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Liberal seeks troops' opinions

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DATE: 2007.10.09
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PAGE: A6
ILLUSTRATION: Photo: THE CANADIAN PRESS / Liberal defence critic DenisCoderre talks to reporters in Kandahar yesterday. ;
DATELINE: KANDAHAR, AFGHANISTAN
SOURCE: The Canadian Press
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 163

Liberal defence critic Denis Coderre arrived in Afghanistan yesterday to hear from Canadian troops on Canada's role in the conflict.

But Coderre said that no matter what he hears, it won't change his party's position calling for an end to Canada's combat mission when the current mandate expires in February 2009.

"No . . . we are pretty clear about the notion of rotation," Coderre told reporters. "We feel that rotation is in order and that we should put an end to the combat mission."

Coderre said other NATO members should take up the front-line role Canada is playing. "It is not a Canadian mission. It is an international mission."

Coderre, who was part of the government which deployed the troops in 2002, said Canada has done its part. "We're not abandoning the Afghan people. There might be some other way . . . we can help the Afghan people, but we believe . . . rotation is in order."

He said NATO should now look at the caveats that some member countries have in place that keep their troops out of combat in Afghanistan.

Blast kills Australian soldier

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DATELINE: CANBERRA, AUSTRALIA
SOURCE: The Associated Press
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 156

Australia has sustained its first combat casualty in Afghanistan or Iraq after a roadside bomb killed a soldier in southern Afghanistan, the country's military chief said today.

The soldier was killed yesterday when an improvised explosive device went off near the armoured vehicle he was driving, Air Chief Marshal Angus Houston told reporters in Canberra.

Another soldier was seriously injured.

"This is a tragic day for the Australian Defence Force and our thoughts and prayers are with the families of these two soldiers," Houston said.

The soldier's death comes as Australia prepares for general elections due to be called in the next few weeks. Polls show Prime Minister John Howard facing a landslide defeat amid rising opposition to Australia's involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Howard has refused to set a timetable for withdrawing troops from either conflict, saying they will remain for as long as they are needed.

A recent U.S. Studies Centre survey found 64 per cent of Australians oppose the Iraq war and 51 per cent oppose Australia's involvement in Afghanistan.

Food convoy attacks rise: UN official

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DATELINE: OTTAWA
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COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 349

Convoys carrying food donations are increasingly under attack in southern Afghanistan, says the area director of the UN's World Food Program.

"From a security point of view it has gotten worse, there's no doubt about that," Rick Corsino said yesterday during a visit to Ottawa. "We've lost more food in the past 12 months through those attacks than we had in the previous three years."

His comments come after Foreign Affairs Minister Maxime Bernier declared: "The territory here in Kandahar is safer than one year ago. The number of attacks is diminished. I admit the situation is still difficult, but (it) has greatly improved."

Based in Kabul, Corsino estimates 1,000 tonnes of wheat, beans, cooking oil and fortified biscuits have been waylaid since January. About 30 attacks on trucks moving the food between volatile southern districts are blamed on insurgents who resent foreign intervention, or on bandits who later sell donations meant to sustain the poor.

"Two or three attacks have resulted in the deaths of (Afghan) truck crews and police escorts," Corsino said. None of his staff has been killed as huge swaths of the south are off-limits to UN workers including parts of Kandahar.

Corsino is working with Afghan government officials and national non-government organizations in a long-distance bid to ensure food gets where it's supposed to go. "My main worry is to not only deliver the program but deliver it in a credible manner."

Recent reports "suggested that we needed to tighten up a little bit more on the distribution monitoring. So we're putting more attention in those areas at the moment." Those efforts include contracting local Afghans as "private-sector staff . . . to serve as our eyes and ears in those areas."

The UN has also helped fund transportation and training for Afghan officials to trace food distribution in areas where international staff can't go.

On the bright side, the UN expects to deliver 225,000 tonnes of food this year to Afghans deemed by periodic surveys to be most in need, Corsino said. "I have to say, it's not perfect. It's the best we can do under the circumstance."

Food aid is often in exchange for school or literacy enrolment, or participation in road and canal construction.

Afghanistan executes 15

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DATELINE: KABUL
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COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 285

Ending a three-year moratorium on the death penalty, Afghanistan executed 15 prisoners, the prisons chief announced yesterday.

The United Nations protested the executions, which could complicate the missions of some NATO countries.

The mass execution took place Sunday according to Afghan law, which calls for condemned prisoners to be shot to death, said Abdul Salam Ismat, who oversees Afghanistan's prisons.

The crimes included murder, kidnapping and armed robbery, but officials said no Taliban or al-Qaida fighters were among the prisoners.

Until it was ousted in 2001, the hardline Taliban regime carried out executions in public. The new government pledged it would halt executions, and had carried out only one, in 2004.

Foreign troops often hand over captured militants to the Afghan government, raising the question of whether countries that do not use the death penalty might stop doing so.

The Netherlands was one of the first to criticize the Afghan announcement, calling the executions "extremely unwelcome." But it also said Dutch troops would continue to transfer militants to the Afghan government, saying it had an agreement protecting those prisoners from execution.

Anger over the executions also could prove a snag for NATO's efforts to get its member countries to send more troops to Afghanistan. NATO has some 40,000 soldiers there but commanders complain they need more helicopters, mobile troops and instructors to train the Afghan army.

The announcement on state television said President Hamid Karzai ordered the executions following a decision by a special commission he set up to review rulings by the Supreme Court. "After all the discussions and after looking back over the cases . . . in order to prevent future crimes, such as murders, armed robberies, kidnappings, and to maintain the stability of the country, (Karzai) approved the prisoners' death sentences," the statement said.

Food convoys targeted

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COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Times & Transcript
(Moncton)
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Convoys carrying precious food donations are coming under increasing attack in southern Afghanistan.

Rick Corsino, local director of the UN's World Food Programme, says security there is only getting worse. He says about 1,000 tonnes of wheat, beans and cooking oil have been lost in attacks since January. That's more food lost in the last 10 months than in the last three years.

The attacks are blamed on insurgents who resent foreign intervention, and sometimes on thieves who later sell the food.

Anti-yellow ribbon protests dishonour sacrifices

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DATE: 2007.10.09
SECTION: Opinion
PAGE: D7
BYLINE: Charles W. Moore for the Times & Transcript
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Times & Transcript (Moncton)
WORD COUNT: 756

I support the right of citizens to protest Canada's involvement in the Afghanistan war and military operations in general. Those who so choose to do are ironically exercising the freedom that soldiers shed blood to preserve, and that our troops in Afghanistan are, among other things, putting their lives on the line to defend against the malign forces of international terrorism.

However, what is not OK is harassment of those, whether they be individuals, businesses, institutions, or local governments, who demonstrate support for our soldiers and for their mission by displaying the yellow ribbon symbol. It's one thing to be a free-expression freeloader, quite another to disrespect others' right of free expression in support of the principles that make such expression possible.

Banefully, there have been fights from coast to coast about yellow ribbons being displayed on police cars and fire trucks. In the latest flare-up, the Fredericton Peace Coalition, reportedly a collection of 11 member groups, has announced plans to launch a campaign to get businesses, churches, and individuals to remove yellow ribbons from lapels, automobiles, windows and doors.

Peace Coalition organizer Tracy Glynn told News 88.9's Denise Miller that "We see it as (being) all connected to a mission in Afghanistan that we oppose. We support the troops, but we want them brought home."

Well as I said, Ms. Glynn and her fellow-travelers are entitled to their opinion, but this too-frequently prattled trope about "supporting the troops, but not the mission" is a big load of what emits from the south end of a northbound horse, and an affront to the intelligence of any clear thinking person.

It's an odd sort of "support" that says, essentially, "we think what you're doing is a waste of time, money, and lives, even morally wrong, but don't worry, we support you."

While principled objection to war is possible, albeit naive, idealistic, and in many instances morally impoverished, you can't have it both ways.

Reports from the Afghan theatre pretty much unanimously confirm that our soldiers believe what they are doing there is the right thing to do, and perceive their efforts and sacrifices as making a positive and substantial difference in the lives of the Afghan people.

If you want to contradict them, that's your right, but don't flatter yourself by claiming to still "support" these brave men and women.

My impression is that if any of our troops serving in Afghanistan imagine their mission there is not important and worthwhile, they would represent an exceedingly tiny minority.

The troops believe in the mission. At least the ones who write to me responding to columns I've written on related topics do.

One Canadian Armed Forces sergeant stationed in country wrote:

"As a serving member of the Canadian Forces presently serving in Afghanistan I wish to say thank you for your article. You basically said what every Canadian soldier over here thinks, and for that I salute you . . ."

I am humbled.

The fact is that the "get out of Afghanistan (now or in 2009), but we support our troops" crowd who complain that this war is futile and that lives lost in it are "wasted," will make that assertion self-fulfilling prophecy if they get their way, and they are essentially spitting on the graves of our soldiers who've made the supreme sacrifice there believing what they were doing was worthwhile.

Ms. Glynn contends that wearing or displaying a "Support Our Troops" yellow ribbon trumpets positive support for the war.

"I think by putting the yellow ribbon on or wearing the red shirt, you're being a cheerleader for the war," Glynn said.

That's certainly the case for me, and no apologies.

The coalition is threatening to withdraw support of local businesses if they continue to display yellow ribbon decals.

"We'll be launching a take down your ribbon campaign in October, just before the sixth anniversary of the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan," Glynn told CTV Atlantic.

The terminology "invasion and occupation" reveals Ms. Glynn's true ideological leanings, and I'm inclined to think that this protest will go nowhere in terms of persuading ribbon-displayers to remove the symbols, more likely the contrary.

So good on Fredericton Mayor Brad Woodside, who has declared that the yellow ribbon on his lapel is staying put, as is the one he displays in his window as well, adding that if anything, we should be putting up and wearing more ribbons.

More exemplary of the true Canadian spirit than Ms. Glynn and her '60s peace protest wannabe throwbacks are the 2,000 or so citizens of Saint John who turned out in the pouring rain for the Sept. 28 Red Friday Rally on Long Wharf, organized by Lori Greenslade, mother of Private David Greenslade slain by Taliban bushwhackers in Afghanistan on Easter Sunday.

n Charles W. Moore is a Nova Scotian freelance writer and editor whose articles, features, and commentaries have appeared in more than 40 magazines and newspapers in Canada, the U.S., the U.K., and Australia.

Two soldiers, airman added to N.S. war memorial

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WORD COUNT: 145

Two fallen soldiers and an U.S. marine pilot had their names added to a war memorial in Tatamagouche during a quiet ceremony Sunday.

All three men had strong ties to the small Nova Scotia community of about 1, 000 people.

Pte. Nathan Smith, a Canadian soldier killed in 2002 in Afghanistan when an American jet mistakenly bombed his unit; Sgt. Darcy Tedford, a soldier killed by an ambush last year in Afghanistan; and Capt. Derrick Nichols, a U.S. marine pilot who died in a training exercise in 2004, had their names added to the cenotaph.

Nichols grew up in Tatamagouche and attended school in the area.

Smith spent part of his childhood in Dartmouth, N.S., and moved to Tatamagouche with his parents.

"The people of this community have been so good to us. It just really means a lot."

Bill Cameron, a legion organizer, said it's important that the young men be remembered alongside those who died in previous wars.

"It's very important that we remember them in our community and have their names added to the cenotaph along with First World War and Second World War veterans," said Cameron.

Letters | Canadians must learn war on terror not the way to peace

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As someone who has lived, worked, and studied in Fredericton for 27 years, I am gravely disappointed with Mayor Brad Woodside for his lack of leadership and misinformed opinion when it comes to his position on the war in Afghanistan.

I'm also disappointed with the New Brunswickers who left numerous ignorant and threatening comments on the Fredericton Peace Coalition's website.

I support our troops, but I don't support the mission. I believe the yellow ribbons are meant to dupe Canadians into supporting an unjust war by hiding behind the slogan Support Our Troops.

It's very easy for businesses and individuals to show their yellow ribbons, but try actually thinking about the war and then voice your opinion to the press. That's courage, that's democracy, and that's what Canada is all about.

Many of Canada's great soldiers of both world wars in the 20th century believed they were fighting for a lasting peace and a better world. We shouldn't betray what they were fighting for.

Here in the state of Maryland where I now live, I have found a large and vibrant peace movement that spans the whole country and stems from more than 70 per cent of Americans who are against Bush, the war on terror and the war in Iraq.

On Sept. 15, led by veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan, I marched shoulder-to-shoulder with tens of thousands of American citizens to oppose the destructive and futile war that has made America more unsafe than ever before.

If most Americans have figured out that the war on terror is a fraud, why are Canadians supporting the same war in Afghanistan?

It's true that many young men decide to volunteer for our Armed Forces as it holds the only promise of a future. In the U.S., young men are returning home from the war on terror mentally and physically scarred by a brutal occupation that oppresses the soldiers as much as it oppresses Iraqis.

Canada should offer its young men and women a more promising future than "kill and be killed" in an unjust war. The war in Afghanistan is exactly the same as the war in Iraq, and its continuance will result in the same outcome of tragedy, destruction and a more unstable world than ever before.

Personally, I think Tracy Glynn's statements to the press were honest, courageous and thoughtful.

I stand in solidarity with any organization, any movement or any individual who comes down on the side of peace, prosperity and life rather than war, devastation and destruction.

Mayor Brad Woodside, you should be ashamed of yourself.

Dana R. Brown

Baltimore, MD

Thank you to all veterans

When I read the article in the Sept. 27 Daily Gleaner entitled Peace group wants yellow ribbons removed, it reminded me of a time when a co-worker declared that wearing a poppy on Remembrance Day glorified war.

I couldn't believe this person would say that, and I cannot believe there is a group that would not want to show support to our troops.

To suggest people who are showing support through the yellow ribbons and red Fridays, don't know anything about the war is really an unfair generalization.

Maybe Tracy Glynn should learn not to judge others because she admits to not knowing what is happening in Afghanistan.

Even if people are not sure of what the whole thing is all about they can still show their support to the troops, as they risk their lives to make things better for the innocent in Afghanistan.

I would just like to ask the Fredericton Peace Coalition, where do you think Canada would be if no one went to fight in the first and second world wars?

I want to thank the veterans of those wars.

There are not any words that can truly express the gratitude to the troops in Afghanistan now, those that have been there and those that will be there. So please accept this Thank you. God Bless you all.

Jane Hall

Fredericton

Military families invisible soldiers

I am writing this letter on behalf of the families of soldiers in Afghanistan.

My boyfriend is over there right now, and I support him and all the other soldiers as well.

I was appalled to read that the Fredericton Peace Coalition is asking get businesses to take down the yellow ribbons. The ribbons do not say support the war; they say support the troops.

The brave men and women over there doing what they are trained to do appreciate knowing that we support them.

They love to see the signs and see the people wearing the yellow pins.

I am proud of our army and the brave men and women that represent us all over the world.

I agree that we want them home. I had to put the man I love on the plane to go overseas, but that does not mean we shouldn't support them in doing their job.

There are many jobs where the people put their lives on the line everyday for others and we support them; police officers and firefighters for example. And we support them. I consider all the families waiting for their loved ones to come home "the invisible soldiers." We are proud to wear the yellow ribbons everyday.

Sandra Rickard

Fredericton

City's drug problem not ending

I would like to comment on a news story in the Sept. 25 Daily Gleaner, entitled Suggestion to move methadone clinic panned.

There is a major drug problem in this city, and detoxification and methadone programs are not helping. One reason they fail is they are only for a limited time, and once the individual is clean from the addictive substance, they walk right back into it all over again.

The local detoxification unit in this city is pitifully inadequate.

They need a safe place for them to go to get away from the drugs until they are strong enough to withstand the initial temptation.

I appreciate the effort many agencies are making to help those caught in the web of addiction.

However, and very sadly so, this effort is not making any substantial leaps and bounds in curbing drug dealers. They are a contributing factor in getting our youth and other members of our community on this junk.

I suggest anyone who receiving financial assistance from a government agency who has an addiction should have to undergo a three- to five-year drug treatment program.

Michael G. McKay

Fredericton

Drastic steps to reach Kyoto

When Prime Minister Harper declares Canada cannot meet Kyoto's targets I say: Nonsense.

Here are measures that would go a long way in helping our country reach those targets sooner than we expect.

1. Raise the price of gas to \$2 a litre and use the excess collected toward an emergency fund to help victims of weather-related disasters.
2. Make exhaust levels a criterion for vehicle inspection and any gas- powered machinery.

3. Give major industrial polluters a tax-free period so they can use the cash otherwise collected to refurbish their plants in order to meet state of the art waste and emission levels.
4. Make municipalities take measures that render the use of personal vehicles inconvenient while alternative modes of transportation would be more efficient, safe and convenient to users.
5. Institute tax incentives for Canadians doing their part in helping their country meet its targets.

There are those who argue adopting strict measures to reduce our emissions will adversely affect our economy and our ability to compete on global markets. Again I say: Nonsense.

The added benefits of adopting strict measures will be fitter Canadians, a healthier environment and a consequent decrease in our health costs.

Just think about it: if the land is sick, the people will become sick and the economy will suffer.

Guy Vézina

Fredericton

Afghan food convoys attacked; 1,000 tonnes stolen since January: UN

PUBLICATION: Kingston Whig–Standard (ON)

DATE: 2007.10.09

SECTION: National/World

PAGE: B1

SOURCE: The Canadian Press

BYLINE: Sue Bailey

DATELINE: Ottawa

WORD COUNT: 412

Convoys carrying precious food donations are increasingly under attack in southern Afghanistan, says the local director of the United Nations World Food Programme.

"From a security point of view it has gotten worse – there's no doubt about that," Rick Corsino said yesterday during a visit to Ottawa.

"We've lost more food in the past 12 months through those attacks than we had in the previous three years."

His comments come on the heels of a whirlwind tour by Foreign Affairs Minister Maxime Bernier who declared: "The territory here in Kandahar is safer than one year ago. The number of attacks is diminished. I admit the situation is still difficult, but [it] has greatly improved."

Canada's mission in Afghanistan could be debated intensely this fall amid the prospect of an early federal election. The Conservative drive to extend Canada's combat role past February 2009 runs counter to every opposition leader.

Based in Kabul, Corsino estimates that about 1,000 tonnes of wheat, beans, cooking oil and fortified biscuits have been waylaid or vanished since January. About 30 attacks on local Afghan trucks moving the food between volatile southern districts are blamed on insurgents who resent foreign intervention, or sometimes on bandits who later sell donations meant to sustain the poorest families.

"Two or three attacks have resulted in the deaths of [Afghan] truck crews and police escorts," Corsino said. None of his staff has been killed as the UN increasingly restricts movement and the ability to track food aid in the most dangerous areas.

Huge swaths of the south are off-limits to UN workers including parts of Kandahar where Canadian troops are based, Zabul to the east and Uruzgan to the north.

Corsino is working with Afghan government officials and national non-government organizations in a long-distance bid to ensure food actually gets where it's supposed to go.

"My main worry is to not only deliver the program, but deliver it in a credible manner."

Recent reports out of Zabul and Uruzgan "suggested that we needed to tighten up a little bit more on the distribution monitoring. So we're putting more attention in those areas at the moment." Those efforts include contracting local Afghans as "private-sector staff ... to serve as our eyes and ears in those areas."

The UN has also helped fund transportation and training for Afghan government officials to trace food distribution in areas where international staff can't go.

On the bright side, the UN expects to deliver this year about 225,000 tonnes of food to Afghans deemed by periodic surveys to be most in need, Corsino said. "I have to say, it's not perfect. It's the best we can do under the circumstance."

In Ottawa, the federal government just announced another \$25 million for emergency food supplies in Afghanistan.

Australian soldier dies in Afghanistan

PUBLICATION: Kingston Whig-Standard (ON)

DATE: 2007.10.09

SECTION: National/World

PAGE: B1

COLUMN: In brief

WORD COUNT: 115

Australia has sustained its first combat casualty in Afghanistan or Iraq after a roadside bomb killed a soldier in southern Afghanistan, the country's military chief said yesterday. The soldier, whose name and rank were not immediately released, was killed yesterday when an improvised explosive device went off near the armoured vehicle he was driving. Another soldier was seriously injured in the attack. The soldier's death comes as Australia prepares for general elections and polls show conservative Prime Minister John Howard facing a landslide defeat amid rising opposition to Australia's involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Coderre firm on 2009 pullout; Other NATO members should take up front-line role, Liberal defence critic says

PUBLICATION: The Chronicle-Herald

DATE: 2007.10.09

SECTION: World

PAGE: A6

SOURCE: The Canadian Press

BYLINE: Dene Moore

ILLUSTRATION: Liberal defence critic Denis Coderre said in Kandahar on Monday that Canada has done its part when it comes to the Afghan war. (DENE MOORE / CP)

WORD COUNT: 508

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan – Liberal defence critic Denis Coderre arrived in Afghanistan on Monday to hear from Canadian troops on Canada's role in the conflict.

But Coderre said that no matter what he hears in the coming days, it won't change his party's position calling for an end to Canada's combat mission when the current mandate expires in February 2009.

"No, in the sense that, about the combat mission we are pretty clear about the notion of rotation," Coderre told reporters after his arrival at Kandahar Airfield.

"We feel that rotation is in order and that we should put an end to the combat mission."

The Liberals have vowed to vote against the Conservative government's plan to extend the combat mission.

Coderre said other members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization should take up the front-line role Canada is currently playing.

"It is not a Canadian mission. It is an international mission," he said after visiting the Tim Hortons on the military base Monday.

Foreign Affairs Minister Maxime Bernier made the same photo-op stop at the base the day before.

With the war in Afghanistan expected to dominate Parliament this fall – and perhaps even a federal election – all parties have ramped up efforts to sell their positions to the public.

Coderre, who was part of the government which deployed troops to Afghanistan in 2002, said Canada has done its part when it comes to the Afghan war.

"We're not abandoning the Afghan people," he said. "There might be some other way, at the military level, that we can help the Afghan people but we believe, about the combat mission, that rotation is in order."

He said NATO should now look at the caveats that some member countries have in place that keep their troops out of combat in Afghanistan.

"What we need is to be blunt," Coderre said.

No other member countries are volunteering. In fact, several, including the Netherlands, are debating the future of their own missions in Afghanistan. The Dutch commitment ends in August 2008.

NATO and Canadian military officials have already sounded the alarm over troop strength in Afghanistan.

The international force has around 37,000 troops in Afghanistan but only Canada, the United States, Britain and the Netherlands have taken on combat roles in the violent southern regions, where Taliban activity is strongest.

Canada has about 2,300 troops in Kandahar as part of its overall commitment of 2,500 to the International Security Assistance Force. Seventy-one Canadian soldiers and one diplomat have died since the Canadian mission began in 2002 and Coderre said public opinion is against continuing the mission.

Coderre will spend two more days at the NATO base on his unofficial visit but he won't be going off the base to visit soldiers on the front line for security reasons.

His opinion on the proposed February 2009 pullout is not a popular one with many troops.

"I don't think it's a good idea," said one young soldier. "We haven't had time to do what we wanted to do. It would be better to continue."

He said he's ready to come back and finish the job.

Another soldier was resigned to the fact that the decision will be made for political reasons.

"The decision will be made by politicians," he said. "(But) Honestly, I think we need to stay because we've started work here that we need to finish."

Coderre said he's spoken to Gen. Ray Henault, the Canadian general who chairs NATO's military committee, and he said the international organization does have a contingency plan for a Canadian withdrawal from its combat role.

He told reporters that Canada should focus instead on Pakistan's role in war in Afghanistan. Governance and corruption within Afghanistan are another major issue.

"We can announce millions and millions, but do we believe that that money is going exactly where it should be?" he asked.

Food convoys under attack

PUBLICATION: The
Chronicle–Herald
DATE: 2007.10.09
SECTION: Canada
PAGE: A6
SOURCE: The Canadian Press
BYLINE: Sue Bailey
WORD COUNT: 161

OTTAWA (CP) – Convoys carrying precious food donations are increasingly under attack in southern Afghanistan, says the local director of the United Nations World Food Program.

"From a security point of view it has gotten worse – there's no doubt about that," Rick Corsino said Monday during a visit to Ottawa.

"We've lost more food in the past 12 months through those attacks than we had in the previous three years."

His comments come on the heels of a whirlwind tour by Foreign Affairs Minister Maxime Bernier who declared: "The territory here in Kandahar is safer than one year ago. The number of attacks is diminished. I admit the situation is still difficult, but (it) has greatly improved."

Canada's mission in Afghanistan could be debated intensely this fall amid the prospect of an early federal election. The Conservative drive to extend Canada's combat role past Feb–ruary 2009 runs counter to every opposition leader.

Based in Kabul, Corsino estimates that about 1,000 tonnes of wheat, beans, cooking oil and fortified biscuits have been waylaid or vanished since January.

Afghan prisoners executed; Shooting of 15 brings end to three-year ban on death penalty

PUBLICATION: The
Chronicle-Herald
DATE: 2007.10.09
SECTION: Front
PAGE: A1
SOURCE: The Associated
Press
BYLINE: Jason Straziuso
WORD COUNT: 673

KABUL, Afghanistan – Ending a three-year moratorium on the death penalty, Afghanistan executed 15 prisoners by gunfire, including a man convicted of killing three foreign journalists during the U.S.-led invasion, the prisons chief announced Monday.

The United Nations protested the executions, which could complicate the missions of some NATO countries here.

The mass execution took place Sunday evening according to Afghan law, which calls for condemned prisoners to be shot to death, said Abdul Salam Ismat, who oversees Afghanistan's prisons.

The crimes committed by those executed included murder, kidnapping and armed robbery, but officials said no Taliban or al-Qaida fighters were among the prisoners.

Until it was ousted in late 2001, Afghanistan's hardline Taliban regime carried out executions in public, many of them at the Kabul stadium. The new government pledged to the international community it would halt executions and had carried out only one previously, in 2004.

The 15 deaths could complicate relationships between the government and some NATO countries with military forces here. Foreign troops often hand over captured militants to the Afghan government, raising the question of whether countries that do not use the death penalty might stop surrendering prisoners.

The Netherlands was one of the first to criticize the Afghan announcement, calling the executions "extremely unwelcome." But it also said Dutch troops would continue to transfer militants to the Afghan government, saying it had an agreement protecting those prisoners from execution.

Anger over the executions also could prove a snag for NATO's efforts to get its member countries to send more troops to Afghanistan. NATO has some 40,000 soldiers here but commanders complain they need more helicopters, mobile troops and instructors to train the Afghan army. "The fact that we have not fully been able to live up to the promises that nations have made is a point of concern for me," NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer said Monday in Denmark before the executions were announced.

Among those executed was Reza Khan, who was convicted of adultery and the murder of one Afghan and three foreign journalists in 2001. The four were pulled from their cars, robbed and shot near the eastern city of Jalalabad while driving toward Kabul six days after the Taliban abandoned the capital under heavy U.S. bombing.

The four were Australian TV cameraman Harry Burton, Afghan photographer Azizullah Haidari of the Reuters news agency, Maria Grazia Cutuli of Italian newspaper Corriere della Sera and Julio Fuentes of the Spanish daily El Mundo.

Also executed was Farhad, who is also known as Pahlavan and like many Afghan used only a single name. He was involved in the 2005 kidnapping of Italian aid worker Clementina Cantoni, who was freed after three weeks in captivity.

Tom Koenigs, head of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, said the UN had expressed its concern over the use of the death penalty many times in the past.

"The United Nations in Afghanistan has been a staunch supporter of the moratorium on executions observed in Afghanistan in recent years," Koenigs said. "I expect Afghanistan to continue working towards attaining the highest human rights standards and ensuring the due process of law and the rights of all citizens are respected."

The government's official announcement of the executions on state television Monday evening said President Hamid Karzai ordered the executions following a decision by a special commission he set up to review rulings by the Supreme Court.

"After all the discussions and after looking back over the cases . . . in order to prevent future crimes, such as murders, armed robberies, kidnappings, and to maintain the stability of the country, (Karzai) approved the prisoners' death sentences," a statement read over the news said.

Karzai's spokesman, Humayun Hamidzada, had told The Associated Press last week that Karzai was taking "extreme care in execution cases." "He has been holding on to these cases because he wants to make sure that the justice is served and the due process is complete. He personally does not like executions but Afghan law asks for it, and he will obey the laws," Hamidzada said.

Afghanistan executes 15 prisoners, ends moratorium

PUBLICATION: The Guardian (Charlottetown)

DATE: 2007.10.09

SECTION: Deaths/World

PAGE: B9

COLUMN: Synopsis

SOURCE: The Associated Press

DATELINE: KABUL, Afghanistan

WORD COUNT: 143

Ending a three-year moratorium on the death penalty, Afghanistan executed 15 prisoners by gunfire, including a man convicted of killing three foreign journalists during the U.S.-led invasion, the prisons chief announced Monday.

The United Nations protested the executions, which could complicate the missions of some NATO countries here.

The mass execution took place Sunday evening according to Afghan law, which calls for condemned prisoners to be shot to death, said Abdul Salam Ismat, who oversees Afghanistan's prisons.

The crimes committed by those executed included murder, kidnapping and armed robbery, but officials said no Taliban or al-Qaida fighters were among the prisoners.

Until it was ousted in late 2001, Afghanistan's hardline Taliban regime carried out executions in public, many of them at the Kabul stadium. The new government pledged to the international community it would halt executions, and had carried out only one previously, in 2004.

Liberal Defence critic sounds out troops

PUBLICATION: The Guardian (Charlottetown)

DATE: 2007.10.09

SECTION: Deaths/World

PAGE: B9

COLUMN: Synopsis

SOURCE: The Canadian Press

DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan

WORD COUNT: 94

Liberal Defence critic Denis Coderre arrived in Afghanistan on Monday to hear from Canadian troops on Canada's role in the conflict.

But Coderre said that no matter what he hears in the coming days, it won't change his party's position calling for an end to Canada's combat mission when the current mandate expires in February 2009.

"No, in the sense that, about the combat mission we are pretty clear about the notion of rotation," Coderre told reporters after his arrival at Kandahar Airfield.

"We feel that rotation is in order and that we should put an end to the combat mission."

The Liberals have vowed to vote against the Conservative government's plan to extend the combat mission.

Liberal defence critic sounds out troops

PUBLICATION: The Telegram (St. John's)

DATE: 2007.10.09

SECTION: News

PAGE: C10

SOURCE: The Canadian Press

BYLINE: Dene Moore

DATELINE: Kandahar, Afghanistan

ILLUSTRATION: Liberal defence critic Denis Coderre talks to reporters at Kandahar Airfield in Afghanistan, Monday. Coderre is making his own impromptu visit with the Canadian military – a day after Canada's foreign affairs and international co-operation ministers completed a whirlwind tour of the country. – Photo by The Associated Press

WORD COUNT: 505

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Foreign Affairs Minister Maxime Bernier made the same photo-op stop at the base the day before.

With the war in Afghanistan expected to dominate Parliament this fall – and perhaps even a federal election – all parties have ramped up efforts to sell their positions to the public.

Coderre, who was part of the government which deployed troops to Afghanistan in 2002, said Canada has done its part when it comes to the Afghan war.

"We're not abandoning the Afghan people," he said. "There might be some other way, at the military level, that we can help the Afghan people but we believe, about the combat mission, that rotation is in order."

He said NATO should now look at the caveats that some member countries have in place that keep their troops out of combat in Afghanistan.

"What we need is to be blunt," Coderre said.

No other member countries are volunteering. In fact, several, including the Netherlands, are debating the future of their own missions in Afghanistan. The Dutch commitment ends in August 2008.

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Coderre will spend two more days at the NATO base on his unofficial visit but he won't be going off the base to visit soldiers on the front line for security reasons.

His opinion on the proposed February 2009 pullout is not a popular one with many troops.

"I don't think it's a good idea," said one young soldier. "We haven't had time to do what we wanted to do. It would be better to continue."

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Coderre said he's spoken to Gen. Ray Henault, the Canadian general who chairs NATO's military committee, and he said the international organization does have a contingency plan for a Canadian withdrawal from its combat role.

He told reporters that Canada should focus instead on Pakistan's role in war in Afghanistan. Governance and corruption within Afghanistan are another major issue.

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Afghanistan executes 15 prisoners

PUBLICATION: The Telegram (St. John's)

DATE: 2007.10.09

SECTION: News

PAGE: C10

SOURCE: AP

BYLINE: Jason Straziuso

DATELINE: Kabul, Afghanistan

WORD COUNT: 527

Ending a three-year moratorium on the death penalty, Afghanistan executed 15 prisoners by gunfire, including a man convicted of killing three foreign journalists during the U.S.-led invasion, the prisons chief announced Monday.

The United Nations protested the executions, which could complicate the missions of some NATO countries here.

The mass execution took place Sunday evening according to Afghan law, which calls for condemned prisoners to be shot to death, said Abdul Salam Ismat, who oversees Afghanistan's prisons.

The crimes committed by those executed included murder, kidnapping and armed robbery, but officials said no Taliban or al-Qaida fighters were among the prisoners.

Until it was ousted in late 2001, Afghanistan's hardline Taliban regime carried out executions in public, many of them at the Kabul stadium.

The new government pledged to the international community it would halt executions, and had carried out only one previously, in 2004.

The 15 deaths could complicate relationships between the government and some NATO countries with military forces here.

Foreign troops often hand over captured militants to the Afghan government, raising the question of whether countries that do not use the death penalty might stop surrendering prisoners.

The Netherlands was one of the first to criticize the Afghan announcement, calling the executions "extremely unwelcome." But it also said Dutch troops would continue to transfer militants to the Afghan government, saying it had an agreement protecting those prisoners from execution.

Anger over the executions also could prove a snag for NATO's efforts to get its member countries to send more troops to Afghanistan. NATO has some 40,000 soldiers here but commanders complain they need more helicopters, mobile troops and instructors to train the Afghan army. "The fact that we have not fully been able to live up to the promises that nations have made is a point of concern for me," NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer said Monday in Denmark before the executions were announced.

Among those executed was Reza Khan, who was convicted of adultery and the murder of one Afghan and three foreign journalists in 2001. The four were pulled from their cars, robbed and shot near the eastern city of Jalalabad while driving toward Kabul six days after the Taliban abandoned the capital under heavy U.S. bombing.

The four were Australian TV cameraman Harry Burton, Afghan photographer Azizullah Haidari of the Reuters news agency, Maria Grazia Cutuli of Italian newspaper Corriere della Sera and Julio Fuentes of the Spanish daily El Mundo.

Also executed was Farhad, who is also known as Pahlavan and like many Afghan used only a single name. He was involved in the 2005 kidnapping of Italian aid worker Clementina Cantoni; she was freed after three weeks.

Tom Koenigs, head of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, said the UN had expressed its concern over the use of the death penalty many times in the past.

"The United Nations in Afghanistan has been a staunch supporter of the moratorium on executions observed in Afghanistan in recent years," Koenigs said.

"I expect Afghanistan to continue working towards attaining the highest human rights standards and ensuring the due process of law and the rights of all citizens are respected."

Amnesty International said six countries were responsible for 91 per cent of all known executions worldwide last year: China, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Sudan and the United States. Eighteen other countries also carried out executions, the group said.

Food convoys under attack, says UN official

PUBLICATION: The Telegram (St. John's)

DATE: 2007.10.09

SECTION: National

PAGE: B5

SOURCE: The Canadian Press

BYLINE: Sue Bailey

DATELINE: Ottawa

ILLUSTRATION: Foreign Affairs Minister Maxime Bernier offers soldiers JoeLouis cakes at Patrol Base Wilson in the Zhari District, Afghanistan, Sunday. – Photo by The Canadian Press

WORD COUNT: 446

Convoys carrying precious food donations are increasingly under attack in southern Afghanistan, says the local director of the United Nations World Food Programme.

"From a security point of view it has gotten worse – there's no doubt about that," Rick Corsino said Monday during a visit to Ottawa.

"We've lost more food in the past 12 months through those attacks than we had in the previous three years."

His comments come on the heels of a whirlwind tour by Foreign Affairs Minister Maxime Bernier who declared: "The territory here in Kandahar is safer than one year ago. The number of attacks is diminished. I admit the situation is still difficult, but (it) has greatly improved."

Canada's mission in Afghanistan could be debated intensely this fall amid the prospect of an early federal election. The Conservative drive to extend Canada's combat role past February 2009 runs counter to every opposition leader.

Based in Kabul, Corsino estimates that about 1,000 tonnes of wheat, beans, cooking oil and fortified biscuits have been waylaid or vanished since January. About 30 attacks on local Afghan trucks moving the food between volatile southern districts are blamed on insurgents who resent foreign intervention, or sometimes on bandits who later sell donations meant to sustain the poorest families.

"Two or three attacks have resulted in the deaths of (Afghan) truck crews and police escorts," Corsino said. None of his staff has been killed as the UN increasingly restricts movement and the ability to track food aid in the most dangerous areas.

Huge swaths of the south are off-limits to UN workers including parts of Kandahar where Canadian troops are based, Zabul to the east and Uruzgan to the north.

Corsino is working with Afghan government officials and national non-government organizations in a long-distance bid to ensure food actually gets where it's supposed to go.

"My main worry is to not only deliver the program, but deliver it in a credible manner."

Recent reports out of Zabul and Uruzgan "suggested that we needed to tighten up a little bit more on the distribution monitoring. So we're putting more attention in those areas at the moment."

Those efforts include contracting local Afghans as "private-sector staff...to serve as our eyes and ears in those areas."

The UN has also helped fund transportation and training for Afghan government officials to trace food distribution in areas where international staff can't go.

On the bright side, the UN expects to deliver this year about 225,000 tonnes of food to Afghans deemed by periodic surveys to be most in need, Corsino said.

"I have to say, it's not perfect. It's the best we can do under the circumstance."

Food aid is often in exchange for school or literacy enrolment, or participation in road and canal construction. "We've supported about 40,000 families displaced from the (fall) of 2006 to the moment."

In Ottawa, the federal government just announced another \$25 million for emergency food supplies in Afghanistan.

"On this Thanksgiving weekend, Canadians are reminded that we also have a responsibility to the people of Afghanistan," Bev Oda, the minister responsible for international aid, said in a statement.

Canada will spend more than \$1 billion by 2011 on aid to Afghanistan.

BC-Cda-News-Digest

DATE: 2007.10.08
KEYWORDS: ADVISORIES
PUBLICATION: cpw
WORD COUNT: 863

HAY RIVER, N.W.T. _ Police across western Canada were searching Monday for a 23-year-old Alberta man accused of killing a Mountie in Hay River, N.W.T.

Emrah Bulatci, who police say may be armed and dangerous, is charged with first-degree murder in the death of Const. Christopher Worden.

``We call it a `be on the look-out for' bulletin. It has gone out western Canada wide," Sgt. Larry O'Brien said.

``Any police agency would get it. They are keeping an eye out for him."

Worden was gunned down early Saturday morning while answering a trouble call near a suspected drug house in the small town 400 km. south of Yellowknife.

RCMP say Bulatci may also be known as Justin Elise and his last known addresses include locations in the Edmonton area.

Bulatci was arrested during a drug bust in Edmonton last February but was released after posting \$20,000 bail, the Edmonton Sun reported.

He was charged with possession of the proceeds of crime over \$5,000, possession of the proceeds of crime under \$5,000, careless storage of ammunition and two counts of breach of recognizance.

People in Hay River on Monday continued to struggle with the young Mountie's death.

RCMP Commissioner William Elliott was to meet privately with Worden's widow, Jodie, and their eight-month-old daughter, Alexis, as well as with the eight-member Mountie detachment.

``It is important for him (Elliott) to be here at a time like this. Obviously the members are hurting here as well as the family of Chris Worden," O'Brien said.

Jodie Worden was to make a statement about her husband's death on Monday afternoon.

The family is then to travel to Ottawa where the funeral is to be held. The RCMP also plan to hold a memorial service for Worden in Hay River sometime after the funeral. Dates and details for both services were pending.

Food convoys under escalating attack as security worsens: UN official

OTTAWA _ Convoys carrying precious food donations are increasingly under attack in southern Afghanistan, says the local director of the United Nations World Food Programme.

``From a security point of view it has gotten worse _ there's no doubt about that," Rick Corsino said Monday during a visit to Ottawa.

“We've lost more food in the past 12 months through those attacks than we had in the previous three years.”

His comments come on the heels of a whirlwind tour by Foreign Affairs Minister Maxime Bernier who declared: “The territory here in Kandahar is safer than one year ago. The number of attacks is diminished. I admit the situation is still difficult, but (it) has greatly improved.”

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“Two or three attacks have resulted in the deaths of (Afghan) truck crews and police escorts,” Corsino said.

Liberals ride lead in polls while PC school funding flip fails to boost support

TORONTO _ A new poll suggests the Progressive Conservatives have failed to draw closer to the Liberals despite a flip-flop on their controversial plan to fund faith-based schools.

The latest Canadian Press Harris-Decima survey shows Liberal support at 42 per cent among those polled between Oct. 4 and 7 _ down marginally from the 43 per cent support the party received in a similar survey conducted a week ago.

John Tory's Conservatives held second place with 31 per cent support, down a single percentage point from the previous poll despite last week's promise of a free vote in the legislature on the deeply divisive religious school funding issue that's plagued his campaign.

HL:Williams poised to be more forceful with stronger N.L. majority gov't

CARBONAR, N.L. _ If there is a launching pad that will transform Premier Danny Williams into a more aggressive force in Canada, it lies here.

This 376-year-old seaside town, about 90 minutes west of St. John's, once clearly stood as one of the fault lines that separated the true-blue Tories of the capital city area from die-hard Liberal supporters in Newfoundland's rural regions.

It is the hometown of William's chief rival in Tuesday's provincial election, Liberal Leader Gerry Reid.

But now this community of 4,700 represents fertile Progressive Conservative ground.

Many voters who kept the Liberals afloat in the past have grown weary of the party, thanks in part to an embarrassing spending scandal that implicated members of all parties but grew during a previous Liberal government.

They believe a leader like Williams is needed to drive Newfoundland and Labrador's interests higher up the Canadian agenda.

“Coming into ridings like this is a good barometer for us of what the reaction is likely to be in an election and what the reaction of the public has been to our record,” Williams said.

Languages commissioner will look for help for minorities in throne speech

OTTAWA _ The official languages commissioner says the Oct. 16 throne speech will be a prime opportunity for Prime Minister Stephen Harper to say what he plans to do for Canada's linguistic minorities.

"I think the throne speech will send a very important message to the communities about what the government is ready to do," Graham Fraser said in an interview with The Canadian Press.

"I know that work has been done but it will only be in the speech that we'll see the results."

Concrete action would be welcomed by the former journalist who became official languages commissioner nearly one year ago as the government abolished financing to the program which paid for court challenges by minority groups.

Fraser is about to publish a report on results of the controversial decision as well as on government funding cuts last fall to community groups fighting against illiteracy and for assistance for women.

The report's preliminary version, which came out in the spring, criticized the Conservative government for flouting the rights of linguistic minorities.

Liberal Defence critic Denis Coderre in Afghanistan to sound out troops

DATE: 2007.10.08
KEYWORDS: INTERNATIONAL POLITICS DEFENCE
PUBLICATION: cpw
WORD COUNT: 512

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan _ Liberal Defence critic Denis Coderre arrived in Afghanistan on Monday to hear from Canadian troops on Canada's role in the conflict.

But Coderre said that no matter what he hears in the coming days, it won't change his party's position calling for an end to Canada's combat mission when the current mandate expires in February 2009.

“No, in the sense that, about the combat mission we are pretty clear about the notion of rotation,” Coderre told reporters after his arrival at Kandahar Airfield.

“We feel that rotation is in order and that we should put an end to the combat mission.”

The Liberals have vowed to vote against the Conservative government's plan to extend the combat mission.

Coderre said other members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization should take up the front-line role Canada is currently playing.

“It is not a Canadian mission. It is an international mission,” he said after visiting the Tim Hortons on the military base Monday.

Foreign Affairs Minister Maxime Bernier made the same photo-op stop at the base the day before.

With the war in Afghanistan expected to dominate Parliament this fall _ and perhaps even a federal election _ all parties have ramped up efforts to sell their positions to the public.

Coderre, who was part of the government which deployed troops to Afghanistan in 2002, said Canada has done its part when it comes to the Afghan war.

“We're not abandoning the Afghan people,” he said. “There might be some other way, at the military level, that we can help the Afghan people but we believe, about the combat mission, that rotation is in order.”

He said NATO should now look at the caveats that some member countries have in place that keep their troops out of combat in Afghanistan.

“What we need is to be blunt,” Coderre said.

No other member countries are volunteering. In fact, several, including the Netherlands, are debating the future of their own missions in Afghanistan. The Dutch commitment ends in August 2008.

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Canada has about 2,300 troops in Kandahar as part of its overall commitment of 2,500 to the International Security Assistance Force.

Seventy-one Canadian soldiers and one diplomat have died since the Canadian mission began in 2002 and Coderre said public opinion is against continuing the mission.

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“I don't think it's a good idea,” said one young soldier. “We haven't had time to do what we wanted to do. It would be better to continue.”

He said he's ready to come back and finish the job.

Another soldier was resigned to the fact that the decision will be made for political reasons.

“The decision will be made by politicians,” he said. “(But) Honestly, I think we need to stay because we've started work here that we need to finish.”

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“We can announce millions and millions, but do we believe that that money is going exactly where it should be?” he asked.

Afghanistan executes 15 prisoners, ending 3-year lull in death sentences

DATE: 2007.10.08

KEYWORDS: INTERNATIONAL POLITICS DEFENCE JUSTICE MEDIA

PUBLICATION: cpw

WORD COUNT: 769

KABUL, Afghanistan _ Ending a three-year moratorium on the death penalty, Afghanistan executed 15 prisoners by gunfire, including a man convicted of killing three foreign journalists during the U.S.-led invasion, the prisons chief announced Monday.

The United Nations protested the executions, which could complicate the missions of some NATO countries here.

The mass execution took place Sunday evening according to Afghan law, which calls for condemned prisoners to be shot to death, said Abdul Salam Ismat, who oversees Afghanistan's prisons.

The crimes committed by those executed included murder, kidnapping and armed robbery, but officials said no Taliban or al-Qaida fighters were among the prisoners.

Until it was ousted in late 2001, Afghanistan's hardline Taliban regime carried out executions in public, many of them at the Kabul stadium. The new government pledged to the international community it would halt executions, and had carried out only one previously, in 2004.

The 15 deaths could complicate relationships between the government and some NATO countries with military forces here. Foreign troops often hand over captured militants to the Afghan government, raising the question of whether countries that do not use the death penalty might stop surrendering prisoners.

The Netherlands was one of the first to criticize the Afghan announcement, calling the executions "extremely unwelcome." But it also said Dutch troops would continue to transfer militants to the Afghan government, saying it had an agreement protecting those prisoners from execution.

Anger over the executions also could prove a snag for NATO's efforts to get its member countries to send more troops to Afghanistan. NATO has some 40,000 soldiers here but commanders complain they need more helicopters, mobile troops and instructors to train the Afghan army.

"The fact that we have not fully been able to live up to the promises that nations have made is a point of concern for me," NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer said Monday in Denmark before the executions were announced.

Among those executed was Reza Khan, who was convicted of adultery and the murder of one Afghan and three foreign journalists in 2001. The four were pulled from their cars, robbed and shot near the eastern city of Jalalabad while driving toward Kabul six days after the Taliban abandoned the capital under heavy U.S. bombing.

The four were Australian TV cameraman Harry Burton, Afghan photographer Azizullah Haidari of the Reuters news agency, Maria Grazia Cutuli of Italian newspaper Corriere della Sera and Julio Fuentes of the Spanish daily El Mundo.

Also executed was Farhad, who is also known as Pahlavan and like many Afghan used only a single name. He was involved in the 2005 kidnapping of Italian aid worker Clementina Cantoni; she was freed after three weeks.

Tom Koenigs, head of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, said the UN had expressed its concern over the use of the death penalty many times in the past.

“The United Nations in Afghanistan has been a staunch supporter of the moratorium on executions observed in Afghanistan in recent years,” Koenigs said. “I expect Afghanistan to continue working towards attaining the highest human rights standards and ensuring the due process of law and the rights of all citizens are respected.”

The government's official announcement of the executions came on state television Monday evening, saying said President Hamid Karzai ordered the executions following a decision by a special commission he set up to review rulings by the Supreme Court.

“After all the discussions and after looking back over the cases ... in order to prevent future crimes, such as murders, armed robberies, kidnappings, and to maintain the stability of the country, (Karzai) approved the prisoners' death sentences,” a statement read over the news said.

Karzai's spokesman, Humayun Hamidzada, had told The Associated Press last week that Karzai was taking “extreme care in execution cases.”

“He has been holding on to these cases because he wants to make sure that the justice is served and the due process is complete. He personally does not like executions, but Afghan law asks for it, and he will obey the laws,” Hamidzada said.

The Dutch Foreign Ministry expressed distress at the executions.

“For the Netherlands, the abolition of the death penalty is one of our priorities in terms of international human rights policy,” spokesman Bart Rijs said. “We had understood there was a moratorium on the death penalty in force.”

Rijs said Dutch troops would continue to hand over prisoners because the Netherlands had signed a memorandum of understanding with Karzai's government guaranteeing those inmates would not be executed. Rijs said there were 10 such prisoners and all were believed in good health.

Amnesty International said six countries were responsible for 91 per cent of all known executions worldwide last year: China, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Sudan and the United States. Eighteen other countries also carried out executions, the group said.

16 fighters under Most Wanted warlord killed in Afghan airstrikes

DATE: 2007.10.08

KEYWORDS: INTERNATIONAL DEFENCE POLITICS

PUBLICATION: cpw

WORD COUNT: 216

KABUL, Afghanistan _ Airstrikes in eastern Afghanistan killed 16 militants fighting under a wanted Uzbek warlord with a US\$200,000 bounty on his head, while seven militants were killed elsewhere, officials said Monday.

A suicide attack against a NATO convoy in the south, meanwhile, wounded two civilians.

U.S. forces early Sunday called in airstrikes against fighters of Tahir Yuldash, the leader of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and an al-Qaida operational commander, said Nabi Jan Mullahkhail, the provincial police chief of Paktika province. Sixteen militants were killed, he said.

The U.S. military late last month released a list of 12 Most Wanted militants in Afghanistan, and Yuldash was one of five listed with the top reward of US\$200,000.

Mullahkhail said one enemy fighter _ an Uzbek _ was captured during the fighting in the Sorobi district of Paktika and said that the militants from Uzbekistan and Chechnya were fighting under Yuldash.

Afghan and coalition forces killed seven militants during a gunbattle in the Saydabad district of Wardak province Sunday, the Defence Ministry said. Four other fighters were arrested.

In southern Afghanistan, a suicide bomber on foot attacked a NATO patrol in Helmand province's capital of Lashkar Gah on Monday, wounding two civilians but no alliance troops, said provincial police chief Mohammad Hussein Andiwai.

In the eastern Paktia province, U.S.-led coalition forces and Afghan soldiers detained four suspected militants in Gardez district, the coalition said.

1st Writethru The Canadian Press World News Budget – Monday, Oct. 8, 2007

DATE: 2007.10.08
KEYWORDS: ADVISORIES
PUBLICATION: cpw
WORD COUNT: 323

Here are the budgeted stories as of 19:30 ET. The editor handling World news in Toronto can be reached at 416-507-2165

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan _ Liberal Defence critic Denis Coderre arrived in Afghanistan on Monday to hear from Canadian troops on Canada's role in the conflict. But Coderre said that no matter what he hears in the coming days, it won't change his party's position calling for an end to Canada's combat mission when the current mandate expires in February 2009. 700 words. By Dene Moore. BC-Afghan-Cda-Coderre, 3rd Writethru. Moved.

KABUL, Afghanistan _ Afghanistan has executed 15 prisoners, including a man convicted of killing three western journalists and an Afghan photographer, in the country's first use of the death penalty in more than three years. The United Nations protested the killings, which may complicate the missions of some NATO countries in Afghanistan. 900 words. By Jason Straziuso. BC-Afghanistan, 1st Writethru. Moved.

See also:

_ BC-Australia-Afghanistan. Moved.

_ BC-Afghan-German. Moved.

JERUSALEM _ Two senior Israeli politicians, including the prime minister's closest ally, talked openly Monday about dividing Jerusalem, signalling a possible shift in Israeli opinion about one of the Middle East's most contentious issues. 880 words. By Karin Laub. See Photos. BC-Israel-Palestinians, 1st Writethru. Moved.

STOCKHOLM, Sweden _ Two Americans and a Briton won the 2007 Nobel Prize in medicine Monday for groundbreaking discoveries that led to a powerful technique for manipulating mouse genes. 850 words. By Karl Ritter and Matt Moore. See Photos. BC-Nobel-Medicine, 3rd Writethru. Moved.

See also:

_ BC-Nobel-Medicine-Excerpts. Moved Datafile only.

_ BC-Nobel-Medicine-List. Moved Datafile only.

PARIS _ He apparently travelled the world sexually abusing young boys, but remained unidentifiable _ until now. Police in Europe have unscrambled digitally altered images found on the Internet to reveal the face of a man shown abusing boys in Vietnam and Cambodia. 850 words. By John Leicester. See Photo. BC-Interpol-Pedophile-Manhunt, 2nd Writethru. Moved.

Afghanistan executes 15 prisoners at main Kabul prison, first in 3 years

DATE: 2007.10.08

KEYWORDS: DEFENCE INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE POLITICS

PUBLICATION: cpw

WORD COUNT: 73

KABUL, Afghanistan _ Afghanistan has executed 15 prisoners at its main prison outside Kabul.

Chief of Prisons Abdul Salam Ismat says the executions are the first to be carried out in the country in more than three years.

Ismat says the mass execution took place Sunday evening under provisions of Afghan law, which calls for condemned prisoners to be shot to death.

The Taliban used to carry out executions in public, many of them at the war-shattered Kabul stadium.

But the practice stopped after they were ousted from power by in the U.S.-led invasion in 2001.

Canada urged to review private contractors guarding embassies and diplomats

DATE: 2007.10.08

KEYWORDS: DEFENCE INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE POLITICS

PUBLICATION: cpw

WORD COUNT: 600

OTTAWA _ The Foreign Affairs Department quietly relies on a host of private security contractors to protect Canadian embassies and diplomats across the globe _ a small army that needs more supervision, say opposition critics and defence experts.

The call for more oversight follows an incident last month involving the U.S. security firm Blackwater, in which 11 Iraqis died.

Canada has only employed the controversial security contractor to train members of the Canadian Forces and has not used Blackwater for embassy or dignitary protection.

However 2006 federal public account records show a handful of other U.S. and British security corporations working in Iraq have separate protection contracts with Canada for work in other countries.

Precisely what kind of service is provided by firms such as the ArmourGroup of the United Kingdom, and subsidiaries of Wackenhut Security Systems, which ran afoul of U.S. lawmakers over private prisons, isn't clear.

There are also questions about a \$456,000 contract Canada's former ambassador to Kabul signed last year with Saladin Afghanistan Security Ltd.

Documents released under the Access to Information law show the agreement, which ran from June 2006 until June 2007, was to provide a quick reaction force to protect the embassy and the army's Strategic Advisor Team _ both based in the Afghan capital.

Despite repeated requests for comment last week, a Foreign Affairs spokeswoman said Friday no one was available to answer questions about security arrangements.

Both the Pentagon and the U.S. State Department have launched reviews of their use of private security firms.

Dave Perry, a defence researcher at the Dalhousie University's Centre for Foreign Policy Studies, says the Conservative government would be wise to conduct its own review, even though the companies working for Canada may not have gotten into any trouble.

“The issue is: who is providing security and what kind of mechanisms and safeguards are in place to ensure that there aren't any problems,” said Perry, who has written about the military's increasing reliance on private companies for logistics support.

The fact that there have been no reports of incidents in troubled countries should not be taken for granted, he said.

“Is there no reports because there have been no problems _ or are there no problems because nothing is being reported?”

Perry said he's not criticizing the use of private security and stressed their use is necessary in violent parts of the world, but Canada must remain vigilant.

The Corps of Commissionaires, which provides the bulk of protection for federal government buildings in Canada ``can't be everywhere and are not equipped to be operating in a theatre like Afghanistan," he added.

NDP defence critic Dawn Black said the matter of security contractors should be studied by a Parliamentary committee.

``This raises a number of concerns that the government must address in order for Canadians to understand what's going on," she said.

``With what happened in the U.S. with Blackwater and the lack of accountability, I think we have to be very wary and careful when it comes to contracting out our security."

Perry said a potential review by Foreign Affairs officials should look at what rules of engagement contractors might have in high-risk countries _ or the point at which guards are allowed to use deadly force. In addition, their company's arrangements with the local military need to be clearly spelled out.

In the case of Blackwater, forces protecting U.S. diplomats have often not told the American or Iraqi militaries when they are passing through certain areas, which has led to confusion.

Roughly half of the Foreign Affairs Department's \$29.9 million protection services budget goes to either the Canadian Forces or the Canadian Corps of Commissionaires. The rest is paid out to nearly two dozen private security firms, which provided services in various cities.

For instance Wackenhut's subsidiaries in Peru and Greece do unspecified work for Canada, apparently in those countries. Local security is contracted in volatile places such as Lagos in Nigeria, Islamabad in Pakistan and Port-au-Prince, Haiti, among others.

Free Afghan mission debate from politics, focus on Afghans, activists say

DATE: 2007.10.08
KEYWORDS: INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL
PUBLICATION: cpw
WORD COUNT: 935

VANCOUVER _ Paraphrasing an assassinated U.S. president at the Provincial Reconstruction Team base in Kandahar, Canada's foreign affairs minister sought to rally the troops.

“Don't ask the Afghan government what it can do for us in Canada, but what we Canadians can do for the Afghan people,” Maxime Bernier said Sunday.

It's a question both Afghan and Canadian politicians have been asking for months as they've crisscrossed the world to convince both their nations of the merits of Canada's mission in Kandahar.

But the answer is increasingly wrapped up in political rhetoric, activists say, and ordinary Afghans and Canadians are being left out of the debate.

“This is our generation's war,” said Norine MacDonald, president of the Senlis Council, an international think-tank focused in part on counter-narcotics initiatives in opium-laden Afghanistan.

“It's a defining moment for us on the international stage and it's a defining moment for each of us as a Canadian to say what does that really mean to me then? What does it mean when I say I want to stand with my Afghan brothers and sisters against Al Qaida, Taliban extremist elements, that would do them harm and would do us harm?”

Canada's current commitment to the NATO-led mission in Afghanistan is set to expire in 2009, with an April deadline for Canada to firmly decide whether it will stay or go.

Opposition political parties are demanding withdrawal. Prime Minister Stephen Harper has said Parliament would have the opportunity to debate and vote on extending the combat mission past February 2009.

He's also said he's prepared to fight an election campaign over Afghanistan if necessary.

The political debate over the mission manifested itself this weekend when two Conservative cabinet ministers and a Liberal critic hit the ground in Afghanistan in separate trips, filling their time with photo opportunities and fact-finding meetings.

The government has also flown over high-profile Afghan ministers, launched photo exhibits of development work on the ground and pledged to hold regular briefings on progress.

But it's all a sell-job, critics charge, not the actual grassroots debate that's needed on the future of the mission.

Dialogue now takes place at university-sponsored debates, through think-tank papers and in the opinion editorial pages.

But the government seems to be pushing its own agenda and not listening to Canadians who want answers, said Francisco Juarez, a former military reservist who refused to serve in Afghanistan and now is active in the

peace movement.

Juarez said what started as a mission ostensibly launched on humanitarian grounds and to protect national security interests has morphed into a war designed to retool the Canadian military and serve national economic interest instead.

“Our political leaders have really let us down,” he said. “The Conservatives are definitely taking advantage of some of the holes in our understanding of why we’re in Afghanistan.”

More than 10,000 Canadian soldiers have rotated through the dry and dusty land since the mission began in 2002, and 71 Canadian soldiers and one diplomat have died.

It’s those deaths that often frame the debate on Canada’s role in Kandahar, whether it be through rallies showing support for the soldiers or anti-war demonstrations calling the Canadian effort simply a puppet of U.S. government interests.

Juarez said the discussion so far has focused on what’s best for Canada when the debate is actually about the future of the Afghan people.

“We need leadership in this country that is honest about what it is it is doing with the military,” he said. “We need to have leaders who stand up and are recognized for standing up and saying there are other possibilities here besides these expeditionary wars that we go on.”

The debate should start in the halls of power, Juarez said, but it needs to trickle down into the communities, military or civilian, trying to decide whether the mission is something Canada should be involved in.

Ten years ago, thousands of Canadians agitated for Afghanistan, aghast at the violent suppression of human rights by the Taliban regime.

Fire in the bellies of Canadians for restoring those rights seems to have waned with the onset of Canada’s mission.

A recent Canadian Press–Decima research poll suggested that 67 per cent of those asked believe the number of casualties suffered by Canadian troops is unacceptably high, even with whatever progress has been made in rebuilding the war-torn country.

Two-thirds of respondents want Canadian troops to come home when the current mandate from Parliament expires.

Though Afghans are largely free from the legal restrictions imposed on them by the Taliban, the UN has said 2007 has been the most dangerous year for Afghans since 2001.

In the first half of the year, there were 525 security incidents, including attacks by the Taliban and other violent groups, bombings, terrorism of other kinds and abductions, every month.

The Associated Press estimates more than 5,000 people have been killed in the fighting.

The Canadian government touts schools being built, but they’re also being bombed by insurgents, keeping children away.

Though health care and the economy is also improving, opium production and addiction is also at record levels.

No one rallies in Canada about that.

But besides directly government-funded work, only one Canadian non-governmental organization appears to exist whose work is solely focused on human rights in the country Afghanistan.

“We need to be asking what is going on for the everyday life of an Afghan person and how do they see their lives improving and what are their needs,” said Janice Eisenhower of Women for Women in Afghanistan, which supports the military presence.

“We can set up an office for CIDA for development for example but if they're not able to leave the room because of security how effective can they be?”

Since 2002, her organization has raised \$700,000 for projects in Afghanistan ranging from the training of teachers to paying the rent for schools.

She said if her little not-for-profit group can reach out and make connections with ordinary Afghans, there is no reason the Canadian government and ordinary Canadians not to do the same.

The question of where Canada's focus should be is always evolving, she said.

“Those things have to be discussed and worked through with good strong leadership at every front because what we perceive to be the right path today might be completely different by tomorrow,” she said.

“We need to have some grounding principles in place to make sure we're always on the best course we can muster and Canadians understand what that course is.”

Liberal Defence critic Denis Coderre in Afghanistan to sound out troops

DATE: 2007.10.08
KEYWORDS: INTERNATIONAL POLITICS DEFENCE
PUBLICATION: cpw
WORD COUNT: 512

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan _ Liberal Defence critic Denis Coderre arrived in Afghanistan on Monday to hear from Canadian troops on Canada's role in the conflict.

But Coderre said that no matter what he hears in the coming days, it won't change his party's position calling for an end to Canada's combat mission when the current mandate expires in February 2009.

“No, in the sense that, about the combat mission we are pretty clear about the notion of rotation,” Coderre told reporters after his arrival at Kandahar Airfield.

“We feel that rotation is in order and that we should put an end to the combat mission.”

The Liberals have vowed to vote against the Conservative government's plan to extend the combat mission.

Coderre said other members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization should take up the front-line role Canada is currently playing.

“It is not a Canadian mission. It is an international mission,” he said after visiting the Tim Hortons on the military base Monday.

Foreign Affairs Minister Maxime Bernier made the same photo-op stop at the base the day before.

With the war in Afghanistan expected to dominate Parliament this fall _ and perhaps even a federal election _ all parties have ramped up efforts to sell their positions to the public.

Coderre, who was part of the government which deployed troops to Afghanistan in 2002, said Canada has done its part when it comes to the Afghan war.

“We're not abandoning the Afghan people,” he said. “There might be some other way, at the military level, that we can help the Afghan people but we believe, about the combat mission, that rotation is in order.”

He said NATO should now look at the caveats that some member countries have in place that keep their troops out of combat in Afghanistan.

“What we need is to be blunt,” Coderre said.

No other member countries are volunteering. In fact, several, including the Netherlands, are debating the future of their own missions in Afghanistan. The Dutch commitment ends in August 2008.

NATO and Canadian military officials have already sounded the alarm over troop strength in Afghanistan.

The international force has around 37,000 troops in Afghanistan but only Canada, the United States, Britain and the Netherlands have taken on combat roles in the violent southern regions, where Taliban activity is

strongest.

Canada has about 2,300 troops in Kandahar as part of its overall commitment of 2,500 to the International Security Assistance Force.

Seventy-one Canadian soldiers and one diplomat have died since the Canadian mission began in 2002 and Coderre said public opinion is against continuing the mission.

Coderre will spend two more days at the NATO base on his unofficial visit but he won't be going off the base to visit soldiers on the front line for security reasons.

His opinion on the proposed February 2009 pullout is not a popular one with many troops.

“I don't think it's a good idea,” said one young soldier. “We haven't had time to do what we wanted to do. It would be better to continue.”

He said he's ready to come back and finish the job.

Another soldier was resigned to the fact that the decision will be made for political reasons.

“The decision will be made by politicians,” he said. “(But) Honestly, I think we need to stay because we've started work here that we need to finish.”

Coderre said he's spoken to Gen. Ray Henault, the Canadian general who chairs NATO's military committee, and he said the international organization does have a contingency plan for a Canadian withdrawal from its combat role.

He told reporters that Canada should focus instead on Pakistan's role in war in Afghanistan. Governance and corruption within Afghanistan are another major issue.

“We can announce millions and millions, but do we believe that that money is going exactly where it should be?” he asked.

1 Australian soldier killed, another injured in explosion in Afghanistan

DATE: 2007.10.08

KEYWORDS: INTERNATIONAL POLITICS DEFENCE

PUBLICATION: cpw

WORD COUNT: 234

CANBERRA, Australia _ Australia has sustained its first combat casualty in Afghanistan or Iraq after a roadside bomb killed a soldier in southern Afghanistan, the country's military chief said Tuesday.

The soldier, whose name and rank were not immediately released, was killed Monday when an improvised explosive device went off near the armoured vehicle he was driving, Air Chief Marshal Angus Houston told reporters in Canberra. Another soldier was seriously injured in the attack.

“This is a tragic day for the Australian Defence Force and our thoughts and prayers are with the families of these two soldiers,” Houston told reporters in the capital, Canberra. “We’re now working on arrangements to bring the body of the fallen soldier back to Australia.”

The soldier's death comes as Australia prepares for general elections due to be called anytime in the next few weeks. Polls show conservative Prime Minister John Howard facing a landslide defeat amid rising opposition to Australia's involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Howard has refused to set a timetable for withdrawing Australian troops from either conflict, saying they will remain for as long as they are needed.

But the soldier's death is likely to increase calls for a phased Australian withdrawal, as a recent survey by the government-funded U.S. Studies Centre found that as many as 64 per cent of Australians oppose the Iraq war, and 51 per cent oppose Australia's involvement in Afghanistan.

German hostage held in Afghanistan pleads for help on new videotape

DATE: 2007.10.08

KEYWORDS: INTERNATIONAL POLITICS DEFENCE JUSTICE

PUBLICATION: cpw

WORD COUNT: 309

KABUL, Afghanistan _ A German engineer held by Taliban insurgents since July said he lives with the militants ``like family" but pleaded with Germany and Afghanistan to help facilitate his release, according to a new videotape Monday.

A dimly lit video of Rudolf Blechschmidt shows the German in what appears to be a simple mud-brick Afghan home. Blechschmidt says he had been recently released into the custody of the International Committee of the Red Cross but was taken back into Taliban custody.

``And this time we (were) with the Red Cross on the way to Kabul, but the Taliban stop us and bring us back to the mountains," Blechschmidt says on the tape obtained by AP Television News. ``Now we plea to German government and Afghan government, give us some help and make a deal with the Taliban to release us before the winter time starting."

Four employees with the ICRC were kidnapped Sept. 27 while trying to facilitate the German's release. The four, taken hostage by the Taliban, were released in good health two days later.

Blechschmidt is one of two German engineers and five Afghans taken hostage July 18 in Wardak province in central Afghanistan. The other German was found dead of gunshot wounds July 21, while one of the Afghans apparently managed to escape.

On the tape Blechschmidt says he was in bad medical condition but that an Afghan doctor helped him. He also said the Germany Embassy had refused to engage in negotiations for a time, but that negotiations had re-started recently and ``we hope we will become free."

The Taliban have allowed him to call his son in Germany and to talk with newspapers there, he said.

``We hope the Afghan government or somebody else can help us to come out of this situation," he said.

Kidnappings by Taliban militants and criminal gangs have risen in Afghanistan in recent months. A series of high-profile kidnappings have led to ransom payments and prisoner releases, apparently fuelling the spike in the abductions.

Afghan–Executions (details)

DATE: 2007.10.08

KEYWORDS: DEFENCE INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE MEDIA POLITICS

PUBLICATION: bnw

WORD COUNT: 109

KABUL — Afghanistan has executed 15 prisoners at its main prison in Kabul, including a man convicted of killing three western journalists and an Afghan photographer.

It's the first use of the death penalty there in more than three years.

The executions took place Sunday and, under Afghan law, were conducted by firing squad.

Afghanistan's former Taliban administration used to carry out executions in public — many of them at the war-shattered Kabul Stadium.

However, the practice was stopped after they were ousted from power by the U–S–led invasion in 2001.

The London–based human rights group Amnesty International denounced the executions, saying President Hamid Karzai had earlier assured the group he would institute a moratorium on the death penalty.

A Karzai spokesman has declined comment on the executions.

(The Associated Press)

RxH

Afghan-Cda-Coderre-Update (additional comments)

DATE: 2007.10.08

KEYWORDS: INTERNATIONAL DEFENCE POLITICS

PUBLICATION: bnw

WORD COUNT: 147

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan _ Liberal Defence critic Denis Coderre says no matter what he hears from Canadian troops, it won't change his party's position on Afghanistan.

He says the Liberals are adamant — Canada's combat mission there must end when the current mandate expires in February 2009.

Coderre is in Kandahar on a fact-finding trip for the party and to sound out troops on Canada's role in the conflict.

He says he's there ``to be with the troops and listen to them" as well as to offer his support and the party's solidarity.

But he says the party is firm in its belief that combat troops should come home in 2009 and the responsibilities rotated to other NATO countries.

The Liberals have vowed to vote against the Conservative government's plan to extend the combat mission.

Canada has about 23-hundred soldiers in Kandahar as part of its overall commitment of 25-hundred troops to the International Security Assistance Force.

Seventy-one Canadian soldiers and one diplomat have died since the Canadian mission began in 2002 and Coderre said public opinion is against continuing the mission.

(The Canadian Press)

RxH

INDEX:Defence, International, Politics

DATE: 2007.10.08

KEYWORDS: DEFENCE INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

PUBLICATION: bnw

WORD COUNT: 92

OTTAWA – Convoys carrying precious food donations are coming under increasing attack in southern Afghanistan.

Rick Corsino, local director of the UN's World Food Programme, says security there is only getting worse.

He says about 1,000 tonnes of wheat, beans and cooking oil have been lost in attacks since January. That's more food lost in the last 10 months than in the last three years.

The attacks are blamed on insurgents who resent foreign intervention, and sometimes on thieves who later sell the food.

On the bright side, Corsino says the UN will still deliver about 225,000 tonnes of food this year.

The federal government just announced another \$25 million for emergency food supplies in Afghanistan.

(The Canadian Press)

INDEX:International, Defence, Politics

DATE: 2007.10.08

KEYWORDS: INTERNATIONAL DEFENCE POLITICS

PUBLICATION: bnw

WORD COUNT: 103

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan – Liberal defence critic Denis Coderre is on the ground in Kandahar, Afghanistan for what he calls a fact-finding mission.

Coderre says he wants to live with the troops, 'ask how they feel, and listen to them.'

But the Liberal defence critic says that his party's position on ending Canada's combat mission in February 2009 is solid, no matter what he hears in the coming days.

Coderre says it's important for him to visit Afghanistan to understand the mission better, but public opinion in Canada is clear that the combat role should end.

Coderre says other members of NATO should take up Canada's place in volatile Kandahar province.

Canada has about 2,300 troops in Kandahar as part of its commitment to the International Security Assistance Force.

INDEX:International, Defence, Politics

DATE: 2007.10.08

KEYWORDS: INTERNATIONAL DEFENCE POLITICS

PUBLICATION: bnw

WORD COUNT: 134

KABUL – An official says 16 militants fighting for a wanted Uzbek warlord with a 200–thousand–dollar bounty on his head have been killed in air strikes in eastern Afghanistan.

Nabi Jan Mullahkhail, provincial police chief of Paktika province, says U–S forces called in the strikes against fighters of Tahir Yuldash, the leader of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and an al–Qaida operational commander.

Last month, the U–S military released a list of 12 Most Wanted militants in Afghanistan, and Yuldash was one of five listed with the top reward of 200 thousand dollars.

Mullahkhail says one enemy fighter was captured during the fighting in the Sorobi district of Paktika and said militants from Uzbekistan and Chechnya are fighting for Yuldash.

The coalition says in nearby Paktia province, U–S–led coalition forces and Afghan soldiers detained four suspected militants in Gardez district.

Afghan–Cda–Coderre

DATE: 2007.10.08
KEYWORDS: INTERNATIONAL POLITICS DEFENCE
PUBLICATION: bnw
WORD COUNT: 106

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan — Liberal Defence critic Denis Coderre is due in Kandahar, Afghanistan, today.

He's making his own impromptu visit with the Canadian military — a day after Canada's foreign affairs and international co-operation ministers completed a whirlwind tour of the country.

The Montreal M–P says he'll send a clear message of solidarity to the troops.

Yesterday in Kabul, Coderre met a senior infrastructure specialist from the World Bank and members of the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit.

He also had a briefing from the deputy head of the Canadian mission.

He has scheduled a few more meetings in Kabul and Islamabad before returning to Canada.

Coderre has accused the government of ignoring his requests to join this weekend's ministerial visit.

But the Tories say it was the former Liberal administration who initiated a policy denying lone M–P's from visiting Afghanistan.

(The Canadian Press)

PTH

INDEX:Defence, International, Justice, Politics

DATE: 2007.10.08

KEYWORDS: DEFENCE INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE POLITICS

PUBLICATION: bnw

WORD COUNT: 75

KABUL, Afghanistan – Afghanistan has executed 15 prisoners at its main prison outside Kabul.

Chief of Prisons Abdul Salam Ismat says the executions are the first to be carried out in the country in more than three years.

Ismat says the mass execution took place Sunday evening under provisions of Afghan law, which calls for condemned prisoners to be shot to death.

The Taliban used to carry out executions in public, many of them at the war-shattered Kabul stadium.

But the practice stopped after they were ousted from power by in the U.S.-led invasion in 2001.

(The Associated Press)

Liberal MP visits troops in Kandahar; Coderre says party won't budge on 2009 for end of combat role

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SOURCE: THE CANADIAN PRESS
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WORD COUNT: 216

Liberal defence critic Denis Coderre arrived in Afghanistan yesterday to hear from Canadian troops on Canada's role in the conflict.

But Coderre said no matter what he hears in the coming days, it won't change his party's position calling for an end to Canada's combat mission when the current mandate expires in February 2009.

"No, in the sense that, about the combat mission we are pretty clear about the notion of rotation," Coderre told reporters after his arrival at Kandahar Airfield.

"We feel that rotation is in order and that we should put an end to the combat mission."

The Liberals have vowed to vote against the Conservative government's plan to extend the combat mission beyond 2009.

Coderre said other members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization should take up the front-line role Canada is playing.

"It is not a Canadian mission. It is an international mission," he said after visiting the Tim Hortons on the military base yesterday.

Foreign Affairs Minister Maxime Bernier made the same photo-op stop at the base on Sunday.

Coderre, who was part of the Liberal government that deployed troops to Afghanistan in 2002, said Canada has done its part in the war.

"We're not abandoning the Afghan people," he said.

"There might be some other way, at the military level, that we can help the Afghan people but we believe, about the combat mission, that rotation is in order."

Canada has about 2,300 troops in Kandahar. Seventy-one of its soldiers and one diplomat have died since the mission began in 2002.

Coderre will spend two more days at the NATO base on his unofficial visit but he won't be going off the base to visit soldiers on the front line for security reasons.

Australian killed in Afghanistan is first combat death since 2001

IDNUMBER 200710090036
PUBLICATION: Times Colonist (Victoria)
DATE: 2007.10.09
EDITION: Early
SECTION: News
PAGE: A11
DATELINE: SYDNEY
SOURCE: Reuters
WORD COUNT: 300

SYDNEY (Reuters) ---- Australia suffered its first combat casualty in Afghanistan or Iraq yesterday since sending troops to the two countries after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the United States.

The Australian defence department said the soldier was one killed and another wounded when an improvised explosive device detonated next to their vehicle in Uruzgan province in Afghanistan.

"This is a tragic day for the Australian Defence Force and our thoughts are with the families and friends of the two soldiers involved," it said in a statement. The department said the wounded soldier's injuries were not life-threatening.

Australia, a close U.S. ally, was one of the first nations to commit troops in late 2001 to the U.S.-led war to oust the Taliban and al-Qaeda militants from Afghanistan. It has about 1,500 troops in and around Iraq.

The soldier's death precedes national elections in Australia in which the Iraq war will be a major issue, with opposition Labor promising to withdraw troops from Iraq but keep soldiers in Afghanistan.

Conservative Prime Minister John Howard, who is expected to call a poll within days to seek a fifth term, had not previously had to face a combat fatality in either Iraq or Afghanistan.

An Australian special forces soldier was killed in 2002 when his vehicle hit a landmine in southern Afghanistan, but yesterday's death was the first from a direct attack.

Opinion polls show Australians are widely opposed to the Iraq war and have begun to lose faith in Howard's tough security stance, which has won him previous elections.

Meanwhile, Afghanistan announced yesterday it had put to death 15 men, one convicted of killing three foreign journalists, in the second confirmed executions since the fall of the Taliban regime six years ago.

The state broadcaster, Radio Television Afghanistan announced the executions in its evening news bulletin, saying the punishments were for crimes including murder and rape.

The convicted men went before a firing squad late Sunday, government officials told AFP earlier.

Defence critic sticks to his guns: We're leaving by Feburary 2009

IDNUMBER 200710090031
PUBLICATION: Times Colonist (Victoria)
DATE: 2007.10.09
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A10
ILLUSTRATION: Photo: Matthew Fisher, CanWest News Service / Liberaldefence critic Denis Coderre meets a worker from Tim Hortons at the Kandahar Airfield during his visit yesterday. ;
BYLINE: Matthew Fisher
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 398

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan — No matter what he learns on his two day "fact-finding mission" to southern Afghanistan, Liberal defence critic Denis Coderre said yesterday that he and his party would insist that Canada must end its combat mission here when the current mandate expires in February 2009.

"We're not abandoning the Afghan people. There might be another way at the military level to help them," Coderre said during a tour of NATO's main base here that was organized for him by officers from the Canadian contingent. "But we believe about the combat mission that rotation [out of a combat role] is in order."

Coderre's presence on the far side of the world had much to do with a possible federal election campaign in which Afghanistan is expected to be one of the key issues. If he had not missed a UN flight from Kabul to Kandahar on Sunday, he would have been at this dusty, bustling centre of NATO's war against the Taliban at the same time as Foreign Affairs Minister Maxime Bernier, who also treated his brief visit like a whistle-stop campaign event. Both men visited the same Tim Hortons, sought out troops on the same boardwalk and were briefed by senior officers at the same command centres.

In a foretaste of the election campaign, the political rivals from Quebec traded accusations just before Coderre's arrival here about whether Coderre had gone through the proper channels to set up his trip and whether he had received sufficient help from the Tory-led government.

Predictably, Coderre and Bernier used the exotic backdrop of the busy military airbase to stake out their different campaign positions about Canada's proper role in the Afghan war. Bernier boasted of the progress that had been made since the Canadians arrived here 19 months ago and suggested that an undefined future combat role might be required to protect those working on development and reconstruction projects.

Coderre emphasized that it was time for other NATO countries to join the fight and that Canada should not be blamed by its allies for withdrawing its troops from the front lines.

"I don't think we should point fingers at one country," if Canada decided to terminate its combat mission, Coderre said. "If we say there is a rotation, we don't have to be shy. We did a great job for three years."

Recently arrived French fighter jets aiding Canadians in Kandahar

IDNUMBER 200710090030
PUBLICATION: Times Colonist (Victoria)
DATE: 2007.10.09
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A10
DATELINE: KANDAHAR AIRFIELD,
Afghanistan
BYLINE: Matthew Fisher
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 228

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan — As recently as four days ago, French fighter jets scrambled in response to a call for close air support from troops from the Quebec-based Royal 22nd Regiment fighting insurgents.

While details of that mission remain secret, it was not the first time France has come to the aid of Canadian ground troops fighting in Kandahar.

"I've helped the Canadians many times," said Lt.-Col. Fabien Mandon, commander of the Kandahar Air Expeditionary Group as he stood in front of one of the first three French Mirage 2000 jets to be based here. "But the nationality is not important. We will do this for everybody here."

The French air presence at Kandahar is less than two weeks old. Before that, the Mirages flew missions over Afghanistan from a base in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. But getting to the main battlefields in southern and eastern Afghanistan took more than one hour and required three refuellings from tanker aircraft. Being based in the heart of the war zone means pilots can get their jets over troops in distress in 15 minutes or less.

"I prefer to be here. This really puts us in the fight," Mandon said.

"Even if pilots were well aware of what was going on in the operational area, we were too far away. Now we are in the middle of the rockets that fall on this base and we can understand better what is happening."

Afghan base a bustling city in the desert; Kandahar Airfield has comforts of home, but smells of sewage

IDNUMBER 200710090002
PUBLICATION: Times Colonist (Victoria)
DATE: 2007.10.09
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A1 / FRONT
DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan
BYLINE: Rob Shaw
SOURCE: Times Colonist
WORD COUNT: 495

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan — One of the largest, most bustling cities in Afghanistan's Kandahar province isn't actually a city at all.

It's an air base run by Canadians that serves as the launching pad for almost all of the military's operations in southern Afghanistan. Daily life at the Kandahar Airfield is in many ways surreal, as it recreates a piece of North America in the centre of the desert in a war-ravaged country.

Squint as you walk through the large square-shaped commercial boardwalk and you might think you're in a food court in any North American mall. Want a Whopper? Go to the Burger King trailer. Feel like a foot-long Subway? How about a stuffed-crust pizza? Pizza Hut will set you up.

And then there is Tim Hortons, a bastion of Canadiana located in a tiny trailer on a corner of the boardwalk. True to tradition, it even has a drive-thru window for soldiers walking by in a hurry (but no vehicles).

The lineup frequently stretches down the block. One of the most coveted items at the base is a camouflage Tims hat with "Kandahar" emblazoned on the back. It's not for sale, and supposedly the company isn't making any more. But the military is raffling one off for charity.

There is also a sit-down restaurant, and two cafeterias that serve all-you-can eat grub. That is, if you're even hungry. Your appetite is often quelled by the overwhelming stench of raw waste that wafts over the base thanks to a nearby sewage pond that collects the waste from numerous latrines and showers located at the end of every other row of troop tents.

Most of the time, the base smells like an overturned outhouse — ironic, since the outhouses are equipped with so many cleaners and air fresheners that they actually smell better than the air outdoors.

The base, which covers about 500 to 600 hectares, is home to about 15,000 people, 2,500 of whom are Canadian soldiers. There are also American, British, Romanian, Dutch and Australian soldiers.

The place is so big, it has its own bus service. It also has a chapel, gyms, an outdoor rink for ball hockey and two Canada House multi-purpose buildings with pool tables and movie and meeting rooms.

The Americans run a tax-free store that looks like a Wal-Mart inside, where you can buy everything from underwear to an Xbox 360.

Still, living at a military base has a significant downside. When they arrive, soldiers are jet-lagged. Once there, things aren't quite as clean as mom would hope. Communal showers, soldiers sleeping 10 to a tent, and outhouses mean germs spread quickly — so there are hand-sanitizer boxes everywhere.

And then there is the dirt. A fine, light, reddish-brown dust blows everywhere, getting into your eyes, your hair, your ears, your clothes and pretty much everywhere else. For those with allergies, it can be a big problem. For everyone else, it means sore throats, red, scratchy eyes and stuffy, dry, sometimes bleeding, noses.

That can be treated with anti-histamine — the treatment for homesick

soldiers, however, is much less simple.

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REPORT FROM AFGHANISTAN

Times Colonist reporter Rob Shaw is in Afghanistan as part of a Canadian Forces regional media tour.

Stories and photos from the trip also appear online at www.timescolonist.com.

"We learned what the Canadians face on the ground. It is not just about us. They use artillery, too. It helps us better understand the fight."

The six French Mirage 2000s to be based at Kandahar are in addition to fighters from Britain and the Netherlands.

Although they can carry bigger weapons, they are mostly carrying 250 kilogram, laser-guided bombs.

Although such bombs are relatively small, they were being used because they were "powerful enough to kill Taliban and small enough to mitigate collateral damage to civilians and avoid blue on blue (friendly fire) accidents," said Lt.-Col. Gilles Juventin, a Tahitian who commands the French detachment in Kandahar.

"What we bring is firepower and this firepower can be decisive in some engagements. It means that friendly forces can have the advantage even if they are outnumbered, especially if they have been hit by an ambush. We are very reactive."

The French move from Dushanbe has been widely construed here and in NATO as a sign France under its new president, Nicolas Sarkozy, is taking a greater interest in the war in Afghanistan and in improving relations with the United States and its closest allies.

This apparent shift comes at a time when NATO has been desperately trying to shore up political support for the combat mission in countries such as Canada and the Netherlands.

Dispatching Mirages to Kandahar has already won France the warm thanks of Canada's Foreign Affairs Minister Maxime Bernier.

The Harper government would be even happier if rumours about France sending a battalion or brigade of infantry south, where combat forces are badly stretched, turned out to be true.

In military terms, the French deployment was unusually swift. The decision to move south was only made six weeks ago and the French have already built a new apron designed to handle twice as many jets as are scheduled to be based here.

First Australian soldier killed in Afghanistan

IDNUMBER 200710090022
PUBLICATION: Vancouver Sun
DATE: 2007.10.09
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A8
COLUMN: In Brief
KEYWORDS: WAR; IRAQ; ARMED FORCES; UNITED STATES
DATELINE: SYDNEY
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 101

SYDNEY — Australia suffered its first combat casualty in Afghanistan or Iraq on Monday since sending troops to the two countries after the Sept. 11 attacks on the United States. The Australian defence department said one soldier was killed and another wounded when an improvised explosive device detonated next to their vehicle in Uruzgan province in Afghanistan. Australia was one of the first nations to commit troops in late 2001 to the U.S.-led war to oust the Taliban and al-Qaida terrorists from Afghanistan.

About 175 Taliban and Pakistani soldiers killed in fierce battle

IDNUMBER 200710090021
PUBLICATION: Vancouver Sun
DATE: 2007.10.09
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A8
ILLUSTRATION: Colour Photo: Agence France–Presse; Getty Images / Pakistani children receive treatment after being injured in clashes between militants and Pakistani forces near the Afghan border. ;
KEYWORDS: TERRORISM; WAR; TERRITORIAL ISSUES
DATELINE: MIRANSHAH, Pakistan
SOURCE: Agence France–Presse
WORD COUNT: 326

MIRANSHAH, Pakistan — Pakistani helicopter gunships and troops have killed 130 militants in some of the heaviest-ever clashes near the Afghan border, while 45 soldiers have also died, the army said Monday.

The fighting raged throughout Sunday and Monday in the troubled tribal region of North Waziristan, which the United States has pinpointed as the new breeding ground for Osama bin Laden's al–Qaida extremist network.

The army said the pro–Taliban rebels were unusually well–trained and were getting support from Afghanistan, where the Taliban movement has waged a fierce insurgency since being toppled in late 2001.

The unrest puts extra pressure on key U.S. ally Pervez Musharraf two days after he swept a presidential poll, the result of which the embattled military ruler must wait to have confirmed by the Supreme Court.

"The clashes broke out after militants set off IEDs (improvised explosive devices) and conducted ambushes on the security forces" on Sunday, top military spokesman Major General Waheed Arshad told AFP.

"The forces retaliated and killed 130 militants in air strikes and ground attacks. Forty–five security personnel were also martyred."

Most of the fighting has been near Mir Ali, the second–biggest town in rugged North Waziristan, where Musharraf admitted earlier this year that al–Qaida had a presence.

Arshad said contact had been established with a group of around 50 soldiers reported missing earlier and only 10 or 12 had not been accounted for, but it was not clear if any of those had been killed.

Local residents said four civilians also died, including three women, although the army could not confirm this. Around 30 houses were destroyed or badly damaged as troops and rebels exchanged heavy weapons fire, they said.

Violence has spiked in the northwestern region since Pakistani security forces besieged and then raided the al–Qaida–linked Red Mosque in Islamabad in July — an operation that bin Laden has urged militants to

avenge.

"The army is fighting well-trained militants. There are linkages with Afghanistan. Many of them are getting money and weapons from across the border," Arshad said.

Nearly 300 people in Pakistan have died in attacks since the Red Mosque crisis, most of which have been suicide bombings.

Liberal critic gets cool reception

IDNUMBER 200710090046
PUBLICATION: The Leader-Post (Regina)
DATE: 2007.10.09
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: B9
DATELINE: KANDAHAR AIRFIELD
SOURCE: The Leader-Post
WORD COUNT: 286

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD — No matter what he learns on his "fact-finding mission" to Afghanistan, Liberal defense critic Denis Coderre said Monday that he and his party remained convinced that Canada must end its combat mission here when the current mandate expires.

"There might be another way at the military level to help," Coderre said during a tour of Canada's main base that was organized for him by the officers in the Canadian contingent.

"I don't think we should point fingers at one country," if Canada ended its combat mission, Coderre said. "If we say there is a rotation, we don't have to be shy. We did a great job for three years."

Unless extended by parliament, the mission is to end in February 2009.

The Harper government has sent mixed signals about what it intends to propose after February 2009, but it has pledged to have a full parliamentary debate about the question and has recently signaled that it might consider extending the combat mission in a somewhat different form.

His trip to Pakistan and Afghanistan had been paid for out of his own pocket, Coderre said, denying reports that the Senlis Council, which has been highly critical of Canada's combat role, had anything to do with organizing or supporting his journey.

Coderre's trip followed by a day a visit to Kandahar by Foreign Affairs Minister Maxime Bernier. During that visit, Bernier said the Harper government was considering a number of post-2009 mission options to propose to Parliament. He also said the Canadian combat presence in the south had made the province of Kandahar safer.

It was Coderre's misfortune to find few Canadians to talk to when he walked through a recreational area for troops on Monday. He joined two Canadian soldiers for a coffee, but they refused to have their photograph taken with him.

French fighters help Canadian ground troops

IDNUMBER 200710090045

PUBLICATION: The Leader-Post (Regina)

DATE: 2007.10.09

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: B9

ILLUSTRATION: Photo: CanWest / France's Lt.-Col. Fabien Mandon, (left) commander of the Kandahar Air Expeditionary Group and Lt.-Col. Gilles Juventin stand next to one of France's Mirage 2000 jets. ;

DATELINE: KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan

BYLINE: Matthew Fisher

SOURCE: CanWest News Service

WORD COUNT: 513

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan — As recently as four days ago, French fighter jets scrambled in response to a call for close air support from troops from the Quebec-based Royal 22nd Regiment fighting insurgents.

While details of that mission remain secret, it was not the first time France has come to the aid of Canadian ground troops fighting in Kandahar.

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The French air presence at Kandahar is less than two weeks old. Before that, the Mirages flew missions over Afghanistan from a base in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. But getting to the main battlefields in southern and eastern Afghanistan took more than one hour and required three refuelings from tanker aircraft. Being based in the heart of the war zone means pilots can get their jets over troops in distress in 15 minutes or less.

"I prefer to be here. This really puts us in the fight," Mandon said. "Even if pilots were well aware of what was going on in the operational area, we were too far away. Now we are in the middle of the rockets that fall on this base and we can understand better what is happening."

One of the best things about being in Kandahar was being able to speak with soldiers of the Royal 22nd Regiment, even if the accents of the Quebec-based troops were sometimes difficult to understand, Mandon said.

"We met a Canadian here last week who spoke French who had been on the ground during one of our combat missions," he said. "Such meetings are a real advantage of being here because we can improve our tactics. We can understand why they must do things we don't like and they can understand why we do things they don't like."

"We learned what the Canadians face on the ground. It is not just about us. They use artillery, too. It helps us better understand the fight."

The six French Mirage 2000s to be based at Kandahar are in addition to fighters from Britain and the Netherlands.

The French move from Dushanbe has been widely construed here and in NATO as a sign France and its new president, Nicolas Sarkozy, is taking a greater interest in the war in Afghanistan, and in improving relations with the United States and its closest allies. This apparent shift comes at a time when NATO has been desperately trying to shore up political support for the combat mission in countries such as Canada and the Netherlands.

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In military terms, the French deployment was unusually swift. The decision to move south was only made six weeks ago and the French have already built a new apron designed to handle twice as many jets as are now scheduled to be based here.

Rider games a welcome diversion for troops abroad

IDNUMBER 200710090004
PUBLICATION: The Leader-Post (Regina)
DATE: 2007.10.09
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A1 / FRONT
COLUMN: David Ramsay
ILLUSTRATION: Colour Photo: Photo Courtesy of Capt. Vince Kirstein / Capt.Vince Kirstein ;
BYLINE: David Ramsay
SOURCE: The Leader-Post
WORD COUNT: 885

KANDAHAR AIR FIELD -- Capt. Vince Kirstein talks excitedly about meeting his wife for a Mediterranean cruise, a well-deserved break from his day job as the second in command of his Edmonton-based tank squadron.

The one downside, he laments, is that he is scheduled to fly to Rome on Thanksgiving Day, meaning he will miss the Saskatchewan Roughrider game.

Kirstein, born and raised in Strasbourg, is instantly recognizable as an avid Rider fan. During an interview Saturday, the 12-year veteran of the Canadian Forces proudly wears a Rider jersey, and says he has been to or seen all but one game this year. With nine Saskatchewan members in his squadron of 89 soldiers, he makes a point of radioing the soldiers on the battlefield at the end of every game.

"Every game day in front of my house in Edmonton up goes the Rider flag," says Kirstein, who is responsible for logistical and administrative support and moves back and forth between the squadron and his office at the air field. "The only time the Canadian flag goes down is game day."

Rider games provide a relaxing diversion for Kirstein, whose squadron has seen its fair share of action in its first six weeks here.

The Leopard tanks attached to the Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadian) are a key element in operations here. They accompany battle groups, providing support when needed.

Most of the fighting these days is led by the Afghan National Army, with Canadian troops in reserve to provide assistance.

"If things go sideways, we are there to back them up," he says.

Because they are the only tracked vehicles in the field, they also lead forces through dangerous areas.

"Tanks are here for their tactical mobility. We can go places nobody else can go," he says. "We are an escort team. We've got the most armour, the most firepower and the most mobility. So we can get in their relatively safely and get the Afghan National Army into the areas they need to get into without getting blown up along the way."

The squadron was in Afghanistan for less than 24 hours before being sent out into the field, and has been there almost every day since, mostly in the dangerous Zhari and Panjwai districts.

Their worst day was Sept. 24 when Nathan Hornburg, a member of the King's Own Calgary Regiment who was working with the Strathcona squadron, was killed during a battle with insurgents. He had been attempting to repair a track on an immobilized tank while mortars were being fired.

"It was tough," said Kirstein. "The boys had been in a shit fight all day. Things went bad and then got worse. Basically we were stuck in a wadi and couldn't get out of it right away. Tanks are a big target ... The Taliban came from everywhere."

Kirstein, who accompanied Hornburg's body from the field back to Kandahar Air Field, says soldiers accept the risks associated with their profession.

"It's the nature of the beast out here ... The tanks are big targets for the Taliban, so every time we roll, we get shot at."

After a long talk about living in the field — soldiers often eat, drink and sleep in their tanks — the conversation turns back to the Riders.

Kirstein, whose wife is working on a project to have crayons and other supplies shipped to children in the Kandahar district, fondly recalls the blackout bowl, which he attended shortly before shipping out.

"We were done up with the green-and-white hair and everything else," says Kirstein, who does his best to raise the noise level at Mosaic Stadium. "I couldn't talk for the next days. I was totally hoarse."

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– Ramsay is the Leader-Post's deputy editor (nights)

15 prisoners executed Anger over the mass killings could impede NATO's mission in Afghanistan

SOURCETAG 0710090202
PUBLICATION: The Winnipeg Sun
DATE: 2007.10.09
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: 8
BYLINE: JASON STRAZIUSO, THE ASSOCIATED PRESS
DATELINE: KABUL, Afghanistan
WORD COUNT: 333

Ending a three-year moratorium on the death penalty, Afghanistan executed 15 prisoners by gunfire, including a man convicted of killing three foreign journalists during the U.S.-led invasion, the prisons chief announced yesterday.

The United Nations protested the executions, which could complicate the missions of some NATO countries, including Canada, involved in the conflict.

The mass execution took place Sunday evening according to Afghan law, which calls for condemned prisoners to be shot to death, said Abdul Salam Ismat, who oversees Afghanistan's prisons. The crimes committed by those executed included murder, kidnapping and armed robbery, but officials said no Taliban or al-Qaida fighters were among the prisoners.

Until it was ousted in late 2001, Afghanistan's hardline Taliban regime carried out executions in public, many of them at the Kabul stadium. The new government pledged to the international community it would halt executions, and had carried out only one previously, in 2004.

The 15 deaths could complicate relationships between the government and some NATO countries with military forces here. Foreign troops often hand over captured militants to the Afghan government, raising the question of whether countries that do not use the death penalty might stop surrendering prisoners.

The Netherlands was one of the first to criticize the Afghan announcement, calling the executions "extremely unwelcome." But it also said Dutch troops would continue to transfer militants to the Afghan government, saying it had an agreement protecting those prisoners from execution.

Anger over the executions also could prove a snag for NATO's efforts to get its member countries to send more troops to Afghanistan.

MOBILE TROOPS

NATO has some 40,000 soldiers here but commanders complain they need more helicopters, mobile troops and instructors to train the Afghan army.

"The fact that we have not fully been able to live up to the promises that nations have made is a point of concern for me," NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer said yesterday before the executions were announced.

Meanwhile, Australia has sustained its first combat casualty after a roadside bomb killed a soldier in southern Afghanistan yesterday.

The soldier, whose name and rank were not immediately released, was killed when an improvised explosive device went off near the armoured vehicle he was driving. Another soldier was seriously injured in the attack.
KEYWORDS=WORLD

Desert queen Canadian Natalie Simard breaks with tradition as the first female to train Afghan combat soldiers

SOURCETAG: 0710090201

PUBLICATION: The Winnipeg Sun

DATE: 2007.10.09

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: 7

ILLUSTRATION: 2 photos by Michael Den Tandt, Sun Media The Soviet tank graveyard on the outskirts of Kabul is an imposing reminder of Afghanistan's tortured past. Canadians are training combat soldiers at Camp Alamo on the outskirts of Kabul.

BYLINE: MICHAEL DEN TANDT

DATELINE: KABUL

WORD COUNT: 736

As recently as a month ago, Natalie Simard lived quietly in Owen Sound, enjoying her friends and her job in the quartermaster's office on the base in Meaford.

Then the 29-year-old boarded a troop transport and flew to a small coalition camp on the outskirts of war-ravaged Kabul, to carve out a unique spot in Canadian military history.

Simard, a Quebec City native who moved to Owen Sound two years ago to learn English, is the first woman to join a Kabul-based unit of Canadian troops playing a key role in training the new Afghan National Army. She may even be the first woman to ever be involved in training combat soldiers in this rigidly patriarchal society.

Clearly, Simard loves a challenge: This is her second Afghan tour, the first having been at Canada's Camp Julien, also in Kabul, in 2004.

"With the guys I work with, it's great," Simard said at Camp Alamo, a small outpost on the outskirts of the city, where she is posted alongside 300 American and 60 British soldiers, as well as 14 other Canadians. "When I got out with the Afghans, they're always very surprised to see a woman in the army."

The Afghan National Training Centre, of which Simard is a part, is a linchpin of international and Afghan government plans to stabilize the country. Thirty-four thousand troops are combat-ready now, according to coalition sources, with a longer-term goal of 70,000. The ANTC graduates between 800 and 1,000 trained troopers every month.

It's a mission Simard cares passionately about -- even though some aspects of working in this city, in this culture, are particularly hard on her. Until the fall of the Taliban, women in Afghanistan were chattel -- banned from going to school, driving a car or unveiling their faces in public. The country has made enormous strides since the Taliban fell in 2001 -- 25% of its Parliamentarians are women -- but among ordinary Afghans, many of the old attitudes still prevail.

Whenever Simard goes outside the camp's razor-wired walls, she does so with an escort. She cut her blond hair short to make herself less conspicuous. "I'm a little bit shy and I don't like to stand out."

Desert queen Canadian Natalie Simard breaks with tradition as the first female to train Afghan combat soldiers

The Canadian complement at the ANTC is small in number, but its role is critical. The contingent provides the last 10 days of every graduate's training. The Americans train the private soldiers, the British the non-commissioned officers, the French the officers. But when the time comes for Afghan troops to complete the ANTC's 10-week course, Canada gets them all.

Simard does not personally instruct Afghan troops, but she provides logistical support for the other Canadian soldiers who do. "You can't arrive and say, 'This is how it's done,' " she says of the training. "You have to adapt. It's not always obvious. You might ask someone, do it this way. They say, 'Why?' For us it's obvious.

"But no. You have to take a different approach."

Eighty per cent of the Afghan recruits are illiterate.

Many are very young, some 16. All the things Canadian army trainers take for granted — a high-school education, for example — go out the window.

Trainers must teach by showing and by allowing troops to practice rather than through classroom lectures.

Though Simard does find it hard to be the only woman at the ANTC, she doesn't find military life hard. To the contrary, she loves it.

She volunteered to serve in Afghanistan, she said, for the same reason that many soldiers do — to support their fellow soldiers. "I wanted to go because my friends are here," she said simply. "We do it for the family, because we really are like a big family."

When the subject of public opinion and debate back home comes up, Simard gets visibly emotional. Like many soldiers here, she badly wants Canadians to appreciate and support her efforts and those of her fellow soldiers. Strong backing from home helps the soldiers bear what they bear, she said.

Simard acknowledges that for many Canadians, understanding is extremely difficult. Even some of her best friends disapprove of the choices she's made, she said.

"One of my closest friends — for her, me coming here was like committing suicide. She couldn't understand why I would want to do it. I guess it's normal that people don't understand because they only see the political side of it."

She pauses, then adds: "But they don't hear about the positive things that are happening. When I came in 2004 there wasn't a single light in the city at night.

"When we left, half the city was lit at night. It's something people don't understand. It takes time to understand it."

Some in her family wish she was in a different profession, Simard said. Her mother worries about her, particularly now, because of the recent rash of bombings in Kabul.

"But they send me e-mails and surprises and packages, to say, 'We're with you.' And that's what's important — the support of family, and of the people."

Asked if she has a message for the folks at home, Simard said she wishes all her friends the very best.

"You all take good care of yourselves," she said. KEYWORDS=WORLD

Kandahar visit won't sway Grit to extend mission

SOURCETAG 0710090200
PUBLICATION: The Winnipeg Sun
DATE: 2007.10.09
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: 7
ILLUSTRATION: photo of DENIS CODERRE NATO should take up larger role
BYLINE: CP
DATELINE: KANDAHAR
WORD COUNT: 155

Liberal defence critic Denis Coderre arrived in Afghanistan yesterday on an impromptu visit to hear from Canadian troops on Canada's role in the conflict.

But Coderre said that no matter what he hears, it won't change his party's position calling for an end to Canada's combat mission when the mandate expires in February 2009.

"No, in the sense that, about the combat mission we are pretty clear about the notion of rotation," Coderre told reporters after his arrival.

"We feel that rotation is in order and that we should put an end to the combat mission."

The Liberals have vowed to vote against the Conservative government's plan to extend the combat mission.

Coderre said other members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization should take up the front-line role Canada is playing. "It is not a Canadian mission. It is an international mission."

Coderre, who was part of the government which deployed troops to Afghanistan in 2002, said Canada has done its part with the war.

"We're not abandoning the Afghan people. There might be some other way, at the military level, that we can help the Afghan people but we believe, about the combat mission, that rotation is in order."

KEYWORDS=WORLD

Desert queen Canadian Natalie Simard breaks with tradition as the first female to train Afghan combat soldiers

SOURCETAG: 0710090446

PUBLICATION: The Toronto Sun

DATE: 2007.10.09

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: 16

ILLUSTRATION: 2 photos by Michael Den Tandt, Sun Media The Soviet tank graveyard on the outskirts of Kabul is an imposing reminder of Afghanistan's tortured past. Canadians are training combat soldiers at Camp Alamo on the outskirts of Kabul.

BYLINE: MICHAEL DEN TANDT

DATELINE: KABUL

WORD COUNT: 743

As recently as a month ago, Natalie Simard lived quietly in Owen Sound, enjoying her friends and her job in the quartermaster's office on the base in Meaford.

Then the 29-year-old boarded a troop transport and flew to a small coalition camp on the outskirts of war-ravaged Kabul, to carve out a unique spot in Canadian military history.

Simard, a Quebec City native who moved to Owen Sound two years ago to learn English, is the first woman to join a Kabul-based unit of Canadian troops playing a key role in training the new Afghan National Army. She may even be the first woman to ever be involved in training combat soldiers in this rigidly patriarchal society.

Clearly, Simard loves a challenge: This is her second Afghan tour, the first having been at Canada's Camp Julien, also in Kabul, in 2004.

"With the guys I work with, it's great," Simard said at Camp Alamo, a small outpost on the outskirts of the city, where she is posted alongside 300 American and 60 British soldiers, as well as 14 other Canadians. "When I got out with the Afghans, they're always very surprised to see a woman in the army."

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Michael Den Tandt is editor of Sun Media's Owen Sound Sun Times. He is on assignment in Afghanistan.
KEYWORDS=WORLD

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Kandahar visit won't sway Grit to extend mission

SOURCETAG 0710090445
PUBLICATION: The Toronto Sun
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EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: 16
ILLUSTRATION: photo of DENIS CODERRE NATO should take up larger role
BYLINE: CP
DATELINE: KANDAHAR
WORD COUNT: 155

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The Liberals have vowed to vote against the Conservative government's plan to extend the combat mission.

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"We're not abandoning the Afghan people. There might be some other way, at the military level, that we can help the Afghan people but we believe, about the combat mission, that rotation is in order."

KEYWORDS=WORLD

15 prisoners executed Anger over the mass killings could impede NATO's mission in Afghanistan

SOURCETAG 0710090439

PUBLICATION: The Toronto Sun

DATE: 2007.10.09

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: 10

BYLINE: JASON STRAZIUSO, THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

DATELINE: KABUL, Afghanistan

WORD COUNT: 333

Ending a three-year moratorium on the death penalty, Afghanistan executed 15 prisoners by gunfire, including a man convicted of killing three foreign journalists during the U.S.-led invasion, the prisons chief announced yesterday.

The United Nations protested the executions, which could complicate the missions of some NATO countries, including Canada, involved in the conflict.

The mass execution took place Sunday evening according to Afghan law, which calls for condemned prisoners to be shot to death, said Abdul Salam Ismat, who oversees Afghanistan's prisons. The crimes committed by those executed included murder, kidnapping and armed robbery, but officials said no Taliban or al-Qaida fighters were among the prisoners.

Until it was ousted in late 2001, Afghanistan's hardline Taliban regime carried out executions in public, many of them at the Kabul stadium. The new government pledged to the international community it would halt executions, and had carried out only one previously, in 2004.

The 15 deaths could complicate relationships between the government and some NATO countries with military forces here. Foreign troops often hand over captured militants to the Afghan government, raising the question of whether countries that do not use the death penalty might stop surrendering prisoners.

The Netherlands was one of the first to criticize the Afghan announcement, calling the executions "extremely unwelcome." But it also said Dutch troops would continue to transfer militants to the Afghan government, saying it had an agreement protecting those prisoners from execution.

Anger over the executions also could prove a snag for NATO's efforts to get its member countries to send more troops to Afghanistan.

MOBILE TROOPS

NATO has some 40,000 soldiers here but commanders complain they need more helicopters, mobile troops and instructors to train the Afghan army.

"The fact that we have not fully been able to live up to the promises that nations have made is a point of concern for me," NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer said yesterday before the executions were announced.

Meanwhile, Australia has sustained its first combat casualty after a roadside bomb killed a soldier in southern Afghanistan yesterday.

The soldier, whose name and rank were not immediately released, was killed when an improvised explosive device went off near the armoured vehicle he was driving. Another soldier was seriously injured in the attack.
KEYWORDS=WORLD

Coderre visits troops

SOURCETAG 0710081122
PUBLICATION: The Ottawa Sun
DATE: 2007.10.09
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: 16
ILLUSTRATION: photo of DENIS CODERRE Rotation call
BYLINE: CP
DATELINE: KANDAHAR, AFGHANISTAN
WORD COUNT: 176

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"No, in the sense that, about the combat mission we are pretty clear about the notion of rotation," Coderre told reporters after his arrival at Kandahar Airfield.

"We feel that rotation is in order and that we should put an end to the combat mission."

Coderre said other NATO members should take up the front-line role Canada is currently playing.

"It is not a Canadian mission. It is an international mission," he said after visiting the Tim Hortons on the military base yesterday.

Foreign Affairs Minister Maxime Bernier visited the base the day before.

Coderre, who was part of the government which deployed troops to Afghanistan in 2002, said Canada has done its part. "We're not abandoning the Afghan people," he said. "There might be some other way, at the military level, that we can help the Afghan people but we believe, about the combat mission, that rotation is in order."

His opinion on the proposed February 2009 pullout is not a popular one with many troops.

"I don't think it's a good idea," said one young soldier. "We haven't had time to do what we wanted to do."
KEYWORDS=WORLD

Private guards eyed Critics query Canadian security contracts

SOURCETAG 0710081112
PUBLICATION: The Ottawa Sun
DATE: 2007.10.09
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: 8
BYLINE: CP
WORD COUNT: 227

The Foreign Affairs Department quietly relies on a host of private security contractors to protect Canadian embassies and diplomats across the globe — a small army that needs more supervision, say opposition critics and defence experts.

The call for more oversight follows an incident last month involving the U.S. firm Blackwater, in which 11 Iraqis died.

Canada has only employed the controversial security contractor to train members of the Canadian Forces and has not used Blackwater for embassy or dignitary protection.

However 2006 federal public account records show a handful of other U.S. and British security corporations working in Iraq have separate protection contracts with Canada for work in other countries.

Precisely what kind of service is provided by firms such as the ArmourGroup of the United Kingdom, and subsidiaries of Wackenhut Security Systems, isn't clear.

KABUL ASSIGNMENT

There are also questions about a \$456,000 contract Canada's former ambassador to Kabul signed last year with Saladin Afghanistan Security Ltd.

Documents released under the Access to Information law show the agreement, which ran from June 2006 until June 2007, was to provide a quick reaction force to protect the embassy and the army's Strategic Adviser Team — both based in the Afghan capital.

Both the Pentagon and the U.S. State Department have launched reviews of their use of private security firms.

NDP defence critic Dawn Black said the matter of security contractors should be studied by a parliamentary committee.

"With what happened in the U.S. with Blackwater and the lack of accountability, I think we have to be very wary and careful when it comes to contracting out our security." KEYWORDS=NATIONAL

Roadside bomb causes first Australian combat casualty

SOURCETAG 0710090540
PUBLICATION: The London Free Press
DATE: 2007.10.09
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A7
BYLINE: AP
DATELINE: CANBERRA, AUSTRALIA
WORD COUNT: 215

Australia has sustained its first combat casualty in Afghanistan or Iraq after a roadside bomb killed a soldier in southern Afghanistan, the country's military chief said today.

The soldier, whose name and rank were not immediately released, was killed yesterday when an improvised explosive device went off near the armoured vehicle he was driving, Air Chief Marshal Angus Houston told reporters in Canberra. Another soldier was seriously injured in the attack.

"This is a tragic day for the Australian Defence Force and our thoughts and prayers are with the families of these two soldiers," Houston told reporters in the capital, Canberra. "We're now working on arrangements to bring the body of the fallen soldier back to Australia."

The soldier's death comes as Australia prepares for general elections due to be called anytime in the next few weeks. Polls show conservative Prime Minister John Howard facing a landslide defeat amid rising opposition to Australia's involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Howard has refused to set a timetable for withdrawing Australian troops from either conflict, saying they will remain for as long as they are needed.

But the soldier's death is likely to increase calls for a phased Australian withdrawal, as a recent survey by the government-funded U.S. Studies Centre found as many as 64 per cent of Australians oppose the Iraq war, and 51 per cent oppose Australia's involvement in Afghanistan. KEYWORDS=WORLD

Afghanistan resumes executions amid protest

SOURCETAG 0710090539
PUBLICATION: The London Free Press
DATE: 2007.10.09
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A7
BYLINE: JASON STRAZIUSO, AP
DATELINE: KABUL, AFGHANISTAN
WORD COUNT: 283

Ending a three-year moratorium on the death penalty, Afghanistan executed 15 prisoners by gunfire, the prisons chief said yesterday.

The United Nations protested the executions, which could complicate NATO mission here.

The mass execution took place Sunday evening according to Afghan law, which calls for condemned prisoners to be shot to death, said Abdul Salam Ismat, who heads Afghanistan's prisons.

The crimes committed by those executed included murder, kidnapping and armed robbery, but officials said no Taliban or al-Qaida fighters were among the prisoners.

Until it was ousted in late 2001, Afghanistan's hardline Taliban regime carried out executions in public. The new government pledged to halt executions and had carried out only one before, in 2004.

The 15 deaths could complicate relationships between the government and some NATO countries with military forces here. Foreign troops often hand over captured militants to the Afghan government, raising the question of whether countries that do not use the death penalty might stop surrendering prisoners.

The Netherlands calling the executions "extremely unwelcome." But it also said Dutch troops would continue to transfer militants to the Afghan government, saying it had an agreement protecting those prisoners from execution.

Anger over the executions also could snag NATO's efforts to get its member countries to send more troops to Afghanistan. NATO has some 40,000 soldiers here but commanders complain they need more.

Among those executed was Reza Khan, who was convicted of adultery and the murder of one Afghan and three foreign journalists in 2001. The four were pulled from their cars, robbed and shot near the eastern city of Jalalabad while driving toward Kabul six days after the Taliban abandoned the capital under heavy U.S. bombing.

Also executed was Farhad, also known as Pahlavan, who like many Afghans used only a single name. He was involved in the 2005 kidnapping of an Italian aid worker; she was freed after three weeks.

KEYWORDS=WORLD

Liberals firm on ending Afghan combat

SOURCETAG 0710090538
PUBLICATION: The London Free Press
DATE: 2007.10.09
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A7
ILLUSTRATION: photo of DENIS CODERRE
BYLINE: DENE MOORE, CP
DATELINE: KANDAHAR, AFGHANISTAN
WORD COUNT: 222

Liberal Defence critic Denis Coderre arrived in Afghanistan yesterday to hear from Canadian troops on Canada's role in the conflict.

But Coderre said no matter what he hears in the coming days, it won't change his party's position calling for an end to Canada's combat mission when the current mandate expires in February 2009.

"We are pretty clear about the notion of rotation," Coderre told reporters after his arrival at Kandahar Airfield.

"We feel that rotation is in order and that we should put an end to the combat mission."

The Liberals have vowed to vote against the Conservative government's plan to extend the combat mission.

Coderre said other members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization should take up the front-line role Canada is currently playing.

"It is not a Canadian mission. It is an international mission," he said after visiting the Tim Hortons on the military base yesterday.

Foreign Affairs Minister Maxime Bernier made the same stop at the base the day before.

With the war in Afghanistan expected to dominate Parliament this fall — and perhaps even a federal election — all parties have ramped up efforts to sell their positions to the public.

Coderre, who was part of the government which deployed troops to Afghanistan in 2002, said Canada has done its part when it comes to the Afghan war.

"We're not abandoning the Afghan people," he said. "There might be some other way, at the military level, that we can help the Afghan people but we believe, about the combat mission, that rotation is in order."

He said NATO should look at the caveats some member countries have in place that keep their troops out of combat in Afghanistan.

"What we need is to be blunt," Coderre said.

No other member countries are volunteering. Several, including the Netherlands, are debating the future of their own missions in Afghanistan. KEYWORDS=NATIONAL

15 prisoners executed Anger over the mass killings could impede NATO's mission in Afghanistan

SOURCETAG 0710090817
PUBLICATION: The Edmonton Sun
DATE: 2007.10.09
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: 23
BYLINE: JASON STRAZIUSO, AP
DATELINE: KABUL, Afghanistan
WORD COUNT: 333

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KEYWORDS=WORLD

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SOURCETAG 0710090738
PUBLICATION: The Calgary Sun
DATE: 2007.10.09
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: 26
ILLUSTRATION: photo of DENIS CODERRE NATO should take up larger role
BYLINE: CP
DATELINE: KANDAHAR
WORD COUNT: 155

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KEYWORDS=WORLD

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SOURCETAG 0710090716
PUBLICATION: The Calgary Sun
DATE: 2007.10.09
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: 10
BYLINE: JASON STRAZIUSO, AP
DATELINE: KABUL, Afghanistan
WORD COUNT: 333

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KEYWORDS=WORLD

Battlefield politics comes to Kandhar

IDNUMBER 200710090091
PUBLICATION: The StarPhoenix (Saskatoon)
DATE: 2007.10.09
EDITION: Final
SECTION: World
PAGE: C11
DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan
BYLINE: Matthew Fisher
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 452

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan — No matter what he learns on his two day "fact-finding mission" to southern Afghanistan, Liberal defence critic Denis Coderre said Monday that he and his party would insist that Canada must end its combat mission here when the current mandate expires in February 2009.

"We're not abandoning the Afghan people. There might be another way at the military level to help them," Coderre said during a tour of NATO's main base here that was organized for him by officers from the Canadian contingent. "But we believe about the combat mission that rotation (out of a combat role) is in order."

Coderre's presence on the far side of the world had much to do with a possible federal election campaign, where Afghanistan is expected to be one of the key issues. If he had not missed a UN flight from Kabul to Kandahar on Sunday, he would have been at this dusty, bustling centre of NATO's war against the Taliban at the same time as Foreign Affairs Minister Maxime Bernier, who also treated his brief visit like a whistle-stop campaign event. Both men visited the same Tim Hortons, sought out troops on the same boardwalk and were briefed by senior officers at the same command centres.

In a foretaste of the election campaign, the political rivals from Quebec traded accusations just before Coderre's arrival here about whether or not Coderre had gone through the proper channels to set up his trip and whether or not he had received sufficient help from the Tory-led government.

Predictably, Coderre and Bernier used the exotic backdrop of the busy military airbase to stake out their different campaign positions about Canada's proper role in the Afghan war. Bernier boasted of the progress that had been made since the Canadians arrived here 19 months ago and suggested that an undefined future combat role might be required to protect those working on development and reconstruction projects.

Coderre emphasized it was time for other NATO countries to join the fight and Canada should not be blamed by its allies for withdrawing its troops from the front lines.

"I don't think we should point fingers at one country," if Canada decided to terminate its combat mission, Coderre said. "If we say there is a rotation, we don't have to be shy. We did a great job for three years."

While complimenting the troops on what they had done so far, and saying he and his party supported them, Coderre said he had not changed his position or that of his party.

"For now, I have to be convinced and I am not convinced," he said.

Canada should consider augmenting its existing Provincial Reconstruction Team and increasing the number of military mentors it has placed with the Afghan army and police, Coderre said.

Use remorseless criminals as soldiers on battlefield

IDNUMBER 200710090021
PUBLICATION: The StarPhoenix (Saskatoon)
DATE: 2007.10.09
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Forum
PAGE: A10
BYLINE: Joan Morrison
SOURCE: The StarPhoenix
WORD COUNT: 179

After reading letters to the editor and the newspaper articles about cracking down on violence, I suggest that serious thought be given to setting up a military training for these thieves, attackers etc. and sending them overseas.

The Canadian soldiers dying in Afghanistan are there because they choose to make our homeland safe. What are these others doing, as they make a person fearful of going for a walk, being in our own homes or working in an establishment?

The enemy overseas does not seem to care about people's lives. So, to fight them, let's send military personnel who have no feelings. Maybe then our jails would not be so full of addicts or people with an attitude that the world owes them a living.

Maybe the military can make these people feel good about themselves. Maybe it will help these people realize that they have to help themselves before anyone else can.

Judges and military officers are put in their positions because they are supposed to understand and know what to do. Well? Please step in before it's too late.

Joan Morrison

Saskatoon

Afghanistan food convoys being attacked, aid chief says

IDNUMBER 200710090028
PUBLICATION: The Hamilton Spectator
DATE: 2007.10.09
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Canada/World
PAGE: A8
DATELINE: OTTAWA
SOURCE: Hamilton Spectator wire services
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 255

Convoys carrying precious food donations are increasingly under attack in southern Afghanistan, says the local director of the United Nations World Food Program.

"From a security point of view it has gotten worse — there's no doubt about that," Rick Corsino said yesterday during a visit to Ottawa. "We've lost more food in the past 12 months ... than we had in the previous three years."

His comments come on the heels of a visit by Foreign Affairs Minister Maxime Bernier, who declared: "The territory ... is safer than one year ago. The number of attacks is diminished. I admit the situation is still difficult, but (it) has greatly improved."

In other developments yesterday:

* Liberal defence critic Denis Coderre arrived in Afghanistan on a private mission to hear from troops on Canada's role in the conflict. But Coderre said no matter what he hears, it won't change his party's position calling for an end to Canada's combat mission when the current mandate expires in February 2009.

* Australia has sustained its first combat casualty in Afghanistan or Iraq after a bomb killed a soldier in Afghanistan. The death comes as Australia prepares for elections in which Prime Minister John Howard faces defeat due to opposition to Australia's involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan.

* Ending a three-year moratorium on the death penalty, Afghanistan has executed 15 prisoners, an act that could complicate relationships with some NATO countries. Foreign troops often hand over captured militants, raising the question of whether countries that do not use the death penalty might stop surrendering prisoners.

THE AFGHAN MISSION: 'IF THEY HAVE A GOOD SALARY, MAYBE THEY WILL BEHAVE' Troops pay police to bolster security Rerouting salaries through Canadian mentors bypasses corruption in Kabul and boosts morale among key Afghan allies

PUBLICATION: GLOBE AND MAIL

IDN: 072820180

DATE: 2007.10.09

PAGE: A1 (ILLUS)

BYLINE: GRAEME SMITH

SECTION: International News

EDITION: Metro

DATELINE: KANDAHAR, AFGHANISTAN

WORDS: 754

WORD COUNT: 733

GRAEME SMITH KANDAHAR, AFGHANISTAN Canada has decided to sidestep the corrupt Afghan government and ensure the safety of Canadian soldiers by paying Afghan police directly, in cash.

It's an attempt to buy stability in the dangerous districts west of Kandahar city, where Canadian soldiers stake their lives on the reliability of their Afghan allies.

"This is brand new," said Brigadier-General Guy Laroche, Canada's top commander in Afghanistan, during an interview yesterday. "We're going to make sure our people eat." The lack of salaries made it especially difficult to keep Afghan officers serving in Zhari and Panjwai, where the insurgency has inflicted heavy losses on local police and provided an ongoing challenge to Canadian Forces.

"The money did not get to these guys," Gen. Laroche said. "Somebody is taking 10 per cent here, 10 per cent there, and at the end the poor guy is left with nothing. Would you stay in a place like that without being paid? I mean, c'mon." Starting last week, police officers in Zhari and Panjwai districts no longer received their monthly salaries through their regular chain of command in the Ministry of Interior, Gen. Laroche said.

Instead, payments were distributed by Canadian and U.S. soldiers who serve as mentors for Afghan law-enforcement, in the first such experiment in southern Afghanistan. The mentorship programs are themselves a new initiative, as NATO struggles to rein in Afghan forces widely accused of thievery and corruption.

Police were forced to steal for a living when their pay didn't arrive from Kabul, which hurt morale and fostered resentment among local Afghans, the commander said.

"They had to take bribes from the people, because they have to live," Gen. Laroche said.

Kandahar Governor Asadullah Khalid announced last month that a basic patrolman's wages would be increased to \$150 a month, up from \$77, but many officers say they rarely see a fraction of that.

"The government failed to pay salaries, made promises and didn't pay them, so the condition of the police was very bad," said Bismullah Khan, Panjwai police chief, in a telephone interview.

"We are happy about the Canadians' new plan, because I want my men trained and paid," the police chief continued. "They will be controlled by the Canadians, trained by them and paid by them directly.

It's a very good idea." The problems of underpaid police, and the mayhem that results when armed citizens resist thieving cops, were so widely understood in Kandahar that many residents applauded the Canadians' pay reforms, saying it could help bring peace to their war-torn districts.

"This is a good plan, this is the way to success," said Ajmal, 26, a wealthy landowner whose farms surround a small Canadian base in the village of Sperwan.

Noor Rahman, 40, moved his family off their farm in Zhari district as the Canadians got embroiled in fighting there last year, and now owns a shop in Kandahar city. He said there's hope of peace returning to his village if the police can be brought under control.

"If the Canadians pay the police, the police won't steal things from us," Mr. Rahman said. "If they have a good salary, maybe they will behave. The Canadians will give them good training and weapons and monthly salaries, and this is the way they can clean the Taliban from our area." The Canadian military is not funding the salaries, which continue to be drawn from an Afghan government trust fund. All of the money in the fund comes from donor countries, however, and Canada is a major contributor.

Last year, military officials said they planned to fix the pay system by giving Afghan police their own bank accounts and depositing money directly from Kabul. Banks are non-existent in rural areas, however, and the difficulty of travelling to the nearest branch made this idea difficult to implement.

Gen. Laroche said his soldiers are also supporting their Afghan allies with supplies, and ensuring that military backup is available if they get attacked.

The results are already showing, the commander said. When a corrupt police chief was fired recently in Zhari district, local officials worried that the departing chief would inspire many of his patrolmen to abandon their posts.

"When he left, we thought at one point he would be leaving with all the police in the district," Gen. Laroche said. "It did not happen. All the policemen at the different checkpoints, they stayed there. They stayed with our people. It's a good sign."

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Afghanistan; Canada

SUBJECT TERM: strife; government; corruption; police; foreign policy; defence; foreign relations

PERSONAL NAME: Guy Laroche

ORGANIZATION NAME: Armed Forces

THE AFGHAN MISSION: 'IF THEY HAVE A GOOD SALARY, MAYBE THEY WILL BEHAVE' Troops pay po

LIBERAL DEFENCE CRITIC AFFIRMS PARTY'S POSITION ON ENDING MISSION

PUBLICATION: GLOBE AND MAIL
IDN: 072820179
DATE: 2007.10.09
PAGE: A19
BYLINE: DENE MOORE
SECTION: International News
SOURCE: CP
EDITION: Metro
DATELINE: KANDAHAR, AFGHANISTAN
WORDS: 347
WORD COUNT: 309

DENE MOORE The Canadian Press KANDAHAR, AFGHANISTAN Liberal Defence critic Denis Coderre arrived in Kandahar, Afghanistan, yesterday to hear from Canadian troops on Canada's role in the conflict.

But Mr. Coderre said that no matter what he hears in the coming days, it won't change his party's position calling for an end to Canada's combat mission when the current mandate expires in February, 2009.

"No, in the sense that, about the combat mission, we are pretty clear about the notion of rotation," he told reporters after his arrival at Kandahar Airfield.

"We feel that rotation is in order and that we should put an end to the combat mission." The Liberals have vowed to vote against the Conservative government's plan to extend the combat mission.

Mr. Coderre said other members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization should take up the front-line role Canada is currently playing.

"It is not a Canadian mission. It is an international mission," he said after visiting the Tim Hortons on the military base yesterday.

Foreign Affairs Minister Maxime Bernier made the same photo-op stop at the base the day before.

With the war in Afghanistan expected to dominate Parliament – and perhaps even a federal election – this fall, all parties have increased efforts to sell their positions to the public.

Mr. Coderre, who was part of the government that deployed troops to Afghanistan in 2002, said Canada has done its part.

"We're not abandoning the Afghan people," he said. "There might be some other way, at the military level, that we can help the Afghan people but we believe, about the combat mission, that rotation is in order." He said NATO should now look at the caveats that some member countries have in place that keep their troops out of combat in Afghanistan.

Mr. Coderre's opinion on the proposed February, 2009, pullout is not a popular one with many troops.

"I don't think it's a good idea," one young soldier said. "We haven't had time to do what we wanted to do. It would be better to continue."

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Canada; Kandahar; Afghanistan

SUBJECT TERM: strife; foreign policy; defence; statements

PERSONAL NAME: Denis Coderre

ORGANIZATION NAME: Armed Forces

THE AFGHAN MISSION UN relief operation spurs rebuilding efforts World Food Program links rations to education, medical assistance and infrastructure improvements

PUBLICATION: GLOBE AND MAIL

IDN: 072820178

DATE: 2007.10.09

PAGE: A4

BYLINE: STEVEN CHASE

SECTION: National News

EDITION: Metro

DATELINE: Ottawa ONT

WORDS: 461

WORD COUNT: 404

STEVEN CHASE OTTAWA Trucking food aid into Afghanistan is getting riskier as the war-torn country grows more insecure, but a United Nations relief program is reporting small victories in using rations to spur rebuilding efforts.

The World Food Program in Afghanistan has found a way of using food handouts to bring about social change, motivating men to let women and girls attend school, villagers to rebuild infrastructure and the sick to take western medicine.

Canada is among the leading donors to the WFP's Afghan operations.

Over the long Thanksgiving weekend, the Harper government said it is donating \$25-million more to the Afghan effort, on top of \$14-million it doled out over the past 12 months.

The program expects to ship 225,000 tonnes of food to Afghanistan this year, but delivery has grown more dangerous amid a rising threat of insurgent attacks. Since 2006, the areas where the UN program's staff can safely operate has shrunk.

Convoys carrying wheat, beans and cooking oil to southern Afghanistan have also come under increasing attack this year, said Rick Corsino, director of the WFP's Afghan operations.

These raids have seen 1,000 tonnes of wheat, beans and cooking oil lost since January. That's more supplies stolen in the past 10 months than in the past two years.

"The reality over the past 12 to 18 months is it's been more difficult to operate and we don't necessarily see an end to that trend," said Mr. Corsino, who is meeting Canadian government officials in Ottawa this week.

But there are bright spots, including the success of a program that offers food to Afghan husbands, fathers and brothers if they allow their wives, daughters and sisters to attend schools that teach them reading and other basic skills.

The UN program gives female students a four-litre tin of cooking oil to take home every month they're in school.

"Call it a bribe or incentive but it encourages the family to allow the girl to go to school and keep her there," Mr. Corsino said. Today the education program reaches 1.4 million schoolchildren, 40 per cent of whom are female.

A similar effort is offering food to the heads of Afghan households if they allow women to attend classes that teach them to read. In Kandahar province, the UN food-aid effort is schooling more than 5,000 women where it reached only 300 two years ago.

The same food incentive is used to encourage Afghans stricken by tuberculosis to complete their eight-month regimen of drugs.

"We've doubled the [drug-treatment] completion rates," Mr. Corsino said. He added he's talking to Ottawa about ensuring new aid money gets flowing to forestall a looming food-supply crunch.

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Canada; Afghanistan

SUBJECT TERM:foreign aid; strife; food; social structure

Afghanistan mission must end: Coderre

PUBLICATION: WINNIPEG FREE PRESS

DATE: 2007.10.09

PAGE: A4

SECTION: Canada Wire

WORD COUNT: 352

CNS Matthew Fisher KANDAHAR, Afghanistan — No matter what he learns on his two-day "fact-finding mission" to Afghanistan, Liberal defence critic Denis Coderre said Monday his party would insist that Canada end its combat mission here when the mandate expires in February 2009.

"We're not abandoning the Afghan people. There might be another way at the military level to help them," Coderre said during a tour of NATO's main base, organized for him by officers from the Canadian contingent. "But we believe about the combat mission that rotation (out of a combat role) is in order." Coderre's presence here has much to do with a possible federal election — Afghanistan is expected to be one of the key issues.

If he had not missed a UN flight from Kabul to Kandahar on Sunday, he would have been at this dusty, bustling centre of NATO's war against the Taliban at the same time as Foreign Affairs Minister Maxime Bernier, who also treated his brief visit like a whistle-stop campaign event.

Both men visited the same Tim Hortons, sought out troops on the same boardwalk and were briefed by senior officers at the same command centres.

The two Quebec rivals traded accusations just before Coderre's arrival here about whether Coderre had gone through the proper channels to set up his trip and whether he had received sufficient help from the Tory-led government.

Coderre and Bernier used the backdrop of the military airbase to stake out their campaign positions.

Bernier boasted of the progress that has been made since the Canadians arrived here 19 months ago and suggested that an undefined future combat role might be required to protect those working on development and reconstruction projects.

Coderre emphasized that it's time for other NATO countries to join the fight and that Canada should not be blamed by its allies for withdrawing its troops from the front lines.

"I don't think we should point fingers at one country," if Canada decided to terminate its combat mission, Coderre said. "If we say there is a rotation, we don't have to be shy. We did a great job for three years." — CanWest News Service

From war to home: a difficult transition Struggling to resume life, more soldiers seeking help

PUBLICATION: WINNIPEG FREE PRESS

DATE: 2007.10.09

PAGE: A4

SECTION: Life

WORD COUNT: 597

Joe Paraskevas Joe Paraskevas The signs of worry surfaced even before Rod Buck and his fellow troops left Afghanistan last February.

Buck, 42, an army captain from Winnipeg, was the chaplain stationed with about 300 troops that comprised the Canadian Forces' Kandahar Provincial Reconstruction Team. He'd been in Afghanistan for six months. The gravity of being on such a mission was about to hit home, for him and many other soldiers, as the end of their tour approached.

Now, Buck remembers "a definite shift" in the mood of the troops in the days leading up to their departure. The focus and camaraderie that had characterized their lives in one of the world's most dangerous places had begun to give way, not simply to the relief of returning to Canada but to an apprehension of how they would cope with the transition.

"There was a steady number of people who would be coming and talking to me," Buck said recently, easing back in a chair in his office at St. James Lutheran Church where he is a pastor.

"And basically, a common theme developed. We're a little leery about going home." Recent news stories in Winnipeg underline the difficult transition for soldiers, from serving in a foreign country to resuming daily life in Canada.

A Winnipeg clinic that treats soldiers' mental health issues, including post-traumatic stress disorder, reported waiting lists are stretching from weeks to months.

Separately, a soldier from the city, who had served two months in Afghanistan, was charged last month with assault causing bodily harm after one of his infant triplet sons was taken to hospital in critical condition. The boy suffered from several injuries, including broken ribs and a punctured lung. Last week, the soldier was denied bail and must now await trial in jail.

The man's family has complained that both the military and the provincial government did not respond to their pleas for social support.

Military officials wouldn't answer specific questions about the case but told the Free Press that troops receive considerable support before and after they go overseas in an effort to minimize the chances of family upheaval and violence when they return home.

"And then we have ongoing support throughout deployment," said Haley Schroeder, prevention support and intervention co-ordinator with the Military Family Resource Centre at 17 Wing, the Canadian Forces base in Winnipeg.

"We have deployment respite as well as emergency child care that can be accessed normally within one hour of calling, 24-7," Schroeder added. "We offer deployment briefings for deployed families. We have support

groups for deployed families. We have children's programs.

The centre really is here to address all military lifestyle issues." Buck would learn firsthand that the process of transition — which the military calls decompression — can have unforeseen side-effects.

Even in his own case, there were episodes that showed the stress of the overseas mission would linger. Shortly after his return, Buck was in a store that sold electronics. The floor model of a home theatre system was turned on, and he was rattled by the thumping sound it made.

"That really bothered me," he remembered.

In fact, many things began to trouble Buck.

"Low rumbling noises really bothered me," he said. "Large crowds bothered me. Traffic bothered me." The father of four found he was constantly on alert. And yet, he also missed the excitement of his tour.

Life in Afghanistan, fraught with almost constant tension but also a vitality that imbued even daily events with importance, was difficult to leave behind.

"There is a huge emotional response to coming back that I wasn't prepared for," he said. "Everything in theatre (on a mission) is in colour. When you come back, it feels like a lot is in shades of grey."
joe.paraskevas@freepress.mb.ca

Toy cow sends calming message home

PUBLICATION: WINNIPEG FREE PRESS

DATE: 2007.10.09

PAGE: A5

SECTION: World Wire

WORD COUNT: 466

Lindsey Wiebe Lindsey Wiebe KANDAHAR, AFGHANISTAN — A small stuffed toy named Cow is helping an eight-year-old boy know his father is safe in Kandahar.

Electrical engineer John Bieber made the long trek to the Kandahar Air Field last week to work with the military as a civilian on behalf of a Canadian defense company, his second trip to Afghanistan in less than a year.

It's a journey few Canadians outside the military will ever make, and one that's been particularly hard on his son Jack, who never expected his father would head to a war zone.

"He's quite scared," said Bieber, 46. "He said, 'Be careful. I don't want you to get killed.'" "It's never come up before," he added. "Daddy's not a soldier, Daddy's not going to war. That sensibility has never been present." Bieber grew up in Winnipeg and went to the University of Manitoba before moving to Calgary in his late 20s.

His work is highly secretive — he can say only that he works in the area of communications security — and that adds to the challenges of working overseas.

"(My wife) only has a vague idea of what I do," said Bieber. "That doesn't help when you're in a situation like this." The private nature of his job has also made it tough to talk about the trip with his son. "What I've told him is that the soldiers need help with their communications equipment, and they need me to help them out," he said.

Fortunately, Bieber has some company on the trip — the aptly named Cow, a palm-sized, brown and white toy cow Jack insisted his father take with him. Bieber later decided to take photos of the fuzzy toy all over Kandahar — doing everything from riding on a LAV to searching for landmines — to send back to his son in Canada.

Cow even made a guest appearance in front of the famed Cologne Cathedral in Germany, a stopover on Bieber's trip from Canada.

"He was much relieved by that," Bieber smiled. "If it's OK to take Cow along, it can't be that bad." Bieber tries to downplay the dangers when he's speaking to his wife, Lina, but said it's always a challenge. "She pretends to believe me, and we just tend to get on with it," he said. "But I know it keeps her awake at night, and it keeps me awake at night sometimes, too." He said despite his line of work, the initial invitation to go to Afghanistan came as a surprise. Although he felt "significant trepidation" the first time around, he was still confident enough to take on a second trip.

"It's difficult to say no if you believe the work you're doing can save lives," he said.

lindsey.wiebe@freepress.mb.ca Lindsey Wiebe recently returned from an assignment to Afghanistan.

To read more about her trip, visit her blog at www.winnipegfreepress.com.

Battlefield politics laid out during Afghanistan mission

IDNUMBER 200710090046
PUBLICATION: The Windsor Star
DATE: 2007.10.09
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A9
ILLUSTRATION: Photo: Denis Coderre;
DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan
BYLINE: Matthew Fisher
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 476

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan – No matter what he learns on his two day "fact-finding mission" to southern Afghanistan, Liberal defence critic Denis Coderre said Monday that he and his party would insist that Canada must end its combat mission here when the current mandate expires in February 2009.

"We're not abandoning the Afghan people. There might be another way at the military level to help them," Coderre said during a tour of NATO's main base here that was organized for him by officers from the Canadian contingent. "But we believe about the combat mission that rotation (out of a combat role) is in order."

Coderre's presence on the far side of the world had much to do with a possible federal election campaign, where Afghanistan is expected to be one of the key issues.

If he had not missed a UN flight from Kabul to Kandahar on Sunday, he would have been at this dusty, bustling centre of NATO's war against the Taliban at the same time as Foreign Affairs Minister Maxime Bernier, who also treated his brief visit like a whistle-stop campaign event. Both men visited the same Tim Hortons, sought out troops on the same boardwalk and were briefed by senior officers at the same command centres.

In a foretaste of the election campaign, the political rivals from Quebec traded accusations just before Coderre's arrival here about whether or not Coderre had gone through the proper channels to set up his trip and whether he had received sufficient help from the Tory-led government.

Predictably, Coderre and Bernier used the exotic backdrop of the busy military airbase to stake out their different campaign positions about Canada's proper role in the Afghan war. Bernier boasted of the progress that had been made since the Canadians arrived here 19 months ago and suggested that an undefined future combat role might be required to protect those working on development and reconstruction projects.

Coderre emphasized that it was time for other NATO countries to join the fight and that Canada should not be blamed by its allies for withdrawing its troops from the front lines.

"I don't think we should point fingers at one country," if Canada decided to terminate its combat mission, Coderre said.

"If we say there is a rotation, we don't have to be shy. We did a great job for three years."

While complimenting the troops on what they had done so far, and saying that he and his party supported them, Coderre said he had not changed his position or that of his party.

"For now, I have to be convinced and I am not convinced," he said.

FIFTEEN EXECUTED

Afghanistan announced Monday it had put to death 15 men, one convicted of killing three foreign journalists, in the second confirmed executions since the fall of the Taliban regime six years ago.

The state broadcaster, Radio Television Afghanistan (RTA) announced the executions saying the punishments were for crimes including murder and rape.

The convicted men went before a firing squad late Sunday.

The head of prisons, Abdul Salaam Asmat, said the 15 were put to death at Afghanistan's largest prison, Pul-i-Charki, notorious for mass executions during the 1979–1992 Soviet and communist governments.

Afghanistan executes 15 for murders, rapes

IDNUMBER 200710090012
PUBLICATION: The Ottawa Citizen
DATE: 2007.10.09
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A4
DATELINE: KABUL
SOURCE: Agence France–Presse
WORD COUNT: 212

KABUL · Afghanistan announced yesterday it had put to death 15 men, one convicted of killing three foreign journalists, in the second confirmed slate of executions since the fall of the Taliban regime six years ago.

The state broadcaster, Radio Television Afghanistan (RTA), announced the executions in its evening news bulletin, saying the punishments were for crimes including murder and rape.

The convicted men went before a firing squad late Sunday, government officials said.

The head of prisons, Abdul Salaam Asmat, said the 15 were put to death at Afghanistan's largest prison, Pul-i-Charki, notorious for mass executions during the 1979–1992 Soviet and Communist governments.

The United Nations Mission in Afghanistan reacted with disappointment, saying it had been a "staunch supporter" of a moratorium on the death penalty that President Hamid Karzai had observed over the past years.

UN special representative Tom Koenigs urged the country to "work toward attaining the highest human rights standards and ensuring that the due process of law and the rights of all citizens are respected."

The last known execution by Mr. Karzai's post-Taliban government was in April 2004, when military commander Abdullah Shah was killed with a single bullet after being convicted of a spate of murders.

A Supreme Court spokesman, Wakil Omari, said other people were believed to have been executed in secret since then, but he had no details.

Front-line tour won't change Grit's mind; Defence critic says mission should still expire in 2009

IDNUMBER 200710090011

PUBLICATION: The Ottawa Citizen

DATE: 2007.10.09

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: A4

ILLUSTRATION: Colour Photo: Matthew Fisher, CanWest News Service / Liberaldefence critic Denis Coderre meets a Tim Hortons employee at the Kandahar Airfield yesterday. Mr. Coderre was on a two-day tour of Canadian operations on the frontlines in Afghanistan. Mr. Coderre said he was 'not convinced' that the mission should be extended. ;

DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan

BYLINE: Matthew Fisher

SOURCE: The Ottawa Citizen with a file from Agence France-Press

WORD COUNT: 466

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan · No matter what he learns on his two-day "fact-finding mission" to southern Afghanistan, Liberal defence critic Denis Coderre said yesterday that he and his party would insist that Canada must end its combat mission when the current mandate expires in February 2009.

"We're not abandoning the Afghan people. There might be another way at the military level to help them," Mr. Coderre said during a tour of NATO's main base that was organized for him by Canadian officers. "But we believe about the combat mission that rotation (out of a combat role) is in order."

Mr. Coderre's presence on the far side of the world had much to do with a possible federal election campaign, in which Afghanistan is expected to be one of the key issues. If he had not missed a UN flight from Kabul to Kandahar on Sunday, he would have been at this dusty, bustling centre of NATO's war against the Taliban at the same time as Foreign Affairs Minister Maxime Bernier, who also treated his brief visit like a whistlestop campaign event.

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In a foretaste of the election campaign, the political rivals from Quebec traded accusations just before Mr. Coderre's arrival about whether or not Mr. Coderre had gone through the proper channels to set up his trip and whether or not he had received sufficient help from the Tory-led government.

Predictably, Mr. Coderre and Mr. Bernier used the exotic backdrop of the busy military airbase to stake out their different campaign positions about Canada's proper role in the Afghan war. Mr. Bernier boasted of the progress that had been made since the Canadians arrived 19 months ago and suggested that an undefined future combat role might be required to protect those working on development and reconstruction projects.

Mr. Coderre emphasized that it was time for other NATO countries to join the fight and that Canada should not be blamed by its allies for withdrawing its troops from the front lines.

In all, 72 Canadians have died in Afghanistan. NATO casualties, including the death of an Australian soldier yesterday, the second from that country to die since 2001, are at 181.

While complimenting the troops on what they had done so far, and saying that he and his party supported them, Mr. Coderre said he had not changed his position or that of his party.

"For now, I have to be convinced, and I am not convinced," he said.

Canada should consider augmenting its existing Provincial Reconstruction Team and increasing the number of military mentors it has placed with the Afghan army and police, Mr. Coderre said. He also said NATO already had contingency plans if Canada cut its combat commitment.

The problem with what NATO has been doing in Afghanistan is that the military alliance "lacked cohesion," Mr. Coderre said.

Why come if mind already made up?

IDNUMBER 200710090039
PUBLICATION: National Post
DATE: 2007.10.09
EDITION: National
SECTION: World
PAGE: A15
COLUMN: Matthew Fisher
ILLUSTRATION: Black & White Photo: Matthew Fisher, CanWest News Service /Liberal defence critic Denis Coderre visits the Tim Hortons outlet at Kandahar airfield yesterday. Canada's mission in Afghanistan is expected to be a key plank in the next federal election campaign. ;
DATELINE: AT KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan
BYLINE: Matthew Fisher
SOURCE: National Post
WORD COUNT: 754

AT KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan –Casting himself as the Lone Ranger, and with a thin new beard serving as a partial mask, Liberal defence critic Denis Coderre ventured deep into hostile territory yesterday for a preelection photo op.

No, Mr. Coderre did not travel to Taliban country. He spent the day as the not–particularly–welcome guest of Canadian troops who were almost universally angry at the Liberals' insistence that Canada must end its combat mission here when the current mandate expires in February, 2009.

Not 12 hours earlier, Stephen Harper's new foreign minister, Maxime Bernier, made the same 9,700–kilometre trek for the same pre–election photo op. But as befits a federal minister, Mr. Bernier had much better props.

Arriving and leaving, Mr. Bernier and his entourage had their own Canadian Forces aircraft. While on the ground they had access to SUV limousines, were flown to the Canadian front lines in a U.S. Chinook helicopter and were driven around there in a Bison armoured vehicle.

The Lone Ranger had no sidekick on what was an unauthorized trip. Because of "security concerns" after arriving on a UN flight he was not even allowed outside the wire at this sprawling, heavily guarded base, which is home to about 13,000 NATO soldiers and civilian workers.

Mr. Coderre instead had to hoof it around the airfield, but his main points of interest seemed to be Tim Hortons and the media tent. Among the few perks that Jean Chretien's former immigration minister was given was a computerized card in order to eat at one of the chow halls.

But what Mr. Coderre lacked most of all was a credible explanation of why he had bothered to come on at all on a "fact–finding mission" if, as he said again and again, his mind was already made up that Canada should not continue fighting alongside the Dutch, British, Americans, Australians and Romanians in southern Afghanistan.

Mr. Bernier had his own communications problem. His mantra was that security in the south had improved. This notion flew in the face of a recent UN study and much anecdotal evidence.

More than anything it sounded like part of a Tory election strategy to declare a victory of sorts, creating the political space for a partial withdrawal or a substantial redefinition of the mission — though it must also be said that the Conservatives have sent mixed signals for months on their intent for Canada's role in Afghanistan.

What Mr. Coderre — and to an extent Mr. Bernier — failed to provide in Kandahar was a realistic appraisal of the current security situation, which is not particularly good, and how it would get much worse if Canada were to retreat. Also missing was an appreciation of how Canada's combat role in southern Afghanistan, which was championed by Paul Martin's Liberal government and then mightily embraced by Stephen Harper's Tories, has created an expectation among Afghans that Canada was actually serious about helping this country.

Those who would demand a change in the Canadian mission are ignoring a broad international consensus that little social or economic development can take place here unless there is security and that establishing such security requires years of commitment, not months.

It is also laughable that some Canadian politicians think that after only 19 months of combat their country has already earned a dividend from NATO for fighting the Taliban in Kandahar's Panjwaii and Zhari districts and that somehow Canada now has the right to condemn countries such as Germany that have refused to fight in Afghanistan.

Canadian troops have done very well here, but their courage and their successes do not make up for the fact that for decades Canada neglected its military so badly that it became the laughing stock of NATO. And several generations of Canadian politicians were quite happy to have it that way.

It is only because of what Canada has been doing in Kandahar that it has begun to re-establish its position as a respected member of NATO. Canada's top general, Rick Hillier, has commanded the International Security Assistance Force here. Maj.-Gen. Marc Lessard of the Van Doos is to assume command for all combat operations in southern Afghanistan from next February.

The antics of Messrs. Coderre and Bernier over the Thanksgiving weekend were a lively pre-election sideshow. The crux of the matter is whether Canada can, in good conscience, so quickly abandon the 90% of Afghans who believe in what they are doing, throwing into question whether the 71 Canadians who have died here did so for any good reason.

KEYWORDS: POLITICIANS; POLITICAL PARTIES; GOVERNMENT; CANADA

Coderre affirms Afghanistan pullout by 2009; Liberal Defence Critic; 'Not abandoning Afghan people'

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PUBLICATION: National Post
DATE: 2007.10.09
EDITION: National
SECTION: World
PAGE: A15
DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan
BYLINE: Matthew Fisher
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 583

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan – No matter what he learns on his two-day "fact-finding mission" to southern Afghanistan, Liberal defence critic Denis Coderre said yesterday he and his party would insist Canada must end its combat mission here when the current mandate expires in February, 2009.

"We're not abandoning the Afghan people. There might be another way at the military level to help them," Mr. Coderre said during a tour of NATO's main base here that was organized for him by officers from the Canadian contingent. "But we believe about the combat mission that rotation [out of a combat role] is in order."

Mr. Coderre's presence on the far side of the world had much to do with a possible federal election campaign in which Afghanistan is expected to be one of the key issues. If he had not missed a UN flight from Kabul to Kandahar on Sunday, he would have been at this dusty, bustling centre of NATO's war against the Taliban at the same time as Foreign Affairs Minister Maxime Bernier, who also treated his brief visit like a whistlestop campaign event. Both men visited the same Tim Hortons, sought out troops on the same boardwalk and were briefed by senior officers at the same command centres.

In a foretaste of the election campaign, the political rivals from Quebec traded accusations just before Mr. Coderre's arrival here about whether or not the Liberal MP had gone through the proper channels to set up his trip and whether or not he had received sufficient help from the Tory-led government.

Mr. Coderre and Mr. Bernier used the exotic backdrop of the busy military airbase to stake out their different campaign positions about Canada's proper role in the Afghan war. Mr. Bernier boasted of the progress that had been made since the Canadians arrived here 19 months ago and suggested that an undefined future combat role might be required to protect those working on development and reconstruction projects.

Mr. Coderre emphasized that it was time for other NATO countries to join the fight and that Canada should not be blamed by its allies for withdrawing its troops from the front lines.

"I don't think we should point fingers at one country," if Canada decided to terminate its combat mission, Mr. Coderre said. "If we say there is a rotation, we don't have to be shy. We did a great job for three years."

While complimenting the troops on what they had done so far, and saying that he and his party supported them, Mr. Coderre said he had not changed his position or that of his party.

"For now, I have to be convinced and I am not convinced," he said.

Canada should consider augmenting its existing Provincial Reconstruction Team and increasing the number of military mentors it has placed with the Afghan army and police, Mr. Coderre said. He also suggested NATO already had contingency plans if Canada cut back its combat commitment.

The problem with what NATO had been doing in Afghanistan is that the military alliance "lacked cohesion," he said. "How can we get all countries to participate?"

Canada switched its forces to a combat role in Kandahar from a relatively quiet peacekeeping mission in Kabul in February, 2006. But only the U.S., Britain, Romania and the Netherlands also signed on for combat.

Unless extended by Parliament, the current Canadian mission is to end in February, 2009. While favouring a new combat mandate if Parliament approves, the Harper government has sent mixed signals about exactly what Canada might do next. It has repeatedly pledged to have a full Parliamentary debate about the question.

KEYWORDS: IMMIGRATION; AFGHANISTAN; CANADA

Harper is in the driver's seat

IDNUMBER	200710090055
PUBLICATION:	Montreal Gazette
DATE:	2007.10.09
EDITION:	Final
SECTION:	Editorial / Op-Ed
PAGE:	A18
KEYWORDS:	PRIME MINISTERS; POLITICIANS; POLITICAL PARTIES; GOVERNMENT;CANADA
SOURCE:	The Gazette
WORD COUNT:	581

Prime Minister Stephen Harper has played his cards deftly in preparation for the new session of Parliament. If the throne speech passes, he says, then the government will proceed with the speech's agenda, and any such bill the opposition combines to defeat will trigger an election.

This is a gamble that Harper and his Conservatives can hardly lose. Current Liberal disorder, surging Conservative support in at least some parts of Quebec, and the listlessness of the Bloc Québécois combine to mean that the Conservatives would very likely fare at least as well in a new election as in the last one. And a new Conservative minority would surely have carte blanche to govern, barring some major gaffe, for at least another 18 months.

Artfully, Harper claims he does not want an election, and that one would likely lead to another minority. "Majority" is the word Harper dares not speak, because a significant number of Canadians still fear that winning a majority would turn the Conservative caucus into Attila's marauding Huns.

The reality is that the extra seats Harper would need to get a majority would have to come from cities, and/or from socially-liberal Quebec: A Conservative majority caucus would be more centrist than the current one. But some observers believe Harper hurt his party badly in the last days of the 2005-06 campaign by musing openly about a majority; he won't do that a second time.

Can the opposition steer away from an election? The NDP and the Bloc have long since decided, for reasons of their own, to oppose a Throne Speech they have not heard. So an election can be averted only if the Liberals support the speech, or at least refrain from voting against it.

Once the throne speech is passed, bills would start pouring into the legislative hopper: The PM spoke of new tax cuts, crime-crackdown bills stalled in the last session, the environment, and Afghanistan. With the country divided 50-50 on that last issue, Harper might be willing to risk a defeat over it – 50 per cent is considerably better than the Conservatives' 36 per cent in the 2006 vote. And he was careful to frame the issue as one of "moral responsibility" growing from a Liberal initiative. He is also speaking earnestly about responsible options and mature consideration. He's sounding reasonably statesmanlike and serious. The Liberals will split on the issue, or leave themselves open to charges of inconstancy and hypocrisy.

On every other issue, Harper will come out swinging in the Throne Speech, because he learned last spring that being in office is not quite the same as being in power. The last weeks of the last Parliamentary session were sour for the government, with many major bills stalled by a fractious opposition.

Harper is not the sort of PM who got into this for the nice office or the free travel – he wants to change things,

and that requires the ability to pass legislation. So he's seeking the upper hand in advance, while preaching sweet reason about "effective government." It's easy to speak softly when you have the big stick of good electoral prospects and a bulging party treasury.

The Liberals were left gasping last week – correctly, but ineffectually – that Harper as opposition leader had a quite different attitude about respect for opposition views. They look like a deer in the headlights right now.

This promises to be an interesting autumn.

End mission in 2009, says Liberal MP; Afghanistan to be election issue. Denmark won't boost troops further; French move south from Tajikistan

IDNUMBER 200710090039
PUBLICATION: Montreal Gazette
DATE: 2007.10.09
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A15
KEYWORDS: ORGANIZATIONS; DEFENCE; AFGHANISTAN; CANADA
DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan
BYLINE: MATTHEW FISHER
SOURCE: CanWest News Service; Reuters and AFP contributed to this report
WORD COUNT: 538

No matter what he learned on his two day "fact-finding mission" to southern Afghanistan, Liberal defence critic Denis Coderre said yesterday that he and his party would insist that Canada must end its combat mission here when the current mandate expires in February 2009.

"We're not abandoning the Afghan people. There might be another way at the military level to help them," Coderre said during a tour of NATO's main base. "We believe ... that rotation (out of a combat role) is in order."

If Coderre had not missed a UN flight from Kabul to Kandahar on Sunday, he would have been at this dusty, bustling centre of NATO's war against the Taliban at the same time as Foreign Affairs Minister Maxime Bernier, who also treated his brief visit like a whistle-stop campaign event. Both men visited the same Tim Hortons, sought out troops on the same boardwalk and were briefed by senior officers at the same command centres.

In a foretaste of a federal election campaign, the political rivals from Quebec traded accusations just before Coderre's arrival here about whether or not Coderre had gone through the proper channels to set up his trip and whether or not he had received sufficient help from the Tory-led government.

Predictably, Coderre and Bernier used the exotic backdrop of the busy military air base to stake out their different campaign positions about Canada's proper role in the Afghan war. Bernier boasted of the progress that had been made since the Canadians arrived here 19 months ago and suggested that an undefined future combat role might be required to protect those working on development and reconstruction projects.

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Denmark said yesterday it has no plans to further boost the number of troops it has in Afghanistan as part of the International Security Assistance Force, Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen said after meeting with NATO General-Secretary Jaap de Hoop Scheffer.

End mission in 2009, says Liberal MP; Afghanistan to be election issue. Denmark won't boost troops further

Last month, de Hoop Scheffer expressed disappointment that some of the 26 allies were not sending troops to fight the Taliban in the more dangerous southern provinces.

Germany in particular has been resisting pressure from the United States and other NATO countries to allow its 3,000 soldiers in Afghanistan to operate outside of the more stable north.

Until two weeks ago, France operated mostly in the north also. But last week, French Mirage jets responded to a call for close air support from troops from the Quebec-based Royal 22e Régiment fighting the Taliban.

The French move from Tajikistan has been widely construed here and in NATO as a sign France and its new president, Nicolas Sarkozy, is taking a greater interest in the war and in improving relations with the United States and its allies here.

Pakistani helicopter gunships and troops killed 130 militants in some of the heaviest-ever clashes near the Afghan border Sunday and yesterday while 45 soldiers have also died, the army said yesterday.

Where is justice when judges don't know law?; Afghan mission targets legal system

IDNUMBER 200710090126
PUBLICATION: Edmonton Journal
DATE: 2007.10.09
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: D12
KEYWORDS: JUDGES; WAGES & SALARIES
DATELINE: KANDAHAR CITY, Afghanistan
BYLINE: Rob Shaw
SOURCE: Victoria Times Colonist; CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 346

KANDAHAR CITY, Afghanistan – How do you dispense justice in a country where judges don't know the law and warlords run their own prisons?

That's the question facing Canadians as they join international organizations trying to help Afghans reform their legal system.

"Rule of law is an important governance issue," said Lt.-Cmdr. April English, who works in the office of the judge advocate general in Edmonton and now serves as legal adviser to Canada's Provincial Reconstruction Team in Kandahar province.

"Without the rule of law you have chaos among the people."

Until recently, the country's legal system operated largely at the whim of a village elder's ruling, a warlord's edict or the opinion of a judge who may or may not be following the law.

In theory, Afghanistan's law is similar to Canada's. When a person is arrested, the state has 72 hours to present its case to a judge, who can then take it to trial. The prosecution and defence are considered neutral parties in the eyes of the court.

A judge usually confers with three of his peers to deliver a verdict and sentence. But as in many aspects of Afghan life, theory and reality are a long way apart.

The UN recently surveyed criminal trials in five areas. There were major problems in more than 90 per cent of proceedings, including: the Afghan judge did not understand the law; the prosecution did not show up to court; defendants were unaware they were entitled to a lawyer, or couldn't find a lawyer; and judges made verdicts based on opinion instead of law, said Georgette Gagnon, at the UN's Assistance Mission in Afghanistan law unit.

The UN and Canada are working to change that situation by funding seminars for judges and prosecutors and hoping the judges, in turn, re-educate their peers.

The Canadian International Development Agency and Department of Foreign Affairs have helped fund training for 75 prosecutors, 68 public defenders, 90 judges (of which 16 were women), and 20 additional

judges to act as trainers to others.

Much of Afghan justice in rural areas is handled by the local elder with the most cultural or religious respect. The elder usually brings together the two parties and arrives at an agreeable solution and punishment, English said.

Canadians see success training Afghan recruits; 'This is the best job I have ever had in the army,' says soldier mentoring battalion of 150

IDNUMBER 200710090125
PUBLICATION: Edmonton Journal
DATE: 2007.10.09
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: D12
KEYWORDS: WAR; TERRORISM
DATELINE: CAMP HERO, Afghanistan
BYLINE: Matthew Fisher
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 489

CAMP HERO, Afghanistan – It's 10 a.m. and a battalion of fresh recruits from the Afghan National Army is already calling it a day. Because it's Ramadan, they cannot drink or eat, and they're tired.

Of the 100 new soldiers being mentored by Canadian troops, only 35 had shown up for work that morning. The missing infantrymen had been paid the day before, and they had gone to spend their time and money with their families at a time of year that's the Afghan equivalent of Christmas.

For all that, Canadian mentors to several Afghan National Army battalions are gung-ho about the prospects for the raw recruits they were helping to transform into soldiers at a base not far from NATO's Kandahar Airfield.

"Seriously, this is the best job I have ever had in the army," says Sgt. Dave Querry, on his sixth overseas tour with the Royal 22nd Regiment. "My chums in the Van Doo are in Masum Ghar for combat and I am here in the culture of these people. The other Van Doo do their job, but they do not meet Afghans. I see the people here from when they wake up in the morning."

Cpl. Alain Courturier of Edmundston, N.B., is also a strong fan of the mentoring program.

"All the soldiers stop talking and listen to us when we come around," Courturier said. "These guys didn't go to school, but they are really intelligent. If you tell them something, you realize a week or two later that they remember."

The Harper government has sent mixed signals about Canada's military contribution in Afghanistan after the current mission — which involves a lot of fighters and a small number of mentors to the army and the police — ends in early 2009. One of the options being considered is a much larger military teaching presence so that Afghan government forces can learn to defend themselves.

"My idea is that we should invest more in this kind of thing, rather than in the battle," said Querry, 35, of Trois Rivières, Que. "I am proud of what I do with this group. It isn't easy but I can see the evolution."

In Querry's group, four Canadians mentor 150 Afghan soldiers.

Lieut. Balyali, a 28-year-old platoon commander who, like many Afghans, has only one name, is disappointed that Dutch mentors are about to take over from the Canadians, who will move on to another, more experienced battalion.

"I am glad to work with the Canadians," Balyali said. "It has been good training."

Relatively well paid by Afghan standards and housed in U.S.-designed barracks superior to the ones the Red Army left behind, Balyali's recruits receive about \$100 a month. Senior officers can earn as much as 10 times that.

Balyali, however, expressed two concerns. He's disappointed that the Afghan army did not allow his men to take the month of Ramadan off. And he's angry at the poor quality of his men's weapons.

"We have good training and good troops but without good weapons we can't fight," he says.

Lt.-Col. Muhammad Anbia, a 25-year veteran, expresses similar disappointment. "It is clear to everyone that we have light weapons, not heavy weapons."

Harper moderates political approach to avoid going to the polls; Tories content to nudge Canadians gradually in a conservative direction

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PUBLICATION:	Edmonton Journal
DATE:	2007.10.09
EDITION:	Final
SECTION:	Opinion
PAGE:	A16
COLUMN:	Susan Riley
KEYWORDS:	PRIME MINISTERS; POLITICIANS; POLITICAL PARTIES; GOVERNMENT; CANADA
DATELINE:	OTTAWA
BYLINE:	Susan Riley
SOURCE:	Ottawa Citizen
WORD COUNT:	791

OTTAWA – In a rare formal sit-down with the national media last week, Prime Minister Stephen Harper repeated that he does not want an election now, that Canadians don't want one and his priority is to continue governing.

Naturally, this has touched off a renewed frenzy of election speculation.

It isn't just that journalists are incapable of accepting a straight answer, although, to be fair, we are not accustomed to straight answers from political leaders. Harper planted a seed of doubt when he argued that if the opposition parties pass his Oct. 16 throne speech because they haven't finished packing, or their leader is distracted, or they just aren't ready for an election, they forgo the right to vote against any legislation that flows from the speech.

"They have to fish or cut bait," was how he put it. "You can't pass the throne speech one day and the next day say 'we didn't actually mean to do it.'"

In theory, that means confidence votes on every new bit of Conservative legislation — a challenge to the opposition to vote yes, or take it to the street. It means a parliamentary session that could be more tiresome than the last, with more bluster, double-dares and time-wasting distractions — nothing like the low-key, incremental progress toward Conservative goals that the prime minister claims to want. That, in fact, he probably does want.

Indeed, this could be part of Harper's "hidden agenda," hinted at his long time friend and former adviser, Tom Flanagan, in recent weeks. In his recent book, *Harper's Team*, Flanagan concedes there is no natural conservative majority in Canada, and a right-wing government will win total power only incrementally. The idea, according to Flanagan, is to offer cautious, moderate-sounding initiatives that nudge the country in a conservative direction, rather than frightening everyone with a lusty moral crusade for fundamental reform.

We've already seen this strategy in Harper's retooled rhetoric on climate change, symbolic concessions to Quebec nationalism at the risk of annoying his western base, his populist posturing on economic and tax

issues.

Harper's \$64-million anti-drug strategy is another example of mixed messaging: along with muscular "get-tough-on-dealers" provisions, it includes money for treatment and education.

It is not "a simple war on drugs," said Harper, but neither is it an endorsement of "harm reduction" — needle exchanges and injection sites for addicts. The new Conservative watchword is "balance." This so-called "balanced" approach isn't likely to curb drug use any more than existing programs do, but it could be a successful political ploy: a rebuke to those who would decriminalize or legalize soft drugs, reassurance for worried parents, "compassion and help" for users.

Indeed, to avoid coming across like a latter-day J. Edgar Hoover, Harper reached out to boomer parents who "romanticized" soft drug culture in their youth, but now worry about what, and how much their adolescents are taking.

Even on Afghanistan, Harper is tempering his language. While his reluctance to withdraw troops, even after the February 2009 deadline, remains firm, he avoided abusing the mission's critics last week. "Can I say that we're ready to leave cold turkey in 2009? I think it's hard to imagine, but I do recognize that the Canadian population, the Canadian people, expect that we will leave in a responsible manner over an understandable period of time."

In the end, the brake on Harper is not the opposition, scattered and disunited as they are, but the voters. He insists, for instance, that his government's anti-crime measures, stalled in the last Parliament, must pass this time — or else.

He points to past support from his rivals for tougher measures against gun crimes and tighter parole provisions. Although many criminologists, and the example of other countries, suggest tougher penalties don't reduce gun crime — and statistics show the so-called crime wave is wildly exaggerated — it will be a brave opposition leader who provokes an election over so emotional a subject.

The only issue, apart from Afghanistan, that might justify an election is the one on which Harper is most vulnerable: climate change. But he won't give the opposition a chance to defeat him.

Environment Minister John Baird says he has no intention of re-introducing his widely disparaged clean air bill. Instead, the government will implement its green policies administratively. This doesn't mean there won't be a fall election: a careless head count before a vote, a provocative remark, an unexpected catastrophe could present an opportunity, to Harper or his rivals.

But the prime minister says he doesn't want an election, neither Gilles Duceppe, nor Stéphane Dion, can afford one, and Canadians don't want one. For the time being, maybe we, me included, should find something more important to write about.

Susan Riley is a national affairs columnist for the Ottawa Citizen

Australian soldier killed

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PUBLICATION: Edmonton Journal
DATE: 2007.10.09
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A11
KEYWORDS: MARKET RESEARCH
SOURCE: Bloomberg
WORD COUNT: 77

An Australian soldier died in Afghanistan and another was wounded when a roadside bomb detonated near their vehicle on Monday.

The soldiers, part of the 300-strong reconstruction task force in Oruzgan Province, were returning to base when the device exploded, Australian Defence Force Chief Angus Houston told reporters in Canberra.

It is the first Australian combat death in Afghanistan since a soldier was killed when his vehicle hit a landmine in 2002. Australia has about 970 troops in the country.

Troop visit won't sway Liberal view; Party still backs withdrawal, Coderre says on Afghan tour

IDNUMBER 200710090037
PUBLICATION: Edmonton Journal
DATE: 2007.10.09
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A11
ILLUSTRATION: Colour Photo: Reuters / An Afghan boy holds up his hands to receive food distributed by U.S. soldiers in a village about 45 kilometres west of Kandahar on Monday. ;
KEYWORDS: IMMIGRATION; DRUG TESTING; AFGHANISTAN; CANADA
DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan
BYLINE: Matthew Fisher
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 555

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan – No matter what he learns on his two-day

"fact-finding mission" to southern Afghanistan, Liberal defence critic Denis Coderre said Monday that he and his party would insist Canada must end its combat mission here when the current mandate expires in February 2009.

"We're not abandoning the Afghan people. There might be another way at the military level to help them," Coderre said during a tour of NATO's main base here that was organized for him by officers from the Canadian contingent. "But we believe about the combat mission that rotation (out of a combat role) is in order."

Coderre's presence on the far side of the world had much to do with a possible federal election campaign, where Afghanistan is expected to be one of the key issues. If he had not missed a UN flight from Kabul to Kandahar on Sunday, he would have been at this dusty, bustling centre of NATO's war against the Taliban at the same time as Foreign Affairs Minister Maxime Bernier, who also treated his brief visit like a whistle-stop campaign event. Both men visited the same Tim Hortons, sought out troops on the same boardwalk and were briefed by senior officers at the same command centres.

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Canada should consider augmenting its existing Provincial Reconstruction Team and increasing the number of military mentors it has placed with the Afghan army and police, Coderre said. He also claimed that NATO already had contingency plans if Canada cut back its combat commitment.

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France assists Canada's troops; Country has responded 'many times'

IDNUMBER 200710090027
PUBLICATION: Calgary Herald
DATE: 2007.10.09
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A9
KEYWORDS: CASINOS; STOCKS; FILM INDUSTRY
DATELINE: KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan
BYLINE: Matthew Fisher
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 427

As recently as four days ago, French fighter jets scrambled in response to a call for close air support from troops from the Quebec-based Royal 22nd Regiment fighting insurgents.

While details of that mission remain secret, it was not the first time France has come to the aid of Canadian ground troops fighting in Kandahar.

"I've helped the Canadians many times," said Lt.-Col. Fabien Mandon, commander of the Kandahar Air Expeditionary Group, as he stood in front of one of the first three French Mirage 2000 jets to be based here. "But the nationality is not important. We will do this for everybody here."

The French air presence at Kandahar is less than two weeks old. Before that, the Mirages flew missions over Afghanistan from a base in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. But getting to the main battlefields in southern and eastern Afghanistan took more than one hour and required three refuellings from tanker aircraft. Being based in the heart of the war zone means pilots can get their jets over troops in distress in 15 minutes or less.

"I prefer to be here. This really puts us in the fight," Mandon said. "Even if pilots were well aware of what was going on in the operational area, we were too far away. Now we are in the middle of the rockets that fall on this base and we can understand better what is happening."

One of the best things about being in Kandahar was being able to speak with soldiers of the Royal 22nd Regiment, even if the accents of the Quebec-based troops were sometimes difficult to understand, Mandon said.

"We met a Canadian here last week who spoke French who had been on the ground during one of our combat missions," he said. "Such meetings are a real advantage of being here because we can improve our tactics. We can understand why they must do things we don't like and they can understand why we do things they don't like."

"We learned what the Canadians face on the ground. It is not just about us. They use artillery, too. It helps us better understand the fight."

The six French Mirage 2000s to be based at Kandahar are in addition to fighters from Britain and the Netherlands.

The French move from Dushanbe has been widely construed here and in NATO as a sign France and its new president, Nicolas Sarkozy, is taking a greater interest in the war in Afghanistan, and in improving relations with the U.S. and its closest allies. This apparent shift comes at a time when NATO has been desperately trying to shore up political support for the combat mission in countries such as Canada and the Netherlands.

Liberal war critic stresses rotation

IDNUMBER 200710090011
PUBLICATION: Calgary Herald
DATE: 2007.10.09
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A2
COLUMN: Newsmakers
ILLUSTRATION: Photo: Denis Coderre;
KEYWORDS: WAR
SOURCE: Herald News Services
WORD COUNT: 178

No matter what he learns on his two day "fact-finding mission" to southern Afghanistan, Liberal defence critic Denis Coderre said Monday that he and his party would insist that Canada must end its combat mission in Afghanistan when the current mandate expires in February 2009.

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