximates the behaviour of Saudi Arabia's rulers, and we have no problem talking to them. On the contrary: Western governments sell them billions of dollars worth of weapons.

If we can peddle arms to the most misogynistic dictatorship in the world, we can at least have a conversation with the Taliban.

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Afghanistan

SUBJECT TERM: strife; human rights

ORGANIZATION NAME: Taliban

To defeat bin Laden, first you have to understand him

PUBLICATION: GLOBE AND MAIL

IDN: 072190134

DATE: 2007.08.07

PAGE: A15 (ILLUS)

BYLINE: SHEEMA KHAN

SECTION: Comment

EDITION: Metro

DATELINE:

WORDS: 842

WORD COUNT: 834

SHEEMA KHAN The threat from al-Qaeda and its offshoots remains high, according to recent U.S. intelligence reports. It is clear that Osama bin Laden's message continues to attract adherents. In order to understand the power of his ideas, one should study the words of the man himself.

Bruce Lawrence, a Duke University Islamicist, has done just that in *Messages to the World*, a compilation of bin Laden's statements from 1988–2004. The recurring theme in bin Laden's arguments is reciprocity.

According to Michael Sheuer, a former CIA agent who was in charge of hunting down bin Laden, al-Qaeda's attacks on the West are not based on "who we are," but because of "what we do" in foreign lands.

Mr. Sheuer is highly critical of American leaders for lying to the American people about al-Qaeda's true motivation.

In *Messages*, bin Laden lambastes the U.S. for meddling in the affairs of Muslims. His call: Get out, stop stealing our resources (namely oil), and stop propping up autocratic regimes that act against the interests of the masses. Why, he asks, is Muslim blood so cheap, that it flows so readily in so many lands? His warning: If you continue to kill civilians in our countries, we will do the same in yours, until you stop.

While the vast majority of Muslims reject that prescription, they agree with the gist of the argument – namely, that Western foreign policy has been both intrusive and oppressive. At the heart of Muslim resentment is U.S. support of Israel at the expense of the Palestinians (and, in 2006, the Lebanese). Anger grew, as well, while U.S. troops were stationed for a decade in Saudi Arabia, host of Islam's holiest sites. It reached a tipping point with the invasion of Iraq, the Guantanamo prison, and a "war on terror" that many see as a front for a "war on Islam." Many also see the oft-repeated call for democracy by Western governments as sheer hypocrisy, since people's choices in some Muslim countries have been annulled (Algeria) or punished (Palestine) when they don't conform to the wishes of Washington, Paris and London.

Osama bin Laden elaborates on these themes using the concept of jihad.

What does this mean for Canadians? Bin Laden specifically mentioned Canada after the U.S. and its allies, including Canada, attacked Afghanistan in 2002. His message to the allies: Do not support the U.S. in its hegemonic enterprises.

Our fight is with the Americans, but if you insist on supporting their aims by invading our lands, then we will bring the fight to you in yours.

The ramifications of the Afghan mission on domestic security have yet to enter in public debate. However, the upcoming trial of 15 Toronto-area men accused of planning a terror campaign should shed further light. Media accounts have suggested that the men were angered by Canada's military presence in Afghanistan.

This does not mean that our foreign policy should be held hostage to terror. However, we need to recognize that there is mounting anger – especially amongst Muslim youth – at the injustices perpetrated against their co-religionists elsewhere. When it comes to Afghanistan, there is dismay at the high number of civilian deaths by NATO forces; the impunity with which warlords continue to operate, and the impression that Hamid Karzai is yet another Western puppet. Bin Laden's message of reciprocity – cloaked in powerful religious terminology – is taking root.

In order to diffuse this trend toward an extremist response, we must adopt a strategy that has legitimacy both in the language of Islam, and in democratic norms.

In Messages , bin Laden acknowledges that the Prophet Mohammed forbade the killing of innocent civilians in combat. Yet, to support his call for violence in the West, he bypasses the Prophet's words in favour of the rulings of a medieval scholar, Ibn Taymiyyah, who sanctioned the killing of non-combatants. Bin Laden stresses reciprocity and perpetual warfare, whereas the Prophetic template stressed patience, strict limits on war, and amnesty.

So, in the battle of ideas, Muslim scholars must counter bin Laden's arguments with authoritative Prophetic examples.

In the democratic arena, there needs to be a push toward civic engagement by Muslim youth. This means that Islamic centres must stop importing preachers who encourage isolation and who forbid or discourage voting.

At the same time, Muslim youth should have legitimate avenues to vent grievances and engage politicians. The Americans recognized the importance of this approach by sponsoring a National Muslim American Youth Summit, in which Muslim youth met officials from the departments of Homeland Security, State and Justice. We should follow that example in Canada.

Finally, Muslim youth have the shining examples of Maher Arar and Monia Mazigh, who persevered against terrible injustice without falling prey to radicalization or hatred. Mr. Arar has even called for rebuilding public trust in the very institutions that failed him. Their inspiring story is the ultimate lesson in civic engagement.

sheema.khan@globeandmail.com

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Canada; United States; Middle East

SUBJECT TERM:foreign policy; religion; islam; political; muslims; terrorism; youth

PERSONAL NAME: Osama bin Laden

ORGANIZATION NAME: al-Qaeda

IN BRIEF Taliban proposes exchange of hostages, report says

PUBLICATION: GLOBE AND MAIL

IDN: 072190005

DATE: 2007.08.07

PAGE: A13

BYLINE:

SECTION: International News

SOURCE: AFP

EDITION: Metro

DATELINE: Seoul KOREA (SOUTH)

WORDS: 66

WORD COUNT: 76

AFP Seoul Taliban militants holding 21 South Korean aid workers in Afghanistan proposed today that some female hostages be exchanged for jailed women supporters of the insurgents, Yonhap news agency reported.

The reported new demand by spokesman Yousuf Ahmadi, in a telephone interview with the agency, follows Taliban claims that two of the Korean women were gravely ill.

Foreign Minister Song Min–Soon denied any serious health problems.

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Afghanistan

SUBJECT TERM: strife; hostages; kidnapping; south koreans

PERSONAL NAME: Yousuf Ahmadi

ORGANIZATION NAME: Taliban

Who's really in charge in the Harper cabinet?

PUBLICATION: WINNIPEG FREE PRESS

DATE: 2007.08.07

PAGE: A8

SECTION: Canada Wire

WORD COUNT: 740

CNS Richard Foot CHARLOTTETOWN — When Stephen Harper's government makes big decisions — on the war in Afghanistan, or on income trusts or climate change — the prime minister says he leads his cabinet as merely a first among equals.

"On very, very rare occasions would I make a decision on a policy matter — as opposed to just routine, machinery-of-government issues — would I make a decision on a policy matter unilaterally," Harper said Thursday in a remarkably frank assessment of how decisions are reached at the highest political levels in Canada.

"On all but a very small number of issues, there's been a very, very broad consensus in our cabinet. I don't think I've ever been in a position where I've had to really force a decision through on one group of people or another." Harper was speaking at a news conference in Prince Edward Island at the end of the Conservatives' annual summer caucus retreat, where he also hinted he might shuffle the cabinet before the summer is out.

The million-dollar question: Will beleaguered Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor, saddled with selling an increasingly troublesome war and seemingly at odds with his chief of defence staff, be moved elsewhere or shuffled out altogether? But who cares? Is the federal cabinet relevant any longer as a decision-making body, or has it — under a string of recent Liberal and Tory leaders — become a gathering of yes-men and women, simply rubber-stamping the wishes of the prime minister? Does it matter who's in and who's out, or which MPs occupy which portfolios? Harper's claims of consensus government are at odds with the growing sense among many political observers and constitutional experts that Canada is run less like a parliamentary democracy on the British model than like a private kingdom in which the prime minister and a chosen clique of often-unelected advisers dictate federal policy as long as their term in office allows.

For Donald Savoie, the only cabinet question that really matters is which ministers, if any, are likely to be in Harper's inner circle.

Savoie is an internationally respected political scientist from the University of Moncton.

Three years ago, he published *Breaking the Bargain*, a landmark critique of the sidelining of the civil service and the concentration of power in the prime minister's office. "What we've got today is less cabinet government and more court government," he said in a recent interview. "Those with influence are those who sit in the prime minister's court." Some courtiers may also happen to be cabinet ministers. Prentice is believed to be a member of Harper's inner circle. Senate government leader Marjorie LeBreton is a powerful and trusted link between Harper and the old Progressive Conservative wing of the party, which remains critical to his hold on power.

Savoie also says the finance minister in almost every federal government — in this case, Ontario MP Jim Flaherty — still counts as a key figure because he occupies an indispensable role as the country's chief fiscal decision-maker. Flaherty will not be moved in the expected cabinet shuffle.

But outside of a few individuals, "it doesn't matter a great deal who's in cabinet today, except that they get formal access to the court once a week — access to the king, the prime minister and his courtiers," says Savoie. "Generally, the cabinet no longer matters as a decision-making body." He says the problem cannot solely be blamed on power-hungry leaders.

"The Westminster (British) model was not designed for the kind of forces we're seeing now. Things like professional lobbyists and pollsters and the modern media have pushed the entire system off its moorings," says Savoie.

Harper admits he is not altogether unsympathetic with such criticisms.

"There's no doubt, I'm not going to deny it, I have enough political science background myself to know that the trend in parliamentary systems over 150 years has been towards a concentration of power in the prime minister's office," Harper said on Thursday.

"At the same time, I don't think outsiders are really in a position to make assessments of whether decisions are consensual or not, and to what degree the prime minister does or does not dominate the cabinet, unless you're actually there and you see the workings up close." — CanWest News Service

Trekking program gets professionals out of the office, onto the battlefield; Jumping off a 10-metre tower isn't what most people do on a day off, Andrew Thomson writes.

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SECTION: City
PAGE: C1 / FRONT

ILLUSTRATION: Colour Photo: Mike Carroccetto, The Ottawa Citizen / BenNeil takes the plunge in a simulated parachute jump during a day of 'Executrekking' at CFB Petawawa. The Canadian Forces program gives professionals a chance to trade in their civvies for a day and get a taste of military life. The hands-on, intensive adventure is also an effort to encourage employers not to pass over reservists, who often need time off to carry out training exercises or go on a tour of duty. ; Colour Photo: Mike Carroccetto, The Ottawa Citizen / Jeff Mierins, president of Dow Honda, left, pulls the trigger during a simulated suicide-bomber demonstration at CFB Petawawa. ; Photo: Mike Carroccetto, The Ottawa Citizen / Citizen reporter Andrew Thomson rappels a six-metre wall at CFB Petawawa. ; Photo: Mike Carroccetto, The Ottawa Citizen / Myriam Bower, left, Jeff Mierins and Lori Strath are all smiles before an open-air helicopter ride over the wilderness north of the base. ; Photo: Mike Carroccetto, The Ottawa Citizen / A Forces member stands by as area immigration lawyer Warren Creates emerges from the hatch of a light-armoured vehicle. ;

DATELINE: CFB PETAWAWA
BYLINE: Andrew Thomson
SOURCE: The Ottawa Citizen
WORD COUNT: 1190

CFB PETAWAWA — My body is strapped head-to-toe in parachute gear, tightening my torso and limbs against the backdrop of 35C heat. The others have all taken the plunge. And the paratrooper is barking orders, telling me to move to the edge, tuck in my chin, and jump.

The descent is just 9.6 metres. And the harness stops you long before the ground ever could.

Did I mention I have a slight issue with heights?

The simulated parachute drop on Thursday, within the Land Forces Central Area Training Centre at CFB Petawawa, was part of the Executrek program, an outing that gives professionals and businesspeople a taste of military life.

The Canadian Forces Liaison Council, which seeks to promote goodwill with the business community, showcases the military ethos to employers who might hesitate to hire, promote, or even retain reservists committed to weeks of training each summer — or an overseas deployment.

Trekking program gets professionals out of the office, onto the battlefield; Jumping off a 10-metre tower isn't

About 20 such treks are held across Canada each year. Civilians from all fields get a crash course in military training and view reservists in action.

Demand for reserve enlistment will only grow in coming years, said Léo Desmarteau, the liaison council's executive director. Reserve forces have averaged about 20 per cent of Canada's military presence in Afghanistan. And base personnel at Petawawa believe that by next spring, about 10 per cent of Ontario's 6,000 reservists will find themselves disembarking at Kandahar airport.

That means added pressure on employers to accommodate. But despite the political discord surrounding the Afghanistan mission, public support for the rank-and-file has never been higher, Mr. Desmarteau said during the bus ride to Petawawa.

"We had a surge in support during the (1998) ice storm, too," he explained. "People got to see reservists in action and recognized the value of what they're doing."

Military tradition often dictates secrecy, Mr. Desmarteau said. Executreks try to tear down the proverbial barbed wire that often stands between the base and those who only learn about uniformed life from Hollywood.

That's how a reporter who's not fond of open heights finds himself on a mock tower.

Stage One: Seven men and two women boarded a bus at the Dow's Lake reserve barracks at 7 a.m. We had a lawyer, an orthotics manufacturer, a WestJet manager, and a Citizen reporter and photographer among the ranks. Some can't keep their BlackBerries silent (even when we're deep inside the base).

Normally about 35 to 40 people fly in from across Ontario on chartered aircraft for Executreks to Petawawa. But money is tight, said Lt.-Col. Gerry Holden, an engineer at London airport.

Stage Two: We're told on the bus that Canada's first military aircraft flight occurred here in 1909. Soon enough we're on board two CH-146 helicopters, with helmets, protective goggles, and fluorescent earplugs.

And wide-open side doors.

For the next 20 minutes our flight plan darts and twists along rivers and through forest clearings to the base's furthest reaches, rising and falling from 1,000 feet all the way down to below the tree line.

Hubert Janssen, a manager at Telesat Canada, has been a reservist for more than 35 years. His last helicopter ride was in 1998 during a training exercise at CFB Wainwright in Alberta; a heart attack forced an evacuation to Edmonton on a British chopper.

"It's just like driving a motorcycle," he observed as the helicopter swayed back and forth during the contour phase of our tactical ride.

A couple of subsequent hard right turns left us staring straight down. One doggie bag was handed out to our group of seven, and it went unused. But my Tim Hortons breakfast sandwich and doughnut from two hours prior suddenly seemed like an error in judgment.

No problem for Lori Strath, WestJet's station manager at the Ottawa airport.

"There's no other word for it: That was awesome!"

Stage Three: I'm in the watcher position, peering through an overhead hatch at the rear of our LAV3, the

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light-armoured vehicle of choice in Afghanistan.

Trying to avoid the dust, I was told this is the most dangerous position onboard; your job is to scan for roadside bombs, other explosive devices, and suspected suicide bombers venturing too close (water bottles are usually the first deterrent hurled from the LAVs).

Our CH-146 tandem had since left us in the wilderness. The next destination was lunch with a group of reservists chosen from across Ontario for a leadership course with the Royal Canadian Regiment. This was Day 2 of a 72-hour patrol.

They marched in from the woods, faces painted and clutching machine-guns, able to count hours of sleep this week on one hand.

The Executrekks mingled with this new crop of reservists, soliciting home towns, experience, aspirations. Our meals were paper bags served from the back of a truck marked "Beef macaroni/tomato sauce," or "Veal cutlet with lemon sauce" or "Chicken cacciatore."

These are individual meal packs, IMPs, made for the field. Soldiers eat them cold, throw them into a boiling pot on a campstove, or fill a heating pouch with water.

The macaroni, which tasted surprisingly good, was served with Ritz crackers, instant butterscotch pudding, a Cup-a-Soup and tropical drink mix.

The sealed box of sliced peaches with syrup would have to wait for the bus ride back to Ottawa.

Stage Four: The days of opposing armies clearly, and colourfully, marked on an open battlefield have joined Napoleon and the Duke of Wellington in the history books.

Distinguishing friend from Taliban or al-Qaeda foe is a trickier concept. Training at CFB Petawawa now includes demonstration kits for recognizing improvised explosive devices (IEDs) that wreak havoc on western militaries in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The best they can hope for is fingering a bomber before they detonate. Someone sweaty and fidgety, for instance.

The men and women of Executrek grasped a hand-held detonator connected by orange wire to a suicide vest with two compressed-air cartridges. But they unleashed foot powder, not explosives.

Ms. Strath set off a separate tripwire charge after walking through a ditch, showing how easily the devices can take lives. The Canadian Forces use them for hand-to-hand urban training.

"I didn't even feel the wire," she said.

Stage Five: Call it a gut instinct, but an army truck with a large red cross, parked directly beside your next task, is never a good sign. Two medics lounged in the back, seemingly awaiting the carnage to come.

Not quite. We were to rappel a six-metre wall, and regulations forced emergency personnel to be there.

During a lull, Jeff Mierins, president of Dow Honda and Star Motors, chatted about plans to discuss reserve policies with his fellow new-car dealers after witnessing them in action.

"It would be good to have, so people with (military obligations) on their résumé aren't afraid to join our

Trekking program gets professionals out of the office, onto the battlefield; Jumping off a 10-metre tower isn't

company."

Stage Six: The mock tower was our final stop: 93/4 metres is the standard height used to test prospective paratroopers; many recoil right away and go no further. Chances are that a plunge from 9,750 metres won't bolster their willingness to jump.

The full-body harness with backup parachute left little to the imagination once tightened. But my jump almost didn't happen. We had to switch lines after a mysterious piece of aluminum fell off. Just a precaution, the paratroopers later explained.

With nerves jangling, I spent three seconds breaking the golden rule of heights—fearing (don't look down) before leaping.

A half-second later, the rope tightened and jerked me straight up for the 100-metre glide across the field, legs kicking all the way.

The troops in the maroon berets had made it seem effortless during their demo run.

Myriam Bower, a civilian public affairs officer at the Department of National Defence, was next. She ruminated for at least three minutes before jumping to rapturous and relieved applause.

"It was a case of mind over matter," she later said. "I'd do it again if we had the chance, but the second time would be for fun."

Stage Seven: Our final stop was the officer's mess. Hats were prohibited. Cold beer, thankfully, was not.

Back on the bus, discussion centred on the soldiers' (regulars and reservists) dedication and coolness under pressure. Plus the collective trust required in your comrades that the parachutes will always be properly attached, or that the helicopter engines will always be properly serviced.

"I couldn't help but be impressed by their professionalism, and the devotion they've undertaken by choice," said Warren Creates, an Ottawa immigration lawyer.

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If you want danger, find it at home

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COLUMN: Kate Heartfield
BYLINE: Kate Heartfield
SOURCE: The Ottawa Citizen
WORD COUNT: 723

As the story of the South Korean Christians taken hostage in Afghanistan shows, the decision to travel to a dangerous country can have horrific consequences, and not only for the travellers.

Anyone who goes to a war zone or an oppressed country has to make an ethical judgment: What will my family, my employer or my government have to do for me if I get into trouble? What effects could my visit have on the politics of the place I'm visiting?

I'm not talking about places with high rates of pickpocketing or malaria infection. I'm talking about war zones or severely oppressive regimes.

The more dangerous the place, the more compelling the reason to travel must be if the decision is to be ethically sound. Trained emergency aid workers have a compelling reason to go to war zones, for example. So do journalists, who report back to the world on the places tourists can't, or shouldn't, go.

Even ill-prepared aid workers or missionaries believe, at least, that they're going for the right reasons.

The people who really bug me are the danger tourists.

Tourists travel entirely for their own benefit. Bored people with disposable incomes don't need to put themselves in danger, to force their governments or families to negotiate with hostage-takers or mount search missions. They don't need to use their money to prop up corrupt or evil regimes. But some do.

Afghanistan is an interesting case: Canada is trying to support the government there, and to develop the economy. So one might argue that going as a tourist is a noble action. But it's doubtful that the economic benefits of Western tourism to Afghanistan outweigh the dangers.

What it comes down to is this: If you're convinced that going to a dangerous place is the right thing to do, then go. But at least think about it first. Don't go just to get an adrenaline rush from the danger that you and other people face.

There seems to be a fashion for nasty destinations in the book world these days. One example is *101 Places Not to Visit: Your Essential Guide to the World's Most Miserable, Ugly, Boring and Inbred Destinations* by Adam Russ.

I've been reading one by Tony Wheeler, the founder of the Lonely Planet guidebook brand: *Bad Lands: A Tourist on the Axis of Evil*.

I've always been sympathetic to the Lonely Planet philosophy. The books aren't stuffy and they don't assume that Western tourists are as fragile as teacups.

But Lonely Planet has taken some criticism for being a little too neutral about its destinations. Mr. Wheeler's attitude is neutral in the extreme, judging by his book.

If Mr. Wheeler's book were a piece of journalism, it would be ethical, according to my rules. And his book almost is journalism — but not quite. As the title indicates, it's a memoir and a guide to other tourists.

He visits several countries with governments that endanger their own citizens or other countries. He scoffs at embargos, boycotts and travel advisories, without ever addressing the ethics of tourism to "bad lands."

In Afghanistan, he meets a "feisty" Japanese tour operator. He writes that "the Japanese government, like the Australian one, contends that the whole country is a no-go zone. She's irate about this."

Mr. Wheeler doesn't tell us what the tour operator's argument is. Presumably, he's on her side, since he's a tourist there himself. But he doesn't give his own argument either.

The chapter on Cuba contains a section giving Americans advice on how to get there without their government knowing.

The chapter on Burma contains the obligatory history of its democratic uprising and of Aung San Suu Kyi, the Nobel Prize Winner who's living under house arrest. But Mr. Wheeler doesn't mention that Aung San Suu Kyi has asked tourists not to come to her country until its people know freedom. He doesn't examine the impact of tourism on the generals in charge of the country.

He interviews a tourism operator who "switched sides from the 'boycott Burma' activists to her own pro-tourism activities." She's working for a better country "from within", she says, but Mr. Wheeler doesn't explain how she's doing that. Between the lines, there's an assumption that pro-boycott activists are naïve outsiders. Many might be, but they're taking their principles from the democratic movement inside Burma.

Mr. Wheeler and other danger tourists either don't know or don't care that there is an observer effect in tourism: just as a scientist can't touch a frog's innards without cutting it open, a tourist can't take a government-approved tour in North Korea without sending a little message of approval to Kim Jong-il.

Kate Heartfield is a member of the Citizen's editorial board. She blogs at ottawacitizen.com/worldnextdoor.

Bush warns Karzai against Iran; U.S. president takes Afghan leader to task as two-day visit wraps up

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DATELINE: CAMP DAVID, Maryland
BYLINE: Peter Baker
SOURCE: The Washington Post
WORD COUNT: 567

CAMP DAVID, Maryland – U.S. President George W. Bush yesterday warned Afghan President Hamid Karzai to be more suspicious of neighbouring Iran, calling the Islamic republic a "destabilizing force" that should be isolated until it drops any nuclear aspirations and proves it can be a positive influence.

Capping a two-day visit at the presidential retreat at Camp David, Mr. Bush took issue with Mr. Karzai's view that Iran "has been a helper" in Afghanistan, a rare point of divergence in a meeting intended to show solidarity in the battle with the Taliban and al-Qaeda. The Bush administration has accused Iran of arming the Taliban, reports Mr. Karzai largely brushed aside before arriving in the U.S.

"They're not a force for good, as far as we can see," Mr. Bush said of Iran, with Mr. Karzai at his side. "They're a destabilizing influence wherever they are. Now, the president will have to talk to you about Afghanistan. But I would be very cautious about whether or not the Iranian influence there in Afghanistan is a positive force. And therefore, it's going to be up to them to prove to us and prove to the government that they are."

The contrasting assessments of Iran came as the two leaders tried to calibrate their approaches to Afghanistan's other critical neighbour, Pakistan. Mr. Karzai and his government have been highly critical of Pakistan for harbouring Taliban and al-Qaeda guerrillas in rugged, largely ungoverned tribal territory along the border. Mr. Bush has been more understanding of Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf's dicey political position, calling him a valuable ally in the struggle with terrorists, but lately pressing him to do more.

Mr. Bush ducked a question about whether he would send U.S. forces into Pakistan without Gen. Musharraf's permission to take out top al-Qaeda leadership if necessary, saying that "we're in constant communications with the Pakistan government" and that "it's in their interest that foreign fighters be brought to justice." He added, "I'm confident, with real actionable intelligence, we will get the job done."

Mr. Bush's comments came days after U.S. Senator Barack Obama, a leading Democratic presidential candidate, caused a stir by saying he would be willing to order U.S. troops into Pakistan unilaterally if Gen. Musharraf failed to take out terrorists. Mr. Obama also criticized Mr. Bush's strategy in Afghanistan, vowing to send two more U.S. brigades — about 7,000 troops — to fight Taliban guerrillas. Nearly 26,000 U.S. troops are now in Afghanistan.

Mr. Karzai's visit comes at a difficult moment as he faces the renewed Taliban threat and a hostage crisis involving 21 South Korean missionaries. South Korea's embassy yesterday said it had "high hopes" for

face-to-face talks with the Taliban militia holding 21 of its citizens, one of whom has been able to speak to a negotiator. The kidnappers have already killed two hostages.

A senior U.S. official said Mr. Bush wanted to shore up Mr. Karzai by bringing him to this mountain retreat just days before the Afghan president hosts a summit with Gen. Musharraf in Kabul on Thursday. "It was pretty much of a gut check to see how Karzai's doing, and it seems like he's doing well," the official said.

Mr. Bush and Mr. Karzai trade compliments, with both vowing they would defeat the Taliban.

To view a video report on the hostage crisis in Afghanistan, go to Today's Videos at ottawacitizen.com

PM hints at shuffle, but who really cares?; Is the cabinet relevant any longer as a decision-making body, or has it become a gathering of yes-people, Richard Foot asks.

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SECTION: News
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DATELINE: CHARLOTTETOWN
BYLINE: Richard Foot
SOURCE: The Ottawa Citizen
WORD COUNT: 628

CHARLOTTETOWN — When Stephen Harper's government makes big decisions — on the war in Afghanistan, or on income trusts or climate change — the prime minister leads his cabinet, he says, as merely a first among equals.

"On very, very rare occasions would I make a decision on a policy matter — as opposed to just routine, machinery of government issues — would I make a decision on a policy matter unilaterally," Mr. Harper said on Thursday in a remarkably frank assessment of how decisions are reached at the highest political levels in Canada.

"On all but a very small number of issues, there's been a very, very broad consensus in our cabinet. I don't think I've ever been in a position where I've had to really force a decision through on one group of people or another."

Mr. Harper was speaking at a news conference in Prince Edward Island at the end of the Conservatives' annual summer caucus retreat, where he also hinted he might shuffle the cabinet before the summer was out.

But who cares? Is the federal cabinet relevant any longer as a decision-making body, or has it become a gathering of yes-men and women, simply rubber-stamping the wishes of the prime minister? Does it matter who's in and who's out, or which MPs occupy which portfolios?

Mr. Harper's claims of consensus government are at odds with the growing sense among many political observers and constitutional experts that Canada is run less like a parliamentary democracy in the Westminster model than like a private kingdom, in which the prime minister and a chosen clique of often-unelected advisers dictate federal policy, as long as their term in office allows them.

In Charlottetown last week, Tory cabinet ministers were told to make sure they were in the country, and close to a telephone, in the middle of August, a directive widely interpreted as evidence Mr. Harper is ready to shuffle the deck.

For Donald Savoie, the only cabinet question that really matters is which ministers, if any, are likely to be members of Harper's "court."

PM hints at shuffle, but who really cares?; Is the cabinet relevant any longer as a decision-making body, or

Mr. Savoie is an internationally respected political scientist from the University of Moncton. Three years ago, he published *Breaking the Bargain*, a landmark critique of the sidelining of the civil service, and the concentration of power in the prime minister's office. "What we've got today is less cabinet government, and more court government," he said in a recent interview. "Those with influence are those who sit in the prime minister's court."

A generation ago, cabinets were vitally important power-sharing arrangements, in which the prime minister crafted alliances and catered to powerful figures who represented regional or ideological interests within the ruling party. Their support around the cabinet table was essential to any prime minister maintaining leadership of his party.

"There's no doubt, I'm not going to deny it, I have enough political science background myself to know that the trend in parliamentary systems over 150 years has been towards a concentration of power in the prime minister's office," the prime minister said on Thursday.

"At the same time, I don't think outsiders are really in a position to make assessments of whether decisions are consensual or not, and to what degree the prime minister does or does not dominate the cabinet unless you're actually there, and you see the workings up close.

"Frankly I think we've been really fortunate — and there's no way you can verify this — we've been really fortunate that we've had a large degree of consensus on almost all the decisions we've made.

"I have a great group of people, all highly ethical people, who while they bring individual, regional and personal perspectives to issues, they broadly share a vision of Canada. And on all but a very small number of issues, there's been a very, very broad consensus in our cabinet."

Van Doos focus on training Afghan army; 'There's nothing better than Afghan people solving Afghan problems,' commander says

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ILLUSTRATION: Colour Photo: Andrew Mayeda, The Ottawa Citizen / A Canadian soldier practises at a firing range at Kandahar Airfield. Quebec soldiers have started combat patrols in the volatile south of Afghanistan, venturing into districts of Kandahar where the Taliban lurk. ;
DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan
BYLINE: Andrew Mayeda
SOURCE: The Ottawa Citizen
WORD COUNT: 667

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan – Helping the Afghan army stand on its own will be a focus of the new military rotation led by a Quebec regiment, says the man who will oversee Canada's training and mentoring operations.

The Royal 22nd Regiment, based in Valcartier, Que., and known in English Canada as the Van Doos, has been taking over the bulk of Canada's military operations in this country over the last few weeks.

Quebec soldiers have started combat patrols in the volatile south of Afghanistan, venturing into outlying districts of Kandahar province where the Taliban lurk.

But efforts to train the fledgling Afghan National Army (ANA) will be just as crucial to setting the stage for Canada's planned withdrawal in February 2009, not to mention turning the tide of public opinion in Quebec.

Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor said last month the military would accelerate training of the ANA so Canadian troops could pull back from the front lines.

Lt.-Col. Stéphane Lafaut, the incoming commander of the Operational Mentor Liaison Team, echoed that view.

"We want to focus on that. That's part of establishing security in the area, (and) we need the ANA to do that," he said one recent evening as soldiers from the new rotation test-fired their weapons at Kandahar Airfield. "There's nothing better than Afghan people solving Afghan problems."

It will be not be easy to establish the ANA, built almost from scratch by the United States and its allies after the 2001 overthrow of the Taliban, as a reliable fighting force.

The army presently has more than 50,000 troops, but less than 500 are ready to fight in Kandahar province, where most of Canada's 2,500 troops are stationed.

Van Doos focus on training Afghan army; 'There's nothing better than Afghan people solving Afghan problems,' commander says

Canada's top military commander, Gen. Rick Hillier, has also indicated that ANA training will be a priority during the coming months.

But he has publicly disagreed with Mr. O'Connor on the pace at which training can be accomplished. Gen. Hillier said recently it will be a "long while" before ANA troops are self-sufficient.

Lt.-Col. Lafaut has been impressed by the willingness of the ANA to work with Canadian soldiers. Yet only time will tell how quickly they can be trained, he added.

"I'm not sure where we're going to be in six months from now," he said. "Some units are better than others."

The Van Doos are the first Quebec regiment to command Canadian military operations in Afghanistan.

The regiment has a storied history of fighting alongside anglophone troops, having distinguished itself during the First and Second World Wars, as well as numerous peacekeeping and humanitarian missions.

But there is widespread opposition to the war in Quebec, where anti-war sentiment dates back to the province's resistance to conscription during the two world wars. According to some polls, seven out of 10 Quebecers oppose the mission.

That has heightened the political risk to Prime Minister Stephen Harper, who is counting on a strong showing in Quebec to win a majority in the next election.

Mr. Harper recently softened his stance on the war, saying he would seek a "consensus" from all parties before extending the mission.

Some observers have interpreted Mr. O'Connor's remarks about the emphasis on ANA training as an attempt to shield the Van Doos from heavy fighting. But Brig.-Gen. Guy Laroche, who assumed the Canadian command here last week, has promised that the Van Doos will receive no special treatment.

Rank-and-file soldiers, meanwhile, are trying not to be distracted by the lack of support in Quebec.

"We're not here to prove anything. We're here to do our job," said Sgt. Sylvain Latulippe, who arrived in Kandahar last week.

The people of Quebec will better understand the mission once the military shows it is improving the lives of Afghans, he said.

There have been rumblings of tension between anglophone and francophone soldiers during the handover. Most of the soldiers from the previous six-month rotation were based in Gagetown, N.B., Petawawa, Ont., or Edmonton.

But many soldiers downplay the differences between the two cultures.

"They're no different than us. They just speak a different primary language. Canadian soldiers all train to the same standard," said Maj. Alex Ruff, who commanded a combat platoon during the last rotation.

Project Kandahar

'Sometimes You Forget You're in a War Zone'

For the next six weeks, Citizen reporter Andrew Mayeda will be blogging from Afghanistan while covering

Van Doos focus on training Afghan army; 'There's nothing better than Afghan people solving Afghan problems'

the war embedded with the Canadian military in Kandahar. We've also given him a video camera so he can capture the action.

On Kandahar Airfield: You feel strangely insulated from the war. Maybe that's because the base replicates so many comforts of home ... On the outside, it's a whole different world. Read more and see video footage at ottawacitizen.com

Van Doos focus on training Afghan army; 'There's nothing better than Afghan people solving Afghan problem' 24

Van Doos focus on training Afghan army; 'There's nothing better than Afghan people solving Afghan problems,' commander says

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ILLUSTRATION: Colour Photo: Andrew Mayeda, The Ottawa Citizen / A Canadian soldier practises at a firing range at Kandahar Airfield. Quebec soldiers have started combat patrols in the volatile south of Afghanistan, venturing into districts of Kandahar where the Taliban lurk. ;
DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan
BYLINE: Andrew Mayeda
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WORD COUNT: 685

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Van Doos focus on training Afghan army; 'There's nothing better than Afghan people solving Afghan problem' 37

Lawyers for detained Canadian ask to see misconduct report

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PAGE: A4
COLUMN: National Report
ILLUSTRATION: Black & White Photo: / Omar Khadr;
DATELINE: OTTAWA
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 274

Defence lawyers for Omar Khadr, the 20-year-old Canadian who has been held for six years in the U.S. compound for suspected terrorists in Guantanamo Bay, filed a motion yesterday to see a 2004 report into allegations of misconduct by U.S. military prosecutors without parts of it blacked out. The defence contends the report will show that Captain John W. Rolph, now the deputy chief judge of the Court of Military Commission Review, had contacts with military commission prosecutors starting in 2003. The defence also believes it will show Capt. Rolph advised prosecutors on how to proceed. Those military commissions were later struck down by the U.S. Supreme Court. In a statement, Mr. Khadr's defence lawyers do not contend there is anything improper about the contacts at the time. But they say that they have taken on "added significance" since Capt. Rolph has been assigned to a review of the military commission. Mr. Khadr, pictured, is accused of throwing a grenade during a fire fight 2002 in Afghanistan between U.S. forces and al-Qaida insurgents in which Sergeant Christopher Speer was killed. "So it turns out the senior judge in Omar's case had a hand in creating the last illegal system — I guess it shouldn't be a surprise given how dirty everything else about this procedure seems to be," said lawyer Dennis Edney of Edmonton, in a statement announcing the motion.

KEYWORDS: CANADIANS; PRISONERS OF WAR; INTERNATIONAL LAW; TERRORISM

Taliban 'defeated,' says Afghan president; 'Duty To Complete Job'

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DATELINE: CAMP DAVID,
MD.
SOURCE: Reuters
WORD COUNT: 293

CAMP DAVID, MD. – U.S. President George W. Bush and Afghan President Hamid Karzai vowed yesterday to finish off the Taliban, which Mr. Karzai said was a defeated force that attacks civilians but is not a threat to his government.

Mr. Karzai, visiting the United States amid renewed concern about worsening violence in Afghanistan and the threat from militant hide-outs across the border in Pakistan, said he was building up his army and police with U.S. help.

"Our enemy is still there, defeated but still hiding in the mountains. And our duty is to complete the job, to get them out of their hideouts in the mountains," he said in the second day of meetings with Mr. Bush at the Camp David presidential retreat in the Maryland mountains.

Mr. Bush, who has been on the defensive about the failure to find al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden, said he was confident U.S. and Pakistani forces would track down the militant group's leaders.

But he stopped short of saying whether the United States would seek Pakistan's permission before going after those militants. The subject is a sensitive issue in Islamabad.

"I'm confident, with real, actionable intelligence, we will get the job done," Mr. Bush said.

Bin Laden is believed by U.S. intelligence officials to be hiding in the rugged tribal region of Pakistan, an area near the border of Afghanistan that has been a source of concern to Mr. Karzai because it is seen as a hotbed of Taliban activity.

The Taliban, driven from power by a U.S.-led invasion in 2001, are "a force that is acting in cowardice" by attacking schoolchildren, teachers, clergy, engineers and international aid workers, Mr. Karzai said. "They're not posing any threat to the government of Afghanistan," he said. "It's a force that is frustrated."

Mr. Bush said the two countries' shared Islamic militant foes were "part of an ongoing challenge that the free world faces."

KEYWORDS: WAR; TERRORISM; FOREIGN AID; PAKISTAN; AFGHANISTAN

Van Doos oversee training; Afghan army desperately underequipped

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PAGE: A12
KEYWORDS: WAR; TERRORISM; CANADIANS
DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan
BYLINE: ANDREW MAYEDA
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 329

Helping the Afghan army stand on its own will be a focus of the new military rotation led by Quebec's Van Doos regiment, says the man who will oversee Canada's training and mentoring operations.

The Royal 22e Régiment, based in Valcartier, has been taking over the bulk of Canada's military operations in this country over the last few weeks.

Quebec soldiers have started combat patrols in the volatile south of Afghanistan, venturing into outlying districts of Kandahar province where the Taliban lurk.

But efforts to train the fledgling Afghan national army will be just as crucial to setting the stage for Canada's planned withdrawal in February 2009, not to mention turning the tide of public opinion in Quebec.

Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor said last month the military would accelerate training of the Afghan army so Canadian troops could pull back from the front lines.

Lt.-Col. Stéphane Lafaut, the incoming commander of the Operational Mentor Liaison Team, echoed that view.

"We want to focus on that. That's part of establishing security in the area, (and) we need the ANA to do that," he said one recent evening as soldiers from the new rotation test-fired their weapons at Kandahar airfield. "There's nothing better than Afghan people solving Afghan problems."

It will be not be easy to establish the army, built almost from scratch by the United States and its allies after the 2001 overthrow of the Taliban, as a reliable fighting force.

The army presently has more than 50,000 troops, but less than 500 are ready to fight in Kandahar province, where most of Canada's 2,500 troops are stationed.

Compared with Western forces, the ANA is poorly equipped. Soldiers are often wear little or no body armour and travel around in pickup trucks.

Canada's top military commander, General Rick Hillier, has also indicated ANA training will be a priority during the coming months.

But he has publicly disagreed with O'Connor on the pace at which training can be accomplished. Hillier said recently it will be a "long while" before ANA troops are self-sufficient.

Lafaut has been impressed by the willingness of the Afghans to work with Canadian soldiers. Yet only time will tell how quickly they can be trained, he added.

"I'm not sure where we're going to be in six months from now," he said. "Some units are better than others."

Bush accuses Iran of nuclear arms wish; White House forced to clarify. U.S., Afghan presidents agree Pakistan must do more to quell deadly violence

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PUBLICATION: Montreal Gazette
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EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
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ILLUSTRATION: Colour Photo: LARRY DOWNING, REUTERS / U.S. President GeorgeW. Bush and Afghan President Hamid Karzai differ sharply on role of Iran in Afghanistan. ;
KEYWORDS: NUCLEAR POWER; NUCLEAR REACTORS; NUCLEAR WEAPONS; WAR;URANIUM; TREATIES; TERRORISM
DATELINE: WASHINGTON
SOURCE: AFP
WORD COUNT: 328

U.S. President George W. Bush charged that Iran has openly declared it seeks nuclear weapons – an inaccurate accusation at a time of sharp tensions between Washington and Tehran.

"It's up to Iran to prove to the world that they're a stabilizing force as opposed to a destabilizing force. After all, this is a government that has proclaimed its desire to build a nuclear weapon," he said during a joint news conference with Afghan President Hamid Karzai.

Iran has repeatedly said its nuclear program, widely believed in the West to be cover for an effort to develop atomic weapons, is for civilian purposes.

Asked to provide examples of Tehran openly declaring it seeks atomic weapons, White House officials said Bush was referring to Iran's defiance of international calls to freeze sensitive nuclear work.

They explained he was referring to Tehran's uranium enrichment – a process that can yield nuclear bomb material – and resulting worries by the UN nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency.

"After keeping their nuclear program secret for a decade, the Iranian government has refused the offers of the international community to provide nuclear energy and continues to flout the inspectors of the IAEA," said national security spokesperson Gordon Johndroe.

Bush's shot at Tehran marked a sharp break from Karzai, who on Sunday called the Islamic republic "a helper" against extremists.

The two, who are meeting at the Camp David presidential retreat in Maryland, did agree Pakistan must help quell deadly violence inside Afghanistan.

Pakistan's president, Pervez Musharraf, and Karzai are expected to address a jirga Thursday in Kabul of 700 tribal elders and other influential figures from both countries to try to find ways to address the insurgency.

"I hope very much that this jirga will bring to us what we need," Karzai said. "Our enemy is still there, defeated but still hiding in the mountains. And our duty is to complete the job."

Tribal elders in Pakistan's Waziristan region said they would not attend the grand assembly, Reuters reported.

Taliban resurgence in the past two years has led to accusations by Afghan officials that the insurgents were organizing and launching attacks from the safety of sanctuaries on Pakistani soil. Pakistan denies the allegations.

Khadr's lawyers bid to see censored U.S. report on case; Suggest judge, prosecutors had contacts

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KEYWORDS: CANADIANS; PRISONERS OF WAR; INTERNATIONAL LAW; TERRORISM
DATELINE: OTTAWA
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 206

Defence lawyers for Omar Khadr, the young Canadian who has been held for six years at the U.S. compound for suspected terrorists in Guantanamo Bay, filed a motion yesterday to see a 2004 report into allegations of misconduct by U.S. military prosecutors – without parts of it blacked out.

The defence contends such an unredacted report will show Capt. John W. Rolph, now the deputy chief judge of the Court of Military Commission Review, had contacts with military commission prosecutors starting in 2003. The defence also believes it will show Rolph advised them on how to proceed.

Those military commissions were later struck down by the U.S. Supreme Court.

In a statement, Khadr's defence lawyers do not contend there is anything improper about the contacts at the time.

But they say they have taken on "added significance" since Rolph has been assigned to a review of the military commission.

Khadr, now 20, is accused of throwing a grenade during a 2002 firefight in Afghanistan between U.S. forces and Al-Qa'ida insurgents in which Sgt. Christopher Speer was killed.

"So it turns out the senior judge in Omar's case had a hand in creating the last illegal system – I guess it shouldn't be a surprise, given how dirty everything else about this procedure seems to be," said lawyer Dennis Edney of Edmonton, in a statement announcing the motion.

Cabinet's makeup matters less and less; Shuffle in works. Harper claims he has a broad consensus

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SECTION: News

PAGE: A8

ILLUSTRATION: Colour Photo: CHRIS WATTIE, REUTERS FILE PHOTO / Minister of Indian Affairs
Jim Prentice (left), speaking here in the House of Commons in May last year, is widely touted to succeed Gordon O'Connor as defence minister in next week's shuffle. ;

KEYWORDS: PRIME MINISTERS; POLITICIANS; POLITICAL PARTIES;
GOVERNMENT; CANADA

DATELINE: CHARLOTTETOWN

BYLINE: RICHARD FOOT

SOURCE: CanWest News Service

WORD COUNT: 1179

When Stephen Harper's government makes big decisions – on the war in Afghanistan, or on income trusts or climate change – the prime minister leads his cabinet, he says, merely as first among equals.

"On very, very rare occasions would I make a decision on a policy matter – as opposed to just routine, machinery of government issues – would I make a decision on a policy matter unilaterally," he said Thursday in a remarkably frank assessment of how decisions are reached at the highest political levels in Canada.

"On all but a very small number of issues, there's been a very, very broad consensus in our cabinet. I don't think I've ever been in a position where I've had to

really force a decision through on one group of people or another."

Harper was speaking at a news conference in Prince Edward Island after the Conservatives' annual summer caucus retreat, where he also hinted he might shuffle the cabinet before the summer is out.

But who cares? Is the federal cabinet relevant any longer as a decision-making body, or has it – under a string of recent Liberal and Tory leaders – become a gathering of yes-men and women, simply rubber-stamping the wishes of the prime minister?

Does it matter who's in and who's out, or which MPs occupy which portfolios?

Harper's claims of consensus government are at odds with the growing sense among observers and constitutional experts that Canada is run less like a parliamentary democracy in the Westminster model than like a private kingdom, in which the PM and a chosen clique of often–

unelected advisers dictate federal policy, as long as their term in office allows them.

In Charlottetown last week, Tory ministers were told to make sure they were in the country, and close to a phone, in the middle of August, a directive widely interpreted as evidence Harper is ready to shuffle his deck.

Cabinet's makeup matters less and less; Shuffle in works. Harper claims he has a broad consensus

Revenue Minister Carol Skelton added to the cabinet shuffle speculation Friday when she announced she would not seek re-election. The Saskatchewan MP's move leaves a hole that would allow Harper to promote a backbencher to the cabinet club, while also shuffling existing ministers.

British Columbia MP James Moore and Calgary MP Diane Ablonczy are seen as underemployed and ripe for promotion.

It would be Harper's second cabinet shuffle since coming to power in 2006, and the guessing game is fiercest over who might be promoted or demoted within current cabinet ranks.

And the million-dollar question: will beleaguered Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor – saddled with selling an increasingly unpopular war, and seemingly at odds with his chief of defence staff – be moved elsewhere or shuffled out altogether?

O'Connor's demotion has been predicted for weeks, and CTV reported on the weekend he will be bumped to Veterans Affairs in a shuffle expected next week. It said he would be succeeded by Indian Affairs Minister Jim Prentice, a respected member of the caucus and a Harper favourite.

For Donald Savoie, the only cabinet question that really matters is which ministers, if any, are likely to be members of Harper's "court."

Savoie is an internationally respected political scientist from the University of Moncton.

Three years ago, he published *Breaking the Bargain*, a landmark critique of the sidelining of the civil service, and the concentration of power in the Prime Minister's Office.

"What we've got today is less cabinet government, and more court government," he said in a recent interview. "Those with influence are those who sit in the prime minister's court."

Some courtiers may also happen to be cabinet ministers. Prentice is believed to be a member of Harper's inner circle.

Senate government leader Marjorie LeBreton is a powerful and trusted link between Harper and the old Progressive Conservative wing of the party, which remains critical to his hold on power.

Savoie also says the finance minister in almost every federal government – in this case Ontario MP Jim Flaherty – still counts as a key figure, since he occupies an indispensable role as the country's chief fiscal

decision-maker. Flaherty will not be moved in the expected shuffle.

But outside of a few individuals, "it doesn't matter a great deal who's in cabinet today, except that they get formal access to the court once a week – access to the king, the prime minister and his courtiers," Savoie says. "Generally, the cabinet no longer matters as a decision-making body."

A generation ago, cabinets were vitally important power-sharing arrangements, in which the PM crafted alliances and catered to powerful figures who represented regional or ideological interests within the ruling party. Their support around the cabinet table was essential to any prime minister maintaining leadership of his party.

Savoie also says regional ministers once mattered, because a prime minister needed them for political advice in dealing with Canada's fractious provinces.

Cabinet's makeup matters less and less; Shuffle in works. Harper claims he has a broad consensus

Today, instead of relying on politicians for such information, prime ministers gather it from focus groups or polling surveys or the 24-hour media.

The declining relevance of federal cabinets is not unique to Canada, says Savoie, who recently finished a research stint at Oxford University in England. He says the once-proud institutions of British governance are in a similar state of "disarray."

He also says the problem cannot solely be blamed on power-hungry leaders.

"The Westminster model was not designed for the kind of forces we're seeing now. Things like professional lobbyists and pollsters and the modern media have pushed the entire system off its moorings," says Savoie, who believes prime ministers now govern through a small, powerful circle of courtiers because it's the only way they can "survive and manage the political crises which occur."

"It's not because Harper is power-hungry – although there's some of that at play – it's because there are deeper forces here," Savoie says. "We have to go back to the drawing board, to rethink the role of the civil service and the cabinet, and put some legal limits on the almost unfettered power of the prime minister."

Most intriguing of all, Harper admits he is not altogether unsympathetic to such criticisms.

"There's no doubt, I'm not going to deny it, I have enough political science background myself to know that the trend in parliamentary systems over 150 years has been toward a concentration of power in the prime minister's office," the PM said on Thursday.

"At the same time, I don't think outsiders are really in a position to make assessments of whether decisions are consensual or not, and to what degree the prime minister does or does not dominate the cabinet unless you're actually there, and you see the workings up close.

"Frankly, I think we've been really fortunate – and there's no way you can verify this – we've been really fortunate that we've had a large degree of consensus on almost all the decisions we've made.

"I have a great group of people, all highly ethical people, who while they bring individual, regional and personal perspectives to issues, they broadly share a vision of Canada. And on all but a very small number of issues, there's been a very, very broad consensus in our cabinet."

One of those exceptions might be Michael Chong, Harper's former minister of intergovernmental affairs, who took the once common – but now rare – step of resigning from the cabinet last November on a point of principle.

Chong was opposed to Harper's decision to introduce a motion in the House of Commons declaring the Québécois a nation within a united Canada. Chong also said that, despite his portfolio, Harper hadn't even consulted him on the resolution before sending it to Parliament.

Suggesting, Savoie says, that Harper's claims of having a robust, consensus-driven cabinet might not be entirely valid.

"Harper can claim there's consensus around the table, but who's going to challenge him or debate him on the things he wants done?" Savoie says.

"Any minister who stood up and challenged him, would probably not be in cabinet long."

Cabinet's makeup matters less and less; Shuffle in works. Harper claims he has a broad consensus

Khadr lawyers want to see report

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COLUMN: Canada Digest
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DATELINE: OTTAWA
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 138

OTTAWA – Defence lawyers for Omar Khadr, the young Canadian who has been held for six years in the U.S. compound for suspected terrorists in Guantanamo Bay, filed a motion Monday to see a 2004 report into allegations of misconduct by U.S. military prosecutors without parts of it blacked out.

The defence contends that such a report will show that Capt. John W. Rolph, now the deputy chief judge of the Court of Military Commission Review, had contacts with military commission prosecutors starting in 2003. The defence, headed by lawyer Dennis Edney of Edmonton, also believes it will show Rolph advised prosecutors on how to proceed.

Khadr, now 20, is accused of throwing a grenade during a firefight 2002 in Afghanistan between U.S. forces and al-Qaida insurgents in which Sgt. Christopher Speer was killed.

Bush, Karzai rule out deal on Korean hostages

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KEYWORDS: WAR; TERRORISM; NOBEL PRIZE; FOREIGN AID; AFGHANISTAN; UNITEDSTATES
DATELINE: WASHINGTON
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 137

WASHINGTON – U.S. President George W. Bush and Afghan President Hamid Karzai agreed Monday that there would be no concessions made to the Taliban for the release of 21 South Korean hostages, the White House said.

Bush and Karzai discussed the prisoners' plight during a summit at the Camp David presidential retreat outside Washington, according to national security spokesman Gordon Johndroe.

"President Bush reiterated that the Taliban must release the remaining Koreans held immediately," he said as the two leaders wrapped up two days of talks on the security situation in Afghanistan. "The United States has been working to the extent possible with the Afghan and Korean governments in urging that the hostages be released. There will be no quid pro quo, the Taliban cannot be emboldened by this."