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Two nations could defeat terrorists, Karzai tells Pakistani tribal leaders

IDNUMBER 200708100032
PUBLICATION: Times Colonist (Victoria)
DATE: 2007.08.10
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A9
ILLUSTRATION: Colour Photo: Ahmad Masood, Reuters / Pakistani Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz, left, and Afghan President Hamid Karzai attend a "peace jirga" in Kabul, Afghanistan, yesterday. Afghan and Pakistani political and tribal leaders met in an attempt to agree on ways to combat Taliban and al-Qaeda attacks, but their authority was dented from the outset after Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf pulled out. ;
DATELINE: KABUL, Afghanistan
SOURCE: Agence France-Presse
WORD COUNT: 181

KABUL, Afghanistan (AFP) — Afghan President Hamid Karzai told hundreds of Afghan and Pakistani tribal leaders yesterday that the two nations could defeat a resurgent Al-Qaeda and Taliban if they worked together.

Karzai's remarks came as he opened four days of talks on rising Islamist extremism in the absence of his Pakistani counterpart Pervez Musharraf, who abruptly pulled out of the meeting the day before.

Musharraf's replacement, Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz, joined Karzai in calling for unity at the meeting, known as a "peace jirga," but both leaders also repeated often-traded accusations on the roots of the unrest.

With 700 delegates and elders on hand from tribal areas straddling the rugged border region between Afghanistan and Pakistan — an area said to be rife with terrorists — Karzai said the two nations shared a common destiny.

"I am confident. I believe... if both Afghanistan and Pakistan put their hands together, we will eliminate in one day oppression against both nations," he said.

"If the problem is from the Afghanistan side, we should seek ways to solve it. If the problem is in Pakistan, we should find solutions for it," he said.

Afghan police two decades away from securing Kandahar, chief says; Canadian commander says war far from over

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PAGE: A9

ILLUSTRATION: Colour Photo: Barry Donnelly, CanWest News Service /Kandahar, Afghanistan, police Chief Sayed Agha Saqib says the country's national police is riddled with corruption and lacks training and equipment. ;

DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan

BYLINE: Andrew Mayeda

SOURCE: CanWest News Service

WORD COUNT: 422

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan — It could take as many as 20 years to transform the Afghan National Police into a professional force capable of securing Kandahar province, the recently named Kandahar police chief said yesterday.

The national police are still plagued by such problems as corruption and lack of training and equipment, Sayed Agha Saqib conceded in an interview with CanWest News Service at the provincial police headquarters in Kandahar City.

"But I believe that in 15 to 20 years, they can be turned into a professional police force that can secure all the cities and districts," he said through an interpreter.

Meanwhile, at Kandahar Airfield, a top Canadian military commander threw more cold water on the notion that the insurgency will be defeated anytime soon. Col. Christian Juneau, deputy commander of Canadian Forces in southern Afghanistan, said the Taliban are "on their heels" and have resorted to such "desperate" tactics as suicide bombings.

But he rejected the notion, recently put forward by the governor of Kandahar province in an interview with Canwest News Service, that the war is nearing its conclusion.

"'Coming to an end' is a relative term," said Juneau, who along with other commanders from Quebec's Royal 22nd Regiment — the Van Doos — recently took the reins of Canada's operations here.

"Do we see the war ending in two years, three years, 10 years? It's tough to say."

The amount of time needed to stabilize Afghanistan, and the consequences of not doing so, will increasingly become an issue in Canada as it debates whether to withdraw its troops.

Canada's commitment ends in February 2009. Prime Minister Stephen Harper said recently he would seek opposition consensus before extending the mission.

Afghan police two decades away from securing Kandahar, chief says; Canadian commander says war far from over

Top government and military officials have recently placed an emphasis on training the Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police so they can eventually hold their own against the Taliban and al-Qaeda terrorists.

It is believed that reforming the ragtag ANP will be the much tougher task. The force is widely considered corrupt, underpaid and ill-equipped. Sensing a weak link, the Taliban have stepped up their attacks against police checkpoints throughout the province.

Saqib said the ANP usually wins such skirmishes, but could use more support from NATO and the Afghan army, especially in volatile districts of the province such as Panjwaii and Zhari.

"NATO, the Canadian military and the ANA have good equipment, and they can call in air support whenever they need it. But the police only have AK-47s and occasionally machine-guns," he said.

Saqib took over as provincial police chief last month.

Juneau said the military does its best to pass on intelligence on possible attacks to the police.

He said Canadian commanders are reviewing the layout of police checkpoints around the province.

The military could also bolster police checkpoints with "quick-reaction forces" of Canadian troops and Afghan soldiers, said Juneau.

Sixty-six Canadian soldiers have died in Afghanistan since 2002. There are roughly 2,500 Canadian troops stationed in the country.

Musharraf rejects push to declare emergency powers

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SOURCE: Reuters
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ISLAMABAD, Pakistan (Reuters) —President Pervez Musharraf rejected calls to declare emergency powers and wants Pakistan's elections to go ahead, a spokesman said yesterday after reports the beleaguered leader would opt for authoritarian rule.

Private television channels and newspapers had reported Musharraf was poised to take a step that would probably delay elections due by the turn of the year and could result in restrictions on rights of assembly and curbs on the media.

"In the president's view, there is no need at present to impose an emergency," Information Minister Mohammad Ali Durrani said.

"The president was under pressure from different political parties to impose an emergency, but he believes in holding a free and fair election and is not in favor of any step that hinders it," Durrani added, without specifying the parties.

Members of the ruling coalition have the most to lose at the polls, and Musharraf's own popularity has plunged since he tried in vain to oust the country's most senior judge.

Western countries with troops in Afghanistan are sensitive to any instability in nuclear-armed Pakistan, whose help is crucial to fighting the Taliban insurgency and al-Qaeda.

Musharraf has been a close U.S. ally since the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, but the Bush administration has been pressing Pakistan to act against Taliban and al-Qaeda fighters hiding in tribal regions.

Bush turns up heat on Pakistani leader; Musharraf must prove he has the will to take on terrorists, U.S. president warns

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EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A9
ILLUSTRATION: Colour Photo: Larry Downing, Reuters / U.S. President George W. Bush says Pakistan would have to act swiftly if the whereabouts of al-Qaeda terrorists in Pakistan became known. ;
DATELINE: WASHINGTON
BYLINE: Norma Greenaway
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 486

WASHINGTON — Americans expect "swift action" to take out al-Qaeda operatives in Pakistan if solid intelligence emerges about their whereabouts, U.S. President George W. Bush said yesterday, but he stopped short of saying the U.S. would do the job if the Pakistan government did not.

Bush told a White House news conference that Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf has to prove to Americans he is serious about cracking down on Islamic extremists within his borders.

A recent U.S. intelligence report said the al-Qaeda terrorist organization and the Taliban are using tribal lands along the Afghan border to regroup for battle against forces from Canada, Britain, the U.S. and other NATO countries fighting in Afghanistan.

"I recognize Pakistan is a sovereign nation," Bush told reporters, "and that's important for Americans to recognize that. But it's also important for Americans to understand that he [Musharraf] shares the same concern about radicals and extremists as I do and as the American people do."

The U.S. president also said he pressed his Pakistani ally to hold a "free and fair election." The advice came amid reports, subsequently denied in Islamabad, that Musharraf, who assumed power in a bloodless coup in 1999, was contemplating imposing emergency rule because of deteriorating security conditions in the country.

Questions about the stability of Pakistan and Musharraf's reliability as an ally surfaced when Senator Barack Obama, a leading contender for the Democratic presidential nomination in 2008, said he would unilaterally order U.S. troops into Pakistan if Musharraf refused to take out terrorists.

A vacation-bound Bush also used the news conference to vigorously reassert his case for staying in Iraq, despite mounting criticism of his strategy from inside and outside his own Republican party.

He met reporters just hours before flying to Maine to spend a few days with his parents at their seaside compound in Kennebunkport. There, he and his wife Laura plan a private lunch tomorrow with new French President Nicolas Sarkozy and his wife, Cécilia.

Bush turns up heat on Pakistani leader; Musharraf must prove he has the will to take on terrorists, U.S. pres

Bush then flies to his ranch in Crawford, Texas, to relax and to prepare for a meeting later this month with Prime Minister Stephen Harper and Mexican President Felipe Calderon in the Quebec resort village of Montebello.

On Iraq, Bush pleaded for patience, and appeared to be bracing Americans for a mix of good and bad news when Gen. David Petraeus, the top military commander in Iraq, goes before Congress next month to give a thorough report on the impact of a controversial surge in American troop levels in Iraq announced seven months ago.

The president said the challenges in Iraq are huge after decades of tyranny, but the "young democracy" is taking steps toward forming a functioning government. Bush insisted anew the cost to the United States of leaving Iraq too soon would be unacceptable.

"The first question one has to ask on Iraq is, 'Is it worth it?'" Bush said. "I could not send a mother's child into combat if I did not believe it was necessary for our short-term and long-term security to succeed in Iraq."

Bush turns up heat on Pakistani leader; Musharraf must prove he has the will to take on terrorists, U.S. pres

Memos show CSIS suspected torture; Arar lawyer accuses agency of support for 'outsourcing interrogation'

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PAGE: A1
ILLUSTRATION: Photo: Maher Arar;
DATELINE: OTTAWA
SOURCE: Canadian Press
NOTE: Ran with "KEY ARAR DATES" which has been appended to the end of this story
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 1498

Canada's spy agency suspected, within two days of Maher Arar's deportation from the United States, that the CIA had shipped him somewhere to face possible torture, newly released documents show.

But there's no indication, in the paper trail made public yesterday, that the Canadian Security Intelligence Service alerted its political masters at the time — an oversight that critics say smacks of tacit collusion in the ordeal Arar ultimately faced in Syria.

The documentary evidence, compiled by a public inquiry into the affair, shows a Washington-based liaison officer for CSIS wrote to his superiors in Ottawa in early October 2002 about so-called "rendering" of terrorist suspects to third countries by the Americans.

The CSIS officer suggested Arar's detention and subsequent removal from the U.S. fit an emerging trend in which American authorities would sometimes send terrorism suspects abroad for questioning "in a firm manner" if they couldn't legally hold them or lay charges at home.

The deputy director of CSIS, Jack Hooper, later stated in a memorandum dated Oct. 10, 2002: "I think the U.S. would like to get Arar to Jordan where they can have their way with him."

In fact, two days before Hooper wrote that memo, U.S. officials had already taken Arar from a holding cell in New York at 3 a.m. and put him on a Gulfstream executive jet to Jordan.

From there he was quickly transferred to Syria, where he was tortured into false confessions of links to al-Qaida.

At the time Hooper offered his observations, CSIS knew only that the Ottawa telecommunications engineer had been removed from New York. It didn't know any other details and was desperately trying to find out from both the CIA and FBI what had happened to him.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper, on a trip to the Arctic, noted that he's already raised the Arar case with Washington but dodged the question of whether he would renew that effort, or consult CSIS, in light of the

Memos show CSIS suspected torture; Arar lawyer accuses agency of support for 'outsourcing interrogation'

latest findings.

Harper also attempted to shift the blame for what happened to Arar to the previous government, saying his aim is to "ensure that the events that occurred under the Liberals are not replicated for other Canadian citizens."

Justice Dennis O'Connor, who headed the inquiry into the case, tried to include a description of the 2002 CSIS suspicions in his report last year.

The material was withheld from public view at that time because of claims — by lawyers for Harper's government — that it could undermine national security, international relations or the defence of Canada.

Those contentions were rejected by a Federal Court judge, who ruled last month that the information should be released.

Paul Cavalluzzo, chief counsel for the O'Connor inquiry, said he's glad the information is finally on the public record.

"Our position all along was that the government was overclaiming," said Cavalluzzo. "The law is very clear that the government can only legitimately claim material that could injure national security. That's not to be used to cover information that could cause embarrassment."

Marlys Edwardh, one of the lawyers for Arar, said it doesn't appear, from the evidence she's seen, that CSIS ever shared its suspicions about the CIA's role in the affair with the Liberal government of Jean Chretien five years ago.

"They did absolutely nothing," said Edwardh. "Where's the memo to cabinet, where's the memo to the prime minister, to the solicitor general?"

"The only thing you can draw from this is that they (CSIS) are making sure that this policy of rendering people — outsourcing interrogation in circumstances when someone is going to be tortured — is something they supported."

There was no comment from CSIS on the matter. In Washington, a spokesperson for the U.S. Justice Department reiterated his government's long-standing position that Arar was lawfully deported as a security risk. The Americans have always maintained they had assurances from the Syrian government that he wouldn't be tortured.

On another point, Edwardh was scathing in her criticism of the RCMP for relying on intelligence obtained abroad, again possibly under torture, to support search and wiretap warrant applications within Canada.

The Mounties played fast and loose with their duty to make full disclosure to the judges who issued those warrants, she said.

"The effect is to create a false impression . . . It perpetrates a fraud on the court."

O'Connor concluded, in a section of his report that had also been secret until now, that the RCMP used information from an unnamed country to help obtain search warrants against several individuals in January 2002, as part of a wider anti-terrorist investigation known as Project A-O Canada.

They neglected to mention to the judge who issued the warrants that the country had a questionable human rights record, and conducted no analysis of their own to determine if the information had been obtained under

Memos show CSIS suspected torture; Arar lawyer accuses agency of support for 'outsourcing interrogation'

torture.

O'Connor also found that the Mounties again included suspect evidence in an application for a wiretap warrant in September 2002. This time the information came from a purported confession by Ahmad El Maati, another Arab– Canadian who was interrogated in Damascus but later repudiated the statements he made there and said they were extracted under torture.

The RCMP acknowledged, in their affidavit, that El Maati had changed his story but suggested he could be lying in his claims of mistreatment as part of a "damage control" effort. They also insisted that, whatever the circumstances of the original confession, they had obtained evidence to corroborate what the Syrians had passed to them.

A separate inquiry is currently underway, under former Supreme Court justice Frank Iacobucci, into the cases of El Maati and two other men, Abdullah Almalki and Muayyed Nureddin. All three deny any terrorist links and suspect the RCMP and CSIS collaborated in their detention and torture abroad.

O'Connor has already cleared Arar, saying the RCMP wrongly labelled him a terrorist and passed that information to U.S. authorities, who in turn used it to arrest him and deport him. The judge found no evidence, however, that Canadian intelligence or police officers directly collaborated in the decision to send Arar to Syria.

The Conservative government has since apologized to Arar and paid him \$10.5 million in compensation. He has launched a separate legal action south of the border, seeking damages from the U.S. government, which continues to keep his name on a terrorism watch list despite the findings in Canada.

KEY ARAR DATES

Sept. 26, 2002: Arar arrives at JFK Airport in New York City, on a flight from Zurich, headed for Montreal. He is detained by U.S. authorities, questioned, told he is inadmissible to the United States and asked where he would like to go. He says Canada.

Oct. 4, 2002: Arar is visited by Maureen Girvan, a Canadian consular officer in New York. She later says she never thought the Americans would send him anywhere except home to Canada.

Oct. 8, 2002: Arar is taken from his cell at 3 a.m. and told by American officials he is being deported to Syria.

Oct. 9, 2002: The plane lands in Jordan and Arar is quickly transferred by car to Damascus where he is to be jailed.

Oct. 10, 2002: Arar gets his first look at a cell he describes as being the size of a grave. He is to spend most of the next 10 months there. In Ottawa, the deputy director of CSIS, not knowing where Arar is, states in a memorandum: "I think the U.S. would like to get Arar to Jordan where they can have their way with him."

Oct. 11, 2002: Arar is tortured for the first time, beaten on his palms, wrists, lower back and hips with an electrical cable. He confesses — falsely — to terrorist training in Afghanistan.

Oct. 23, 2002: Arar meets Canadian consul Leo Martel for the first time. The beatings have lessened since he was first jailed.

April 23, 2003: Arar meets Canadian ambassador Franco Pillarella and two visiting Canadian MPs, Marlene Catterall and Sarkis Assadourian.

Memos show CSIS suspected torture; Arar lawyer accuses agency of support for 'outsourcing interrogation'

Aug. 14, 2003: Routine consular visits resume after a long interruption. Arar describes his living conditions and later says he told the consul he had been tortured.

Aug. 23, 2003: Arar is blindfolded, put in a car and driven to a new prison. His treatment improves and there is no further torture. He is no longer held in solitary confinement and can mix with other prisoners.

Oct. 4, 2003: After days of anticipating further interrogation, Arar is told instead that he will be going home to Canada. He doesn't believe it.

Oct. 5, 2003: Arar is taken to meet a prosecutor who reads out a confession of his supposed terrorist past and tells him to sign it without giving him a chance to read it. He is then taken to meet the head of Syrian military intelligence, who has been joined by Canadian officials for the occasion. Arar is freed and put on a plane to Canada.

Feb. 5, 2004: Government sets up a formal inquiry under Justice Dennis O'Connor to look into the whole Arar case.

Sept. 18, 2006: Justice O'Connor's report exonerates Arar of any wrongdoing, says inexperienced RCMP investigators wrongly gave inaccurate, unfair and overstated evidence about Arar's alleged terrorist leanings.

Jan. 26, 2007: Federal government settles with Arar with \$10.5 million, plus legal fees. Prime Minister Stephen Harper offers a formal apology.

July 24, 2007: Justice Simon Noel rules in Federal Court that some previously secret findings of the commission must be revealed after commission counsel challenged a government decision to censor 1,500 words from O'Connor report.

July 26, 2007: Inquiry officials announce that despite the fact not all 1,500 censored words were opened to the public, they will not appeal federal Court decision; other parties to the inquiry follow suit.

Aug. 3, 2007: Deadline for federal attorney general appeal of decision passes.

Aug. 9, 2007: Censored words and passages are released, indicating Canadian security officials suspected that Arar had been shipped off to a third country by U.S. officials to be tortured.

CANADIAN PRESS

Troops steeled for long Taliban war

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DATELINE: KANDAHAR, AFGHANISTAN
SOURCE: Canadian Press
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 345

The deputy commander of Canadian troops in southern Afghanistan says the war with Taliban insurgents could be a long and arduous one.

Col. Christian Juneau distanced himself from predictions made a few days ago by Kandahar Gov. Asadullah Khalid that NATO forces would defeat the Taliban in the not-too-distant future.

"Things are still explosive and will continue like that," Juneau said in an interview yesterday.

"When can we say it will be all over? Will it be in two years, three years or 10 years? It's difficult to say."

The colonel acknowledged that while the Taliban can't match NATO forces in terms of military might, they are still capable of deadly strikes against coalition forces in Afghanistan to support the government in Kabul.

Perfect examples of the danger facing coalition troops are bombs left by the roadside that can send 20-tonne military vehicles shooting skyward.

Such roadside bombs have killed 18 Canadian soldiers in the past six months in southern Afghanistan. The improvised explosive devices are responsible for most of the 66 Canadian military deaths in Afghanistan since the Canadian Forces started operating in the country in 2002.

Despite the threats posed by bombs, suicide bombers, ambushers and kidnappers, Juneau said the situation is not as critical in southern Afghanistan as it was a year ago.

Kandahar city, a much more unstable and dangerous place last year, is now experiencing economic growth.

Juneau said this improvement is a boon to the international community because it is pushing the Taliban more and more into a dead end.

"They don't have the initiative — we do. The Taliban are on the defensive and their attacks can be considered as gestures of desperation."

Juneau said the Taliban will be even more isolated as the country's infant mortality rate drops and people's average income rises.

His comments echoed those of other Canadian commanders in Afghanistan. But it's apparent from recent local contacts that coalition forces have a ways to go before they have the local population on side.

Canadian soldiers on patrol recently in Shawali Kot, believed to be an insurgent stronghold, heard villagers complain about alleged extortion by the government's Afghan National Police rather than the Taliban.

Village elders also expressed unhappiness with Canadians and Americans, accusing them of failing to live up to promises to dig wells, build schools and provide other facilities.

Village leaders said they've had no trouble from insurgents and declared there were no Taliban in their area.

Pakistani president calls off emergency rule

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DATELINE: ISLAMABAD, PAKISTAN
SOURCE: Associated Press
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 504

President Gen. Pervez Musharraf backed away yesterday from imposing a state of emergency in Pakistan that would have drastically curtailed freedoms.

The decision came after strong opposition from critics in and out of government. That Musharraf was even considering such an idea was seen as a sign of weakness from the embattled leader as he seeks re-election for another five-year term.

Musharraf, who seized power in a 1999 coup, has come under increasing pressure from forces at home to restore full democracy, and rising U.S. criticism to do more to stop the Taliban and al-Qaida from regrouping in the restive border region with Afghanistan.

The combination of a series of domestic crises and a recent wave of militant violence has left Musharraf at his most vulnerable yet, as the country heads toward a presidential vote this fall and parliamentary elections due by early next year. He has tried a range of strategies to win his battles against militants and in politics.

After a peace deal with Taliban militants failed, he ordered troops back into the border region and an army raid on Islamabad's radical Red Mosque, pleasing his western allies but stirring more violence at home.

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Analysts say the talk of a state of emergency is a sign desperation is creeping in.

"Nothing seems to be working for him," said political analyst Talat Masood. Declaring a state of emergency "is his weapon of last resort. But it would be a weapon of mass destruction, of mass political destruction."

"I don't see any prospects for him," agreed Rasul Bakhsh Rais, professor of political science at Lahore University of Management Sciences. By considering imposing a state of emergency, Musharraf had shown he was struggling hold power by normal political means.

"He's riding a rudderless ship in the middle of a political storm," Rais said.

Information Minister Mohammed Ali Durrani said members of the ruling coalition and "certain other political entities" whom he didn't name had suggested to Musharraf that he declare a state of emergency, allowed under the constitution to deal with serious internal or external security threats.

Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz acknowledged yesterday he had discussed the possibility with the Pakistani president, who also met during the day with legal experts and security officials.

"We have reviewed the matter, the president and myself, and at the time being, we do not see the need for such action," Aziz told a news conference.

Pakistani television stations began reporting late Wednesday that Musharraf could be about to impose emergency rule. The Pakistani leader's abrupt cancellation of a visit to Afghanistan also fuelled speculation something was afoot.

In the early hours yesterday, Tariq Azim, the deputy information minister, said a state of emergency was not desirable, but could not be ruled out.

Bush urges Musharraf to hold election, help U.S. fight terrorists

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PUBLICATION: The Record (Kitchener, Cambridge And Waterloo)
DATE: 2007.08.10
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Front
PAGE: A12
ILLUSTRATION: Photo: ASSOCIATED PRESS / U.S. President George W. Bush calls on a reporter during a news conference at the White House yesterday. ;
DATELINE: WASHINGTON
SOURCE: Associated Press
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 344

U.S. President George W. Bush said yesterday that Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf, his embattled war-on-terror partner, must hold free presidential elections, share intelligence and take "swift action" against terrorist leaders pinpointed in his country.

Bush, at a news conference, spent 45 minutes answering questions on an unusually broad set of issues. They ranged from Iran's role in Iraq, last week's bridge collapse in Minnesota, the friendly fire death of army ranger Pat Tillman, a plunge in the home-mortgage market, the possible closing of the U.S. military prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, tax policy and accountability in his administration.

Musharraf is under growing U.S. pressure to crack down on militants along the border with Afghanistan. The Pakistani leader is under considerable pressure at home, too, where his support is dwindling and violence is on the rise.

Aware of both Musharraf's fragile status and his value to Washington as an anti-terror ally, Bush dodged talking about unilateral U.S. military action inside Pakistan in favour of stressing U.S.-Pakistani co-operation.

But he also listed some of the demands he has made in private to Musharraf: "full co-operation in sharing intelligence," "swift action taken if there's actionable intelligence on high-value targets," and "a free and fair election."

Musharraf, an army general, seized power in a bloodless 1999 coup and pledged to quickly restore democracy. Critics oppose his plan to seek a new five-year presidential term from outgoing legislators and his continued holding of the dual posts of president and chief of the military.

Bush also spoke about what appeared to be a friendly meeting between Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki during the Iraqi leader's three-day visit to Tehran.

"The way these things work is you try to be cordial to the person you're with, and so you don't want the picture to be kind of, you know, duking it out," the president said, holding up his hands in a boxing pose.

But, he added: "If the signal is that Iran is constructive, I will have to have a heart-to-heart with my friend, the prime minister."

U.S. officials say Tehran is exporting into Iraq sophisticated explosive devices that are being used to kill U.S. personnel and Sunnis.

Taliban conflict 'explosive'; Canadian colonel in Afghanistan says war with insurgents will be a long one

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PUBLICATION: Times & Transcript (Moncton)
DATE: 2007.08.10
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PAGE: C4
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Times & Transcript
(Moncton)
WORD COUNT: 350

The deputy commander of Canadian troops in southern Afghanistan says the war with Taliban insurgents could be a long and arduous one.

Col. Christian Juneau distanced himself from predictions made a few days ago by Kandahar Gov. Asadullah Khalid that NATO forces would defeat the Taliban in the not too distant future.

"Things are still explosive and will continue like that," Juneau said in an interview yesterday.

"When can we say it will be all over? Will it be in two years, three years or 10 years? It's difficult to say."

The colonel acknowledged that while the Taliban can't match NATO forces in terms of military might, they are still capable of deadly strikes against coalition forces in Afghanistan to support the government in Kabul.

Perfect examples of the danger facing coalition troops are bombs left by the roadside that can send 20-tonne military vehicles shooting skyward.

Such roadside bombs have killed 18 Canadian soldiers in the past six months in southern Afghanistan. The improvised explosive devices, or IEDs as they are known among soldiers, are responsible for most of the 66 Canadian military deaths in Afghanistan since the Canadian Forces started operating in the country in 2002.

Despite the threats posed by IEDs, suicide-bombers, ambushers and kidnappers, Juneau said the situation is not as critical in southern Afghanistan as it was a year ago.

Kandahar city, a much more unstable and dangerous place last year, is now experiencing economic growth.

Juneau said this improvement is a boon to the international community because it is pushing the Taliban more and more into a dead end.

"They're on their heels," Juneau said.

"They don't have the initiative — we do. The Taliban are on the defensive and their attacks can be considered as gestures of desperation."

Juneau said the Taliban will be even more isolated as the country's infant mortality rate drops and people's average income rises.

Taliban conflict 'explosive'; Canadian colonel in Afghanistan says war with insurgents will be a long one

His comments echoed those of other Canadian commanders in Afghanistan.

But it's apparent from recent local contacts that coalition forces have a ways to go before they have the local population on side.

Canadian soldiers on patrol recently in Shawali Kot, believed to be an insurgent stronghold, heard villagers complain about alleged extortion by the government's Afghan National Police rather than the Taliban.

Villager elders also expressed unhappiness with Canadians and Americans, accusing them of failing to live up to promises of projects to dig wells, build schools and provide other facilities.

Asked about the Taliban, village leaders said they've had no trouble from insurgents. They declared there were no Taliban in their area.

U.S. pledges more money to curb Afghan poppy crop

PUBLICATION: The Telegram (St. John's)

DATE: 2007.08.10

SECTION: International

PAGE: A10

SOURCE: CP

BYLINE: Beth Gorham

DATELINE: Washington

WORD COUNT: 360

The United States released a strategy Thursday in its efforts to fight the widespread poppy production in Afghanistan that's fuelling the Taliban and frustrating efforts to quell violence.

The program will increase rewards for cutting out crops of poppies, the source of opium and related drugs, and planting alternatives. Those who don't will face stiffer penalties.

"We know that opium, maybe second only to terror, is a huge threat to the future of Afghanistan," said anti-drug czar John Walters, who heads the Office of National Drug Control Policy.

"The poor people of Afghanistan are not getting rich off opium," he said. "This is not a future ... that offers the opportunity to develop schools and health care and security. It's drug mafias. It supports warlord(s). It supports terror."

The plan includes giving up to US\$60 million more in development aid to local Afghan officials to bolster anti-poppy efforts.

Afghanistan now accounts for more than 90 per cent of the world's total crop, up from 70 per cent in 2000 and 52 per cent a decade earlier.

The United States is already spending some \$420 million to curb poppy crops and has succeeded in eliminating it in some areas while failing to decrease total production.

Provincial governors who meet goals to reduce poppy crops will get more schools and roads while Afghanistan's central criminal tribunal will get more resources to prosecute those who don't comply.

"We want to make sure that there are greater rewards for success and greater consequences for failure," said State Department anti-drug official Tom Schweich.

Canada has pledged C\$57 million to fund the country's counter-narcotics efforts, including an \$18.5-million program to promote alternative jobs in the volatile Kandahar province where Canadian troops are stationed.

But critics say the so-called "enhanced carrot and stick approach" announced Thursday is only more of the same tactic that's failed in every country it's been tried.

"As long as there is a demand for drugs, there will be a supply to meet it," said Bill Piper at the Drug Policy Alliance.

"Drug prohibition makes plants more valuable than gold."

The alliance noted that a recent report from the State Department's inspector general was critical of eradication goals, saying an assessment team "found no realistic possibility of outspending economic incentives in the narcotics industry."

Meantime, critics say, the practice is alienating citizens from the government and pushing them toward the Taliban.

Some U.S. legislators have proposed alternatives, such as licensing farmers to grow opium for legal pain medications or having the United States buy opium crops from farmers and then destroying them.

Pakistan's Musharraf backs off state of emergency idea

PUBLICATION: The Telegram (St. John's)

DATE: 2007.08.10

SECTION: World

PAGE: A7

SOURCE: AP

BYLINE: Rohan Sullivan

DATELINE: Islamabad, Pakistan

WORD COUNT: 352

President Gen. Pervez Musharraf backed away Thursday from imposing a state of emergency in Pakistan that would have drastically curtailed freedoms.

The decision came after strong opposition from critics in and out of government. That Musharraf was even considering such an idea was seen as a sign of weakness from the embattled leader as he seeks re-election for another five-year term.

Musharraf, who seized power in a 1999 coup, has come under increasing pressure from forces at home to restore full democracy, and rising U.S. criticism to do more to stop the Taliban and al-Qaida from regrouping in the restive border region with Afghanistan.

The combination of a series of domestic crises and a recent wave of militant violence has left Musharraf at his most vulnerable yet, as the country heads toward a presidential vote this fall and parliamentary elections due by early next year.

He has tried a range of strategies to win his battles against militants and in politics.

After a peace deal with Taliban militants failed, he ordered troops back into the border region and an army raid on Islamabad's radical Red Mosque, pleasing his western allies but stirring more violence at home.

On the political front, his bungled attempt to remove Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammed Chaudhry drew thousands of protesters into the streets and raised calls for democracy. That has thrown into serious doubt his bid to win another presidential term while he still holds his post as army chief.

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"Nothing seems to be working for him," said political analyst Talat Masood. Declaring a state of emergency "is his weapon of last resort. But it would be a weapon of mass destruction, of mass political destruction."

"I don't see any prospects for him," agreed Rasul Bakhsh Rais, professor of political science at Lahore University of Management Sciences. By considering the imposition of a state of emergency, Musharraf had shown he was struggling hold power by normal political means.

"He's riding a rudderless ship in the middle of a political storm," Rais said.

War with Taliban to last some time, colonel says

PUBLICATION: The Telegram (St. John's)

DATE: 2007.08.10

SECTION: World

PAGE: A7

SOURCE: CP

BYLINE: Martin Ouellet

DATELINE: Kandahar, Afghanistan

ILLUSTRATION: Deputy Commander Christian Juneau of the Canadian Joint Task Forces in Afghanistan gestures during a news conference at the Kandahar Airfield, Thursday. Juneau says it is much too soon to predict the end of hostilities in Kandahar province, because of an environment of instability and fear. – Photo by The Canadian Press

WORD COUNT: 353

The deputy commander of Canadian troops in southern Afghanistan says the war with Taliban insurgents could be a long and arduous one.

Col. Christian Juneau distanced himself from predictions made a few days ago by Kandahar Gov. Asadullah Khalid that NATO forces would defeat the Taliban in the not too distant future.

"Things are still explosive and will continue like that," Juneau said in an interview on Thursday.

"When can we say it will be all over? Will it be in two years, three years or 10 years? It's difficult to say."

The colonel acknowledged that while the Taliban can't match NATO forces in terms of military might, they are still capable of deadly strikes against coalition forces in Afghanistan to support the government in Kabul.

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Such roadside bombs have killed 18 Canadian soldiers in the past six months in southern Afghanistan. The improvised explosive devices, or IEDs as they are known among soldiers, are responsible for most of the 66 Canadian military deaths in Afghanistan since the Canadian Forces started operating in the country in 2002.

Despite the threats posed by IEDs, suicide-bombers, ambushers and kidnappers, Juneau said the situation is not as critical in southern Afghanistan as it was a year ago.

Kandahar City, a much more unstable and dangerous place last year, is now experiencing economic growth.

Juneau said this improvement is a boon to the international community because it is pushing the Taliban more and more into a dead end.

"They're on their heels," Juneau said.

"They don't have the initiative – we do. The Taliban are on the defensive and their attacks can be considered as gestures of desperation."

Juneau said the Taliban will be even more isolated as the country's infant mortality rate drops and people's

average income rises.

His comments echoed those of other Canadian commanders in Afghanistan.

But it's apparent from recent local contacts that coalition forces have a way to go before they have the local population on side.

Canadian soldiers on patrol recently in Shawali Kot, believed to be an insurgent stronghold, heard villagers complain about alleged extortion by the government's Afghan National Police rather than the Taliban.

Villager elders also expressed unhappiness with Canadians and Americans, accusing them of failing to live up to promises of projects to dig wells, build schools and provide other facilities.

Asked about the Taliban, village leaders said they've had no trouble from insurgents. They declared there were no Taliban in their area.

The Harper political machine is in desperate need of repair

PUBLICATION: Kingston Whig–Standard (ON)

DATE: 2007.08.10

SECTION: Forum

PAGE: 5

COLUMN: Politics

WORD COUNT: 995

Stephen Harper has a little problem. Well into his second year in office, the economy is humming and he has no significant gaffes or scandals on his blotter. Earlier this year, the Tories threw everything they had at Liberal Leader Stephane Dion in TV ads branding him a weakling, indecisive and a geek. Yet polls show the Liberals and Conservatives remain tied in a statistical dead heat.

How could this be?

Voter choices are driven partly by personality, partly by policy. Of the two, personality is arguably the more important. Hence the old saying that men vote for the leader they'd most enjoy tipping a glass with at the pub, while women vote for the person they'd most trust to babysit their kids. Younger men vote for the guy (assuming the party leader is a man, which is still most often the case) they can most easily imagine helping them in a scrap. Young women vote for the leader they'd most like to dance with at a social. And so on.

This is terribly simplistic political calculus, but it is real.

Sophisticates boil it into a single word, charisma, thereby giving it an intellectual lustre. But the phenomenon is no more intellectual than the tendency of kids in a schoolyard to coalesce around the strongest or most forceful child in the group, or of wolves to follow the dominant male. It is visceral. Imagine a scenario in which former prime ministers Paul Martin and Jean Chretien are stuck together on a desert island with a small group of castaways. Who would wind up in charge? The guy who won three back-to-back majorities, that's who.

But because we're human beings, not wolves, there's far more to it than personal dominance – there's policy, there's ideology, the domains of the intellect. And these fundamental elements cross-pollinate all the time.

Former Ontario premier Mike Harris – like him or loathe him – had a strong personal aura, even before he won power. He "came across" as decisive.

This was reinforced during Harris's first term by his take-no-prisoners approach to governing, and his insistence on keeping even the hard promises. That combination – personal strength, policy toughness – won Harris a second term. The current Ontario premier, Dalton McGuinty? Well, he's in trouble. His personal aura is weak.

His policy choices – multiple broken promises – have reinforced that perception. If McGuinty wins again in October, it will be by freakish good luck or an act of God, it seems to me.

Stephen Harper came to Ottawa a few years back with significant liabilities on both the personal and policy fronts: a reputation for coldness and an ideological rigidity that often seemed harsh.

Harper's major asset, his opponents and his allies agreed, was his mind. He quickly put that mind to work and, with the help of some of the cleverest political operators in Canada – including former prime minister Brian Mulroney – he set about turning lemons into lemonade. The result was the Stephen Harper we met in the last federal election campaign – reasoned, cogent, thorough, decisive.

Rather than try to match Paul Martin's cloying friendliness or Jean Chretien's rough-hewn bonhomie, Harper cast himself as emotionally retiring but trustworthy – like a good engineer. The style was deliberately minimalist, with little hyperbole and no false warmth. On policy, he tacked hard towards Main Street (people who work hard and play by the rules), framing every platform in terms individuals could easily understand. It worked.

Why, then, hasn't Harper caught on?

The Conservative spin in the campaign of 2005–06, absorbed through the media into the body politic by osmosis, was that Harper's trenchant decisiveness grew from a well-founded set of personal beliefs and ideas. This carried through into his first months in office. More than once in the early days of his mandate, Harper was compared favourably with Pierre Trudeau, the great liberal idealist. That kind of counter-intuitive press, Harper couldn't buy. It was golden.

But in the intervening months, the notion of Harper as a paragon of principle has all but vanished – because policy feeds personality.

Harper's painstakingly crafted image has been badly eroded by a series of policy reversals, half-measures, broken promises and compromises.

There was the income–trust flip–flop; the broken promise over equalization payments to the Atlantic provinces; recognition of Quebec's "nationhood" within Canada; a high–spending federal budget that tossed goodies to every conceivable interest group; and the pitifully half–hearted effort to go green, which was panned by environmentalists and Kyoto sceptics alike.

Most recently, the Tories have been under fire for allegedly seeking to shelter the Quebec–based Vandoos regiment from combat in Afghanistan, for fear of inflaming anti–war sentiment in Canada's most pacifistic province. It's all been denied, of course, but there is no denying this: Harper and his hapless defence minister, Gordon O'Connor, began talking openly about a "recalibration" of Canada's combat role just as the Vandoos were rolling into Kandahar.

Maybe it's all a coincidence. But maybe not. Previous policy flip–flops have eroded Harper's ability to make strong denials on this or any other point of principle.

At the same time, Harper himself has often appeared to be unduly angry, stubborn and partisan.

What will be left of the Harper brand, come election time? In a worst–case scenario for the Tories, it'll be an image of Harper the cold fish, stubborn and without that backbone of principle – or put another way, lemonade turned back into lemons.

The field is wide open now for Dion, whom many political observers had written off, to start hammering Harper for his personal failings. That's because Dion, Tory attack ads notwithstanding, is still mostly perceived to be a man of principle, rather than slick or pragmatic politics. He can stake out the moral high ground and be believed. His personal awkwardness, even as he works to move beyond it, can be recast as a badge of sincerity. Lemons into lemonade.

It's not a scenario anyone would have predicted, even six months ago.

– Michael Den Tandt is editor of the Owen Sound Sun Times and a national affairs columnist for Osprey Media. Contact mdentandt@thesuntimes.ca.

U.S. increasing rewards to cut poppy crop in Afghanistan

PUBLICATION: The
Chronicle–Herald
DATE: 2007.08.10
SECTION: World
PAGE: A7
SOURCE: The Canadian Press
BYLINE: Beth Gorham
WORD COUNT: 253

WASHINGTON – The United States released a strategy Thursday in its efforts to fight the widespread poppy production in Afghanistan that's fuelling the Taliban and frustrating efforts to quell violence.

The program will increase rewards for cutting out crops of poppies, the source of opium and related drugs, and planting alternatives. Those who don't will face stiffer penalties.

"We know that opium, maybe second only to terror, is a huge threat to the future of Afghanistan," said anti-drug czar John Walters, who heads the Office of National Drug Control Policy.

"The poor people of Afghanistan are not getting rich off opium," he said. "This is not a future . . . that offers the opportunity to develop schools and health care and security. It's drug mafias. It supports warlord(s). It supports terror."

The plan includes giving up to US\$60 million more in development aid to local Afghan officials to bolster anti-poppy efforts.

Afghanistan now accounts for more than 90 per cent of the world's total crop, up from 70 per cent in 2000 and 52 per cent a decade earlier.

The United States is already spending some \$420 million to curb poppy crops and has succeeded in eliminating it in some areas while failing to decrease total production.

Provincial governors who meet goals to reduce poppy crops will get more schools and roads while Afghanistan's central criminal tribunal will get more resources to prosecute those who don't comply.

"We want to make sure that there are greater rewards for success and greater consequences for failure," said State Department anti-drug official Tom Schweich.

Canada has pledged \$57 million to fund the country's counter-narcotics efforts, including an \$18.5-million program to promote alternative jobs in the volatile Kandahar province where Canadian troops are stationed.

No end to Afghan war in sight; Canadian colonel: Fight against Taliban will remain "explosive"

PUBLICATION:	The Chronicle–Herald
DATE:	2007.08.10
SECTION:	World
PAGE:	A6
SOURCE:	The Canadian Press
BYLINE:	Martin Ouellet
ILLUSTRATION:	Col. Christian Juneau, deputy commander of Canadian troops in southern Afghanistan, says it is much too soon to predict the end of hostilities in Kandahar province. (Martin Ouellet / CP)
WORD COUNT:	341

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan – The deputy commander of Canadian troops in southern Afghanistan says the war with Taliban insurgents could be a long and arduous one.

Col. Christian Juneau distanced himself from predictions made a few days ago by Kandahar Gov. Asadullah Khalid that NATO forces would defeat the Taliban in the not too distant future.

"Things are still explosive and will continue like that," Juneau said in an interview on Thursday.

"When can we say it will be all over? Will it be in two years, three years or 10 years? It's difficult to say."

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Air force budgets may face big hit; Transport aircraft, war blamed

PUBLICATION: The
Chronicle–Herald
DATE: 2007.08.10
SECTION: Canada
PAGE: A3
SOURCE: The Canadian Press
BYLINE: Murray Brewster
WORD COUNT: 397

OTTAWA – Canada's air force is looking at cutting the operating and maintenance budgets of some of its frontline aircraft next year in a fiscal pinch that defence insiders blame on new heavy–lift C–17 transport aircraft and the war in Afghanistan.

Senior planners at the 1st Canadian Air Division are studying a proposed a 32–per–cent reduction in money used for fuel and spare parts for the CF–18s, the C–130 Hercules, C–140 Auroras and the Sea Kings, defence sources told The Canadian Press.

"That's a damn significant hit," said one source, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

"The staff in Winnipeg, the air force staff, are currently doing the staff checks to find out what the impact will be of those cuts."

The reductions, which are being considered for the next budget year, would vary depending upon the fleet, but another defence insider said: "You're basically looking at a one–third cut in operating budget."

An official at National Defence headquarters confirmed the study is underway, but described it as a paper exercise, meant to give commanders a better sense of what is possible.

Jeremy Sales said no final decision has been made, and would not comment on numbers.

"This exercise in no way foreshadows or pre–judges any decision on fleet funding and, in fact, no decision on this will be taken until the fall," he said Thursday.

"Every year this planning is conducted for all of the aircraft fleets in order to provide operational commanders and senior management information about the potential effects of budget restraints due to evolving circumstances. The important thing to note here is that the safety of the aircraft and crew are never compromised."

A spokeswoman for Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor emphasized the study is not finished and dismissed the notion of cuts as speculation.

"Ultimately it's the Minister of National Defence that makes the decision and Minister O'Connor does not plan on cutting the air force budget for CF18s, Hercules, Aurora, and Sea Kings," Isabelle Bouchard said in an e–mail.

It remains to be seen whether the former brigadier general will be around in the fall to make that decision. Speculation around the anticipated cabinet has often been built on O'Connor being moved to another portfolio.

A few months ago, O'Connor was forced to patch up a shortfall in the navy's operating budget when it faced a similar budget woes.

The number-crunching may go on every year, but it is the size of the proposed cut that has air force insiders worried.

"We've been cutting back our national procurement funding for years," said an air force source. "The military is supposed to be about readiness. When you're cutting back your spares, you're cutting back your readiness, your ability to respond."

Pakistan president seen as weak after backing off state of emergency idea

PUBLICATION: The Guardian (Charlottetown)

DATE: 2007.08.10

SECTION: World

PAGE: B5

SOURCE: AP

DATELINE: ISLAMABAD, Pakistan

WORD COUNT: 140

President Gen. Pervez Musharraf backed away Thursday from imposing a state of emergency in Pakistan that would have drastically curtailed freedoms.

The decision came after strong opposition from critics in and out of government.

That Musharraf was even considering such an idea was seen as a sign of weakness from the embattled leader as he seeks re-election for another five-year term.

Musharraf, who seized power in a 1999 coup, has come under increasing pressure from forces at home to restore full democracy, and rising U.S. criticism to do more to stop the Taliban and al-Qaida from regrouping in the restive border region with Afghanistan.

The combination of a series of domestic crises and a recent wave of militant violence has left Musharraf at his most vulnerable yet, as the country heads toward a presidential vote this fall and parliamentary elections due by early next year.

He has tried a range of strategies to win his battles against militants and in politics.

U.S. pledges money to curb Afghan poppy crop

PUBLICATION: The Guardian (Charlottetown)

DATE: 2007.08.10

SECTION: World

PAGE: B5

SOURCE: CP

DATELINE: WASHINGTON

WORD COUNT: 86

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Is Stephen Harper Bush's new lapdog?

PUBLICATION: The Guardian (Charlottetown)
DATE: 2007.08.10
SECTION: Opinion
PAGE: A7
SOURCE: The Issues Network
BYLINE: Tom Ford
ILLUSTRATION: George Bush; Stephen Harper
WORD COUNT: 826

Like a soldier negotiating a minefield in Afghanistan, Prime Minister Stephen Harper is tiptoeing through a new field for him – foreign affairs.

Until recently, Harper's foreign relations preoccupation was Afghanistan, a policy that's unpopular with some Canadians. Recent polls show that 45 per cent of those questioned did not support the mission, a figure that rises to 70 per cent in Quebec.

There are good reasons why we're in Afghanistan, including the fact NATO, of which we are a founding member, asked us to go there. As Wanda Watkins, the mother of Lane, a recently killed young soldier from Manitoba, said last week, "if Canada and NATO abandon the Afghan people, the sacrifices Lane, our family and others have made will be for nothing."

A major reason some Canadians dislike the Afghanistan mission is that they think the former Liberal government got involved to appease U.S. President George W. Bush because we didn't send troops to Iraq. Such is the venomous hatred of some Canadians to Bush that anything even remotely connected to him is savagely attacked.

That's Harper's big problem in foreign affairs. He can't look as though he's replacing former British prime minister Tony Blair as Bush's lapdog.

Harper's first event on his South American tour recently seemed – in the eyes of some – to emulate Bush. Both visited Colombia; both had praise for the nation's controversial president, Alvaro Uribe, and both want a free trade pact with Colombia. In Bush's case, the pact is stalled in Congress because some Democrats feel Uribe's officials colluded with paramilitaries who murdered union organizers, teachers and journalists.

In a later speech in Santiago, Chile, Harper said Canada should take an interest in Latin America and the Caribbean because we "live in the same neighbourhood" and can help nations there choose a third way between the U.S. economic system and regressive policies.

This month, Harper will meet with Bush and Mexican president Felipe Calderón in a lovely log lodge in Montebello, Quebec, to discuss the Security and Prosperity Partnership (SPP), a favourite whipping person of Canada's left wing.

Some left wingers say the SSP is a not-so-secret attempt to impose a common market on North America, similar to that in Europe. In truth, there doesn't seem to be any fear of that. One reason: The U.S. right-wing doesn't like any restrictions on America, which it sees as an "exceptional nation sitting high on a hill," and Bush, preoccupied with Iraq, doesn't have the time or political capital to argue with them.

As the News Journal of Mansfield, Ohio, puts it: "The North American Union will bury our America under more than 100 million, mostly poor Mexicans, and tens of millions of Canadians, used to their lavish social welfare benefits and socialized medicine, unless we stop it." If nothing much comes of the meeting, expect Maude Barlow, the quarrelsome left-wing head of the Council of Canadians, to take some bows. I only hope she gives some credit to the right-wingers in the U.S.

As well, I hope the meeting can prevent U.S. officials from making more goofy remarks about our borders. U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff suggested this month some Canadians are poised to make terror attacks on the U.S. – playing into unfounded fears Canada is a safe haven for al-Qaida.

John Winter, president of the British Columbia Chamber of Commerce, replied that Canadian business is already suffering significant setbacks because of regulations resulting from U.S. terror fears.

Harper has also dropped himself into the controversy about foreign takeovers and the "hollowing out" of Canada's economy. The controversy flared again recently when the U.K./Australian company Rio Tinto PLC made a US \$38.1 billion all-cash offer for Canadian producer Alcan Inc., the biggest takeover in Canadian history.

The proposed transaction comes on the heels of a number of foreign takeovers of Canadian resource companies such as Inco, Falconbridge and LionOre and steel makers Dofasco, Algoma and Ipso. "It takes 75 million years to form an ore body," said one analyst, "yet we've sold off some of our best in a few months."

Harper has appointed a blue-ribbon panel of business people to investigate foreign takeovers and report back early in 2008. The panel will also look at the highly contentious issues of bank mergers and removing foreign ownership limits on regulated sectors such as telecommunications, airlines and banks.

On top of all this, noises off-stage indicate Ottawa is interested in selling all or a part of Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd., the Crown corporation into which, according to Toronto's Energy Probe, Canadians have pumped \$20.9 billion in subsidies. Areva of France, the world's largest nuclear energy company, and the U.S.'s GE are said to be interested.

For Harper, all these issues are a minefield set out by Canada's fervent nationalists. If he appears to be kow-towing to Bush or the U.S., his arguments, no matter how cogent, will blow up in his face. Tom Ford is managing editor of The Issues Network.

I stand by my thesis

PUBLICATION: The Guardian (Charlottetown)

DATE: 2007.08.10

SECTION: Editorial

PAGE: A6

COLUMN: Letter to the editor

WORD COUNT: 303

Editor:

Re: 'Getting the facts right on Afghanistan' (The Guardian, Aug. 2, 2007). I am appalled and surprised that The Guardian allowed Mark Morrison, a person I do not know, to make what I considered to be personal attacks on private citizens who recently expressed their views in The Guardian. It is one thing to take issue with statements and facts. It is quite another issue to discredit the value of a person's experience. Why do it?

People such as myself who have experienced war first hand do have a base of knowledge which others cannot have. I also have degrees in psychology, business management and adult education, which at least help me to analyze, understand and evaluate situations and facts as they are presented.

I do not know where Mark Morrison got the idea that I think "we would have been better off as poor Nazis or Communists than wealthy Canadians." It certainly was not from me.

Regarding the Taliban, I should have said that the CIA with the full co-operation of the Pakistan military, trained and armed the mujahedeen, the Afghan fighters who fought the Russians and now fight for the Taliban. I have not seen anywhere that Afghanistan has ever posed a national security threat to Canada.

I stick to my thesis. War is about increasing the wealth of a few people, and brings death, grief and suffering to civilians and troops in the combat zone.

My sources are many and various but include 'The Main Enemy' by retired CIA agent Milton Beardon, and James Risen. Also the Project Ploughshares Monitor and the New Internationalist, both reputable and well-respected journals.

The CBC and other media have recently had programs and articles about how the spin doctors remake the facts to portray the biases of government and military agendas. While most people have learned to question the official spin, it seems others still lap it up.

Patrick Dunphy, Annandale

Air force looking at 'significant' cost cuts; Defence insiders say cost of Afghan war, new equipment could lead to major overhaul next year

IDNUMBER 200708100133
PUBLICATION: The Toronto Star
DATE: 2007.08.10
EDITION: Ont
SECTION: News
PAGE: A17
BYLINE: Murray Brewster
SOURCE: Canadian Press
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 444

Canada's air force is looking at cutting the operating and maintenance budgets of some of its frontline aircraft next year in a fiscal pinch that defence insiders blame on new heavy-lift C-17 transport aircraft and the war in Afghanistan.

Senior planners at the 1st Canadian Air Division are studying a proposed 32-per-cent cut in funding for fuel and spare parts for the CF-18s, the C-130 Hercules, C-140 Auroras and the Sea Kings, defence sources told The Canadian Press.

"That's a damn significant hit," said one source, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

"The staff in Winnipeg, the air force staff, are currently doing the staff checks to find out what the impact will be of those cuts."

The reductions, under consideration for the next budget year, would vary depending upon the fleet, but another defence insider said: "You're basically looking at a one-third cut in operating budget."

An official at National Defence headquarters confirmed the study is underway, but described it as a paper exercise, meant to give commanders a better sense of what is possible.

Jeremy Sales said yesterday no final decision has been made.

"Every year this planning is conducted for all of the aircraft fleets in order to provide operational commanders and senior management information about the potential effects of budget restraints due to evolving circumstances. The important thing to note here is that the safety of the aircraft and crew are never compromised."

A spokesperson for National Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor emphasized the study is not finished and dismissed the notion of cuts as speculation.

"Ultimately it's the Minister of National Defence that makes the decision and Minister O'Connor does not plan on cutting the air force budget for CF18s, Hercules, Aurora and Sea Kings," Isabelle Bouchard said in an email.

Air force looking at 'significant' cost cuts; Defence insiders say cost of Afghan war, new equipment could lead to major overhaul next year

It remains to be seen whether the former brigadier general will be around to make that decision after next week's anticipated cabinet shuffle. The fight over how the budget is divided among the various fleets is likely to intensify with the arrival of four C-17 Globemaster heavy-lift transports over the next 12 months.

A few months ago, O'Connor was forced to patch up a shortfall in the navy's operating budget when it faced a similar budget woes.

The number-crunching may go on every year, but it is the size of the proposed cut that has air force insiders worried. "We've been cutting back our national procurement funding for years," said an air force source. "The military is supposed to be about readiness. When you're cutting back your spares, you're cutting back your readiness, your ability to respond."

It also comes at time when the overall cost of Canada's involvement in the war in Afghanistan is rising. O'Connor said in May the estimated bill for the military mission is expected to top \$4.3 billion by the time it is scheduled to end in February 2009 – and increase of \$400 million over previous forecasts.

NATO 'unaware' of plea on behalf of Afghans

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EDITION: Ont
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PAGE: AA01
BYLINE: David Brunnstrom
SOURCE: ; REUTERS NEWS AGENCY
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 364

NATO said yesterday it was not aware of any request by a British NATO commander for the United States to withdraw special forces from his area of operations in southern Afghanistan due to high civilian casualties.

The International Herald Tribune yesterday quoted an unidentified senior British commander in Afghanistan's Helmand province as saying he made the request because the casualties had made it difficult to win over local people.

"NATO headquarters is unaware of such a request," NATO spokesperson Carmen Romero said in Brussels. "Co-ordination on the ground is excellent between Operation Enduring Freedom and ISAF forces, also in the way operations are allocated."

Romero said the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan had taken steps to reduce civilian casualties and understood that the separate U.S.-led force had done the same.

British Defence Minister Des Browne told reporters in Kabul that the commander quoted was expressing a personal view.

"It is the reporting of an observation of a British officer on a particular part of the American military," he said.

"It is not the view of the Helmand Task Force commander, it is not the view of our government, it is not the view of the Americans, it is not the view of the alliance," he said.

"These things can be said in the heat of battle. These are very difficult circumstances."

Pentagon spokesperson Bryan Whitman said there had been no request by the British. "And there is no evidence to support the claim by an unnamed anonymous officer," he said.

However, NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer acknowledged last month mounting civilian casualties had hurt support for NATO and said commanders had ordered troops to hold off on attacks in some situations where civilians were at risk.

Romero said the commander of ISAF had ordered use of precision weapons systems and munitions to minimize civilian casualties.

The Herald Tribune report put the number of civilian casualties this year in Helmand at close to 300, most caused by foreign and Afghan forces, not the Taliban.

It quoted the British commander as saying that in the district of Sangin, which had been calm for a month, there was no longer a need for special forces.

Meanwhile, the deputy commander of Canadian troops in Kandahar province, Col. Christian Juneau, said yesterday it was premature to talk about an end to the hostilities in the war-ravaged country.

Juneau's comments come a few days after Asadullah Khalid, the governor of Kandahar, predicted NATO forces would defeat the Taliban in the not too distant future.

With files from Canadian Press

Border militants targeted; Karzai tells 'peace jirga' Afghanistan and Pakistan can stamp out Al Qaeda, Taliban in tribal regions

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BYLINE: Sardar Ahmad
SOURCE: Agence France–Presse
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 253

Afghan President Hamid Karzai told hundreds of Afghan and Pakistani tribal leaders yesterday the two nations could defeat a resurgent Al Qaeda and Taliban if they worked together.

Karzai's remarks came as he opened four days of talks on rising Islamist extremism in the absence of his Pakistani counterpart Pervez Musharraf, who abruptly pulled out of the meeting the day before.

Musharraf's replacement, Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz, joined Karzai in calling for unity at the "peace jirga" meeting but both leaders also repeated accusations that the other's country is behind the unrest.

With 700 delegates and elders on hand from tribal areas straddling the rugged border region between Afghanistan and Pakistan – where the Pakistani military said it killed at least 10 suspected pro-Taliban militants yesterday – Karzai said the two nations share a common destiny.

"I am confident. I believe ... if both Afghanistan and Pakistan put their hands together, we will eliminate in one day oppression against both nations," he said.

"If the problem is from the Afghanistan side, we should seek ways to solve it. If the problem is in Pakistan, we should find solutions for it," he said.

The jirga has been billed as an opportunity for the tribal leaders to thrash out a strategy to deal with the escalating terrorism threat.

Along with elements from Al Qaeda, the Taliban have been able to regroup since being ousted from power in Kabul by the U.S.–led invasion of Afghanistan in late 2001.

Karzai and Musharraf have traded recriminations about the root of the unrest, while the Pakistani leader has been angered by U.S. accusations that his government is not doing enough to counter the militant threat.

War with the Taliban to last some time, says Canadian colonel in Afghanistan

DATE: 2007.08.09

KEYWORDS: DEFENCE INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

PUBLICATION: cpw

WORD COUNT: 413

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan (CP) _ The deputy commander of Canadian troops in southern Afghanistan says the war with Taliban insurgents could be a long and arduous one.

Col. Christian Juneau distanced himself from predictions made a few days ago by Kandahar Gov. Asadullah Khalid that NATO forces would defeat the Taliban in the not too distant future.

“Things are still explosive and will continue like that,” Juneau said in an interview on Thursday.

“When can we say it will be all over? Will it be in two years, three years or 10 years? It's difficult to say.”

The colonel acknowledged that while the Taliban can't match NATO forces in terms of military might, they are still capable of deadly strikes against coalition forces in Afghanistan to support the government in Kabul.

Perfect examples of the danger facing coalition troops are bombs left by the roadside that can send 20-tonne military vehicles shooting skyward.

Such roadside bombs have killed 18 Canadian soldiers in the past six months in southern Afghanistan. The improvised explosive devices, or IEDs as they are known among soldiers, are responsible for most of the 66 Canadian military deaths in Afghanistan since the Canadian Forces started operating in the country in 2002.

Despite the threats posed by IEDs, suicide-bombers, ambushers and kidnappers, Juneau said the situation is not as critical in southern Afghanistan as it was a year ago.

Kandahar city, a much more unstable and dangerous place last year, is now experiencing economic growth.

Juneau said this improvement is a boon to the international community because it is pushing the Taliban more and more into a dead end.

“They're on their heels,” Juneau said.

“They don't have the initiative _ we do. The Taliban are on the defensive and their attacks can be considered as gestures of desperation.”

Juneau said the Taliban will be even more isolated as the country's infant mortality rate drops and people's average income rises.

His comments echoed those of other Canadian commanders in Afghanistan.

But it's apparent from recent local contacts that coalition forces have a ways to go before they have the local population on side.

Canadian soldiers on patrol recently in Shawali Kot, believed to be an insurgent stronghold, heard villagers complain about alleged extortion by the government's Afghan National Police rather than the Taliban.

Villager elders also expressed unhappiness with Canadians and Americans, accusing them of failing to live up to promises of projects to dig wells, build schools and provide other facilities.

Asked about the Taliban, village leaders said they've had no trouble from insurgents. They declared there were no Taliban in their area.

Over recent months, Afghans have also been complaining loudly about rising civilian casualties from coalition air strikes.

U.S. and NATO military leaders, however, have said that insurgents often seek shelter among civilians, bringing innocent people into the line of fire of coalition warplanes providing air support to ground troops.

Air Force considers 2008 budget cuts for CF18s, Hercules, Aurora, Sea Kings.

DATE: 2007.08.09
KEYWORDS: DEFENCE FINANCE
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WORD COUNT: 156

OTTAWA (CP) _ Canada's air force is looking at cutting the operating and maintenance budgets of some of its frontline aircraft next year in a fiscal pinch that defence insiders blame on new heavy-lift C-17 transport aircraft and the war in Afghanistan.

Senior planners at the 1st Canadian Air Division are currently studying a proposed a 32 per cent reduction in the money used for fuel and spare parts for the CF-18s, the C-130 Hercules, C-140 Auroras and the CH-124 Sea Kings.

Defence sources say it would be a significant hit.

One source said staff at the Winnipeg headquarters are currently doing the staff checks to find out what the impact of the cuts might be.

The reductions, which are being considered for the next budget year, would vary depending upon the fleet.

An official at National Defence headquarters confirmed the study is underway, but described it as a paper exercise, meant to give commanders a better sense of what is possible.

Jeremy Sales said no final decision has been made, and would not comment on actual numbers.

Terror suspects at Guantanamo, including Omar Khadr, declared enemy combatants

DATE: 2007.08.09

KEYWORDS: INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE POLITICS

PUBLICATION: cpw

WORD COUNT: 306

WASHINGTON (AP) _ The 14 so-called "high-value" detainees who were transferred from secret CIA prisons to Guantanamo Bay last year, including Canadian Omar Khadr, have all been declared enemy combatants and are subject to trial, the Pentagon announced Thursday.

Deputy Defence Secretary Gordon England has approved the "enemy combatant" designation for all 14, after reviewing recommendations from their Combatant Status Review Tribunals, which took place over the last six months. Pentagon spokesman Bryan Whitman would not say Thursday when England made the decisions, but indicated that they were done over a period of time.

The detainees, including suspected planners of the Sept. 11 attacks, the USS Cole bombing and the 1998 bombings of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, will now be thrust into a military trial system mired in legal challenges and hampered by lengthy delays.

England's ruling now allows the 14 to be held indefinitely at the detention centre and put on trial for war crimes.

But the trial system itself remains under challenge and it has been called into question by recent court rulings, including a decision by one military judge to throw out a case against Khadr over the wording of the "enemy combatant" designation.

That judge, Army Col. Peter Brownback, said he had no choice but to throw out the case against Khadr because he had been classified as an "enemy combatant" by a military panel years earlier _ and not as an "alien unlawful enemy combatant."

He said the Military Commissions Act, signed by U.S. President George W. Bush last year, says only those classified as "unlawful" enemy combatants can face war trials here.

Khadr, now 20, was captured when he was a 15 years old during a firefight with U.S. forces in Afghanistan in 2002. He was charged with homicide for allegedly throwing a grenade that killed a U.S. army medic during the battle in which he was also wounded.

Some key dates in the ordeal of Maher Arar and its aftermath

DATE: 2007.08.09
KEYWORDS: INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE POLITICS
PUBLICATION: cpw
WORD COUNT: 691

OTTAWA (CP) _ Key dates in the ordeal of Maher Arar:

_ Sept. 26, 2002: Arar arrives at JFK Airport in New York City, on a flight from Zurich, headed for Montreal. He is detained by U.S. authorities, questioned, told he is inadmissible to the United States and asked where he would like to go. He says Canada.

_ Oct. 4, 2002: Arar is visited by Maureen Girvan, a Canadian consular officer in New York. She later says she never thought the Americans would send him anywhere except home to Canada.

_ Oct. 8, 2002: Arar is taken from his cell at 3 a.m. and told by American officials he is being deported to Syria on suspicion of terrorist activity. He is bundled aboard a private jet.

_ Oct. 9, 2002: The plane lands in Jordan and Arar is quickly transferred by car to Damascus where he is to be jailed by Syrian military intelligence.

_ Oct. 10, 2002: Arar gets his first look at a cell he describes as being the size of a grave. He is to spend most of the next 10 months there. In Ottawa, the deputy director of CSIS, not knowing where Arar is, states in a memorandum: "I think the U.S. would like to get Arar to Jordan where they can have their way with him."

_ Oct. 11, 2002: Arar is tortured for the first time, beaten on his palms, wrists, lower back and hips with an electrical cable. He confesses _ falsely _ to terrorist training in Afghanistan. A CSIS official in Washington writes of so-called "rendering" to third countries by the FBI and CIA, saying Arar adds up to just such a case _ where U.S. authorities could not legally hold a terrorist suspect or wanted them questioned "in a firm manner."

_ Oct. 23, 2002: Arar meets Canadian consul Leo Martel for the first time. The beatings have lessened since he was first jailed, and Martel later says he couldn't detect any signs of physical torture. There are several more consular visits in subsequent months but none is private; Syrian officials insist on being present.

_ April 23, 2003: Arar meets Canadian ambassador Franco Pillarella and two visiting Canadian MPs, Marlene Catterall and Sarkis Assadourian. Again the Syrians insist on being present and he can't speak frankly.

_ Aug. 14, 2003: Routine consular visits resume after a long interruption. Arar describes his living conditions and later says he told the consul he had been tortured. The consul agrees he knew living conditions were bad, but says Arar never spoke of torture.

_ Aug. 23, 2003: Arar is blindfolded, put in a car and driven to a new prison. His treatment improves and there is no further torture. He is no longer held in solitary confinement and can mix with other prisoners.

_ Oct. 4, 2003: After days of anticipating further interrogation, Arar is told instead that he will be going home to Canada. He doesn't believe it.

- _ Oct. 5, 2003: Arar is taken to meet a prosecutor who reads out a confession of his supposed terrorist past and tells him to sign it without giving him a chance to read it. He is then taken to meet the head of Syrian military intelligence, who has been joined by Canadian officials for the occasion. Arar is freed and put on a plane to Canada.
- _ Feb. 5, 2004: Government sets up a formal inquiry under Justice Dennis O'Connor to look into the whole Arar case.
- _ Sept. 18, 2006: Justice O'Connor's report exonerates Arar of any wrongdoing, says inexperienced RCMP investigators wrongly gave inaccurate, unfair and overstated evidence about Arar's alleged terrorist leanings to American authorities and recommends compensation for Arar.
- _ Jan. 26, 2007: Federal government settles with Arar with \$10.5 million, plus legal fees. Prime Minister Stephen Harper offers a formal apology.
- _ July 24, 2007: Justice Simon Noel rules in Federal Court that some previously secret findings of the commission must be revealed after commission counsel challenged a government decision to censor 1,500 words from O'Connor report.
- _ July 26, 2007: Inquiry officials announce that despite the fact not all 1,500 censored words were opened to the public, they will not appeal federal Court decision; other parties to the inquiry follow suit.
- _ Aug. 3, 2007: Deadline for federal attorney general appeal of decision passes.
- _ Aug. 9, 2007: Censored words and passages are released, indicating Canadian security officials suspected that Arar had been shipped off to a third country by U.S. officials to be tortured.

U.S. pledges more money to curb Afghan poppy crop in widely criticized scheme

DATE: 2007.08.09

KEYWORDS: POLITICS INTERNATIONAL DEFENCE

PUBLICATION: cpw

WORD COUNT: 382

WASHINGTON (CP) _ The United States released a strategy Thursday in its efforts to fight the widespread poppy production in Afghanistan that's fuelling the Taliban and frustrating efforts to quell violence.

The program will increase rewards for cutting out crops of poppies, the source of opium and related drugs, and planting alternatives. Those who don't will face stiffer penalties.

"We know that opium, maybe second only to terror, is a huge threat to the future of Afghanistan," said anti-drug czar John Walters, who heads the Office of National Drug Control Policy.

"The poor people of Afghanistan are not getting rich off opium," he said. "This is not a future ... that offers the opportunity to develop schools and health care and security. It's drug mafias. It supports warlord(s). It supports terror."

The plan includes giving up to US\$60 million more in development aid to local Afghan officials to bolster anti-poppy efforts.

Afghanistan now accounts for more than 90 per cent of the world's total crop, up from 70 per cent in 2000 and 52 per cent a decade earlier.

The United States is already spending some \$420 million to curb poppy crops and has succeeded in eliminating it in some areas while failing to decrease total production.

Provincial governors who meet goals to reduce poppy crops will get more schools and roads while Afghanistan's central criminal tribunal will get more resources to prosecute those who don't comply.

"We want to make sure that there are greater rewards for success and greater consequences for failure," said State Department anti-drug official Tom Schweich.

Canada has pledged C\$57 million to fund the country's counter-narcotics efforts, including an \$18.5-million program to promote alternative jobs in the volatile Kandahar province where Canadian troops are stationed.

But critics say the so-called "enhanced carrot and stick approach" announced Thursday is only more of the same tactic that's failed in every country it's been tried.

"As long as there is a demand for drugs, there will be a supply to meet it," said Bill Piper at the Drug Policy Alliance. "Drug prohibition makes plants more valuable than gold."

The alliance noted that a recent report from the State Department's inspector general was critical of eradication goals, saying an assessment team "found no realistic possibility of outspending economic incentives in the narcotics industry."

Meantime, critics say, the practice is alienating citizens from the government and pushing them toward the Taliban.

Some U.S. legislators have proposed alternatives, such as licensing farmers to grow opium for legal pain medications or having the United States buy opium crops from farmers and then destroying them.

INDEX:Defence, Finance

DATE: 2007.08.09
KEYWORDS: DEFENCE FINANCE
PUBLICATION: bnw
WORD COUNT: 149

OTTAWA – Canada's air force is looking at cutting the operating and maintenance budgets of some of its frontline aircraft next year in a fiscal pinch that defence insiders blame on new heavy-lift C-17 transport aircraft and the war in Afghanistan.

Senior planners at the 1st Canadian Air Division are currently studying a proposed a 32 per cent reduction in the money used for fuel and spare parts for the CF-18s, the C-130 Hercules, C-140 Auroras and the CH-124 Sea Kings.

Defence sources say it would be a significant hit.

One source said staff at the Winnipeg headquarters are currently doing the staff checks to find out what the impact of the cuts might be.

The reductions, which are being considered for the next budget year, would vary depending upon the fleet.

An official at National Defence headquarters confirmed the study is underway, but described it as a paper exercise, meant to give commanders a better sense of what is possible.

(BN)

INDEX:Defence, International, Politics

DATE: 2007.08.09

KEYWORDS: DEFENCE INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

PUBLICATION: bnw

WORD COUNT: 103

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan – A Canadian colonel serving in Afghanistan says the fight against the Taliban isn't about to end any time soon.

Christian Juneau, deputy commander of Canadian troops in southern Afghanistan, said today it is premature to talk about an end to the hostilities in the war-ravaged country.

Juneau's comments come a few days after Asadullah Khalid, the governor of Kandahar, predicted NATO forces would defeat the Taliban in the not too distant future.

Juneau says it's hard to know whether the war will end in two, three or 10 years.

The colonel acknowledged that while Taliban insurgents can't match NATO forces in terms of military might, they are still capable of deadly strikes.

(BN)

Bush–Tillman

DATE: 2007.08.09

KEYWORDS: INTERNATIONAL DEFENCE POLITICS SPORTS

PUBLICATION: bnw

WORD COUNT: 122

WASHINGTON — U–S President Bush says he expects the military to get to the bottom of it — the mystery of why the death of U–S Army Ranger Pat Tillman was initially explained as the result of enemy fire.

At a White House news conference today, Bush said that the best way to honour Tillman's commitment to his country is to find the truth.

The death of the former N–F–L player in Afghanistan has been a continual source of controversy for American military and the Bush administration.

The Army waited about five weeks after it suspected friendly fire was involved before telling Tillman's family of that suspicion.

Congress has also been trying to determine when and how the White House learned that Tillman's death in 2004 was by friendly fire and not by the enemy.

(APB)

PTH

Air force plans to trim budget to take on new c-17 heavy transport aircraft

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DATELINE: OTTAWA
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Canada's air force is looking at cutting the operating and maintenance budgets of some of its frontline aircraft next year in a fiscal pinch that defence insiders blame on new heavy-lift C-17 transport aircraft and the war in Afghanistan.

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"That's a damn significant hit," said one source, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

"The staff in Winnipeg, the air force staff, are currently doing the staff checks to find out what the impact will be of those cuts."

The reductions, which are being considered for the next budget year, would vary depending upon the fleet, but another defence insider said: "You're basically looking at a one-third cut in operating budget."

KEYWORDS=NATIONAL

Afghan police might be credible in 20 years: chief; Canadian commander says insurgency won't be defeated any time soon

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PUBLICATION: Edmonton Journal
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SECTION: News
PAGE: A6
ILLUSTRATION: Photo: Reuters / An Afghan police officer frisks a civilian at a checkpoint in Ghazni, near Kabul. ; Photo: Sayed Agha Saqib ;
KEYWORDS: WAR; TERRORISM
DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan
BYLINE: Andrew Mayeda
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 403

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan – It could take up to 20 years to transform the Afghan National Police into a professional force capable of securing Kandahar province, the recently named Kandahar police chief said Thursday.

The national police are still plagued by such problems as corruption and lack of training and equipment, Sayed Agha Saqib conceded in an interview with CanWest News Service at the provincial police headquarters in Kandahar City.

"But I believe that in 15 to 20 years, they can be turned into a professional police force that can secure all the cities and districts," he said through an interpreter.

Meanwhile, at Kandahar Air Field, a top Canadian military commander threw more cold water on the notion that the insurgency will be defeated any time soon. Col. Christian Juneau, deputy commander of Canadian Forces in southern Afghanistan, said the Taliban are "on their heels" and have resorted to such "desperate" tactics as suicide bombings.

But he rejected the notion, recently put forward by the governor of Kandahar province in an interview with CanWest News, that the war is nearing its conclusion.

"'Coming to an end' is a relative term," said Juneau, who along with other commanders from Quebec's Royal 22nd Regiment — the Van Doos — recently took the reins of Canada's operations here.

"Do we see the war ending in two years, three years, 10 years? It's tough to say." The amount of time needed to stabilize Afghanistan, and the consequences of not doing so, will increasingly become an issue in Canada as it debates whether to withdraw its troops.

Canada's military commitment ends in February 2009. Prime Minister Stephen Harper said recently he would seek opposition consensus before extending the mission.

Top government and military officials have recently placed an emphasis on training the Afghan National Army (ANA) and Afghan National Police (ANP) so they can eventually hold their own against the Taliban and al-Qaida militants.

It is believed that reforming the ragtag ANP will be the much tougher task. The force is widely considered corrupt, underpaid and ill-equipped.

Sensing a weak link, the Taliban have stepped up their attacks against police checkpoints throughout the province.

Saqib said the ANP usually wins such skirmishes and could use more support from NATO and the Afghan army, especially in volatile districts of the province such as Panjwahi and Zhari.

"NATO, the Canadian military and the ANA have good equipment, and they can call in air support whenever they need it. But the police only have AK-47s and occasionally machine-guns," he said.

Saqib took over as provincial police chief last month. Juneau said the military does its best to pass on intelligence on possible attacks to the police.

He said Canadian commanders are reviewing the layout of police checkpoints around the province.

Bush turns up pressure on Musharraf

IDNUMBER	200708100011
PUBLICATION:	Edmonton Journal
DATE:	2007.08.10
EDITION:	Final
SECTION:	News
PAGE:	A4
KEYWORDS:	FOREIGN RELATIONS; TERRORISM; TERRITORIAL ISSUES; NUCLEARWEAPONS; ARMAMENTS; PRESIDENTS
DATELINE:	WASHINGTON
BYLINE:	Norma Greenaway
SOURCE:	CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT:	203

WASHINGTON – Americans expect "swift action" to take out al-Qaida operatives in Pakistan if solid intelligence emerges about their whereabouts, U.S. President George W. Bush said Thursday.

But he stopped short of saying the U.S. would do the job if the Pakistan government did not.

Bush told a White House news conference that Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf has to prove to Americans he is serious about cracking down on Islamic extremists within his borders.

A recent U.S. intelligence report said the al-Qaida terrorist organization and the Taliban are using tribal lands along the Afghan border to regroup for battle against NATO forces fighting in Afghanistan.

"I recognize Pakistan is a sovereign nation," Bush told reporters, "and that's important for Americans to recognize that.

"But it's also important for Americans to understand that he (Musharraf) shares the same concern about radicals and extremists as I do and as the American people do."

The U.S. president also said he pressed his Pakistani ally to hold a "free and fair election."

The advice came amid reports, subsequently denied in Islamabad, that Musharraf, who assumed power in a bloodless coup in 1999, was contemplating imposing emergency rule.

Questions about Pakistan's stability and Musharraf's reliability surfaced when Senator Barack Obama, a leading contender for the 2008 Democratic presidential nomination, said he would unilaterally order U.S. troops into Pakistan if Musharraf refused to take out terrorists.

'Drastic step' ruled out in volatile nation; President decides against emergency rule after conversation with U.S. secretary of state

IDNUMBER 200708100010

PUBLICATION: Edmonton Journal

DATE: 2007.08.10

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: A4

ILLUSTRATION: Photo: Aamir Qureshi, Agence France–Presse, Getty Images / APakistani police commando stands guard in front of the president's house in Islamabad on Thursday. Embattled President Pervez Musharraf decided against imposing a state of emergency in Pakistan. ; Photo: Musharraf ;

KEYWORDS: TERRORISM; FOREIGN RELATIONS; TERRITORIAL ISSUES; PRESIDENTS;NUCLEAR WEAPONS; ARMAMENTS

DATELINE: ISLAMABAD, Pakistan

SOURCE: New York Times

WORD COUNT: 700

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan – Pakistani President Gen. Pervez Musharraf backed off from declaring a state of emergency in his increasingly volatile country after media, political and diplomatic pressure, Pakistani officials acknowledged Thursday.

U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice telephoned Musharraf about 2 a.m. Thursday in Pakistan, State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said. Bush administration officials refused to discuss publicly what was said, but one Pakistani official said Rice exhorted Musharraf not to declare emergency rule. The conversation lasted about 15 minutes.

"She thought it was an opportune moment to talk about a couple of things," McCormack said without elaborating.

At the time of the conversation, Pakistan's minister of state for information, Tariq Azim Khan, said Musharraf was not ruling out declaring an emergency, which would allow him sweeping powers to restrict freedom of movement and assembly, to suspend Parliament and to curtail the activities of the courts. Such a step, officials in Washington fear, would further inflame the region and open the Bush administration to additional criticism from democracy advocates who say it has already been too willing to turn a blind eye toward Musharraf's failure to restore civilian rule.

In Pakistan, opponents of emergency rule, including some inside the government, warned it would push the country into deeper crisis, as the opposition parties, the judiciary, lawyers and civil society would react strongly against it.

"I fear the whole system will collapse and the country will plunge into a period of turmoil," said one minister, warning of moves to impose emergency rule.

In his remarks Wednesday, Azim cited both "external and internal threats" to the government, including the worsening security situation in the country's tribal areas, where al–Qaida and many Taliban militants are

'Drastic step' ruled out in volatile nation; President decides against emergency rule after conversation with U.S. secretary of state

based. Other Pakistani officials suggested privately, however, that it was less the security situation driving the plan for an emergency than Musharraf's own political concerns as he tries to have himself re-elected to another term.

Musharraf told political supporters in Karachi this week he would stand for re-election by the national and provincial assemblies as early as Sept. 15. But the public mood has soured on the general since he tried to dismiss the chief justice five months ago. The move set off nationwide protests and was later overturned by the Supreme Court.

Opposition parties now seem poised to use the court to bring constitutional challenges against Musharraf's continued rule, particularly his holding dual positions as president and Army chief of staff.

Amid such political uncertainty, some of Musharraf's supporters had urged him to take greater control in the form of extraordinary powers. Last week, close aides to the general and intelligence officials started hinting at the possibility of a "drastic step" — a euphemism for emergency rule — which has been instituted around six times in Pakistan's 60 years of independence.

Some suggested that Musharraf was increasingly finding himself in a dead end. "The president is left with no other option than to clamp down emergency or a martial law to try to extend his stay in power," an intelligence official said on condition of anonymity this week. "It is only a matter of days."

On Wednesday Musharraf cancelled a long-planned trip to Kabul to co-chair a three-day assembly of tribal elders and political leaders with Afghanistan's president, Hamid Karzai. The news fuelled speculation that an emergency decree was imminent.

He stayed home to conduct a high-level meeting of his close military and political aides on Thursday morning. Later in the day, Muhammad Ali Durrani, the information minister, issued a categorical denial that an emergency was being imposed.

"There were so many people recommending the imposition of emergency," Durrani told the local television channel Dawn News, "but the prescience of the president was that he decided not to impose emergency in Pakistan." He also said the general had not signed any document to declare emergency.

"The president is very clear that steps like emergency can hinder the democratic process and should, therefore, be avoided," Durrani added. "To cope with the menace of terrorism, consensus would be developed in the country by taking political parties onboard."

Musharraf's decision to back off came after intensifying pressures from different sides, apparently including American officials who have been some of his most important backers.

Musharraf balks at imposing state of emergency

SOURCETAG 0708100398
PUBLICATION: The London Free Press
DATE: 2007.08.10
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A7
BYLINE: SUN MEDIA NEWS SERVICES
DATELINE: ISLAMABAD, PAKISTAN
COLUMN: News Digest
WORD COUNT: 129

President Gen. Pervez Musharraf backed away yesterday from imposing a state of emergency in Pakistan that would have drastically curtailed freedoms. The decision came after strong opposition from critics in and out of government. That Musharraf was even considering such an idea was seen as a sign of weakness from the embattled leader as he seeks re-election for another five-year term. Musharraf, who seized power in a 1999 coup, has come under increasing pressure from forces at home to restore full democracy, and rising U.S. criticism to do more to stop the Taliban and al-Qaida from regrouping in the restive border region with Afghanistan. KEYWORDS=WORLD

Drastic cuts eyed for Canada's air force But a National Defence official says no final decisions have been made.

SOURCETAG: 0708100397
PUBLICATION: The London Free Press
DATE: 2007.08.10
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A7
BYLINE: MURRAY BREWSTER, CP
DATELINE: OTTAWA
WORD COUNT: 337

Canada's air force is looking at cutting the operating and maintenance budgets of some of its frontline aircraft next year in a fiscal pinch defence insiders blame on new heavy-lift C-17 transport aircraft and the war in Afghanistan.

Senior planners at the 1st Canadian Air Division are studying a proposed 32 per cent cut in money used for fuel and spare parts for the CF-18s, the C-130 Hercules, C-140 Auroras and the Sea Kings, defence sources said.

"That's a damn significant hit," said one source, who spoke on condition of anonymity. "The staff in Winnipeg, the air force staff, are currently doing the staff checks to find out what the impact will be of those cuts."

The reductions, which are being considered for the next budget year, would vary depending upon the fleet, but another defence insider said: "You're basically looking at a one-third cut in operating budget."

An official at National Defence headquarters confirmed the study is underway, but described it as a paper exercise, meant to give commanders a better sense of what is possible.

Jeremy Sales said no final decision has been made, and would not comment on numbers.

"This exercise in no way foreshadows or pre-judges any decision on fleet funding and, in fact, no decision on this will be taken until the fall," he said yesterday.

"Every year this planning is conducted for all of the aircraft fleets to provide operational commanders and senior management information about the potential effects of budget restraints due to evolving circumstances. The important thing to note here is that the safety of the aircraft and crew are never compromised."

The number-crunching may go on every year, but it is the size of the proposed cut that has air force insiders worried.

"We've been cutting back our national procurement funding for years," said an air force source. "The military is supposed to be about readiness. When you're cutting back your spares, you're cutting back your readiness, your ability to respond."

The Hercules fleet may get away relatively unscathed because it contributes a handful of the medium-sized transports to operations in Afghanistan, including dangerous supply-drop exercises at far-flung desert outposts. If cuts are to be made, the sources said, it would involve C-130s based in Canada.

This comes at time when the overall cost of Canada's involvement in the war is rising.
KEYWORDS=NATIONAL

Taliban resilient: Canuck colonel

SOURCETAG 0708100822
PUBLICATION: The Edmonton Sun
DATE: 2007.08.10
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: 37
BYLINE: CP
DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan
WORD COUNT: 284

The deputy commander of Canadian troops in southern Afghanistan says the war with Taliban insurgents could be a long and arduous one.

Col. Christian Juneau distanced himself from predictions made a few days ago by Kandahar Gov. Asadullah Khalid that NATO forces would defeat the Taliban in the not too distant future.

"Things are still explosive and will continue like that," Juneau said in an interview yesterday.

"When can we say it will be all over? Will it be in two years, three years or 10 years? It's difficult to say."

The colonel acknowledged that while the Taliban can't match NATO forces in terms of military might, they are still capable of deadly strikes against coalition forces in Afghanistan.

Perfect examples of the danger facing coalition troops are bombs left by the roadside that can send 20-tonne military vehicles shooting skyward.

Such roadside bombs have killed 18 Canadian soldiers in the past six months in southern Afghanistan. The improvised explosive devices, or IEDs as they are known among soldiers, are responsible for most of the 66 Canadian military deaths in Afghanistan since the Canadian Forces started operating in the country in 2002.

Despite the threats posed by IEDs, suicide bombers, ambushers and kidnappers, Juneau said the situation is not as critical in southern Afghanistan as it was a year ago.

Kandahar city, a much more unstable and dangerous place last year, is now experiencing economic growth.

Juneau said this improvement is a boon to the international community because it is pushing the Taliban more and more into a dead end.

"They're on their heels," Juneau said.

"They don't have the initiative — we do. The Taliban are on the defensive and their attacks can be considered as gestures of desperation."

Juneau said the Taliban will be even more isolated as the country's infant mortality rate drops and people's average income rises. His comments echoed those of other Canadian commanders in Afghanistan.

But it's apparent from recent local contacts that coalition forces have a way to go before they have the local

population on side.

Canadian soldiers on patrol recently in Shawali Kot, believed to be an insurgent stronghold, heard villagers complain about alleged extortion by the government's Afghan National Police rather than the Taliban.

KEYWORDS=WORLD

City soldier returns soon Calgary police fitness co-ordinator overseas training Afghan troops

SOURCETAG: 0708100689

PUBLICATION: The Calgary Sun

DATE: 2007.08.10

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: 22

ILLUSTRATION: photo courtesy of Kyle Clapperton Capt. Kyle Clapperton, left, has been given a leave of absence from his regular job heading fitness training with Calgary cops to serve in Afghanistan.

BYLINE: NADIA MOHARIB, SUN MEDIA

WORD COUNT: 250

Capt. Kyle Clapperton is a world away from his job with Calgary cops.

But the fitness co-ordinator with the force is putting his training talents to good use.

Only instead of dealing with boys and girls in blue he is working with a team of 13 other Canadians at the Kabul Military Training Centre in Afghanistan to help develop that country's National Army.

"Other than the fact that I'm responsible for training recruits in both jobs, there is not much comparison," he said in a recent e-mail from Afghanistan.

"Canada is making a difference in Afghanistan. "I see the effects of our involvement on a daily basis."

The 31-year-old Calgary Highlanders captain said soldiers come from all over the country and from various tribes be trained.

"It is a voluntary army, so most want to fight the Taliban," he said.

"A lot are motivated by a paycheque and the need to support their families."

He said many have had experience in the Afghan army during the communist regime or as Mujahideen fighters but most have little or no experience.

"They may be a great warrior nation, but the Afghan Army still has a long way to go," he said.

"It is slowly increasing its capacity to conduct military operations and take responsibility for its own national security -- but there is a lot more work to be done."

The coup of seeing better trained soldiers hit the job running, is tempered by culture shock, which still hits hard almost a year into the job, Clapperton said.

"Despite over five years since the Taliban were removed from power and the international aid since then, conditions are still extremely poor," he said.

"We still see women wearing the burqua, kids poorly clothed playing in squalor and unimaginable living conditions."

Calgary cops have been very supportive of Clapperton's military endeavours, giving him a year-long leave of absence, and although he has mixed feelings about returning later this month, home has its perks.

"I'm looking forward to seeing family and friends again, having a proper meal with a beer and I really miss my morning Starbucks coffee," he said.

"And I'll be coming home with a greater appreciation for all the advantages we have as Canadians."

KEYWORDS=ALBERTA

Air force budget cuts considered Frontline–aircraft spending would be affected

SOURCETAG 0708100684
PUBLICATION: The Calgary Sun
DATE: 2007.08.10
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: 20
BYLINE: CP
DATELINE: OTTAWA
WORD COUNT: 206

Canada's air force is looking at cutting the operating and maintenance budgets of some of its frontline aircraft next year.

The cuts would come as a result of a fiscal pinch defence insiders blame on new heavy–lift C–17 transport aircraft and the war in Afghanistan.

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"Every year this planning is conducted for all of the aircraft fleets in order to provide operational commanders and senior management information about the potential effects of budget restraints due to evolving circumstances," said Sales.

"The important thing to note here is that the safety of the aircraft and crew are never compromised."
KEYWORDS=NATIONAL

Letters to the Editor Column

SOURCETAG 0708100675
PUBLICATION: The Calgary Sun
DATE: 2007.08.10
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Editorial/Opinion
PAGE: 14
COLUMN: Letters to the Editor
WORD COUNT: 631

DEERFOOT IS THAT BAD

Personally, I'm glad to see a crackdown on speeding on Deerfoot. I tried driving at 80 km/h where required however, due to the people wizzing by me and tailgating, it was just too unsafe. I ended up increasing my speed to 100 km/h because it seemed the risk of being in an accident outweighed the risk of getting a ticket. Oh yes — it's that bad.

David Watson

(There will be a lot of Multanova tickets in the mail.)

ANDERS SOLIDLY BACKED

Oscar Owens (Letters, Aug. 9) should check his facts before he criticizes a successful four-term MP. Rob Anders attended three debates in the last election, which is more than the average incumbent MP. About 600 people attended the largest of these debates at the Bowness high school, where the only person who said anything (to use Oscar's words) "ignorant or controversial" was the Liberal candidate who said she was against a blanket ban on child pornography because it might have "artistic merit". (Yes, she really said that.) It is true there is a small group of vocal dissidents, perhaps Oscar is one of them, but the key word is small. At the last constituency general meeting, about 95% of the party members supported Rob, and supported him enthusiastically.

Andrew Constantinidis

(Thanks for another view.)

JACK'S CHANCE

Jack Layton, where are you? You constantly spout off about how we should negotiate with the Taliban. There are 21 Koreans currently being held captive by the Taliban so here's your chance. Why not go on over to Afghanistan and put your words to action?

Randy Sharman

(Jack's getting a lesson from afar on how tough it is to talk to the Taliban.)

PETER WHO?

Thank goodness, he's finally arrived. Even though I have never heard of the guy, nor heard a peep from him during these months of carnage on city streets, Acting Police Chief Peter Davison is planning on cleaning up the old town once and for all. I don't suppose our saviour Peter is in the running for current Chief Jack "All You Need Is Love" Beaton's job once his farewell tour officially comes to an end later this year?

Jake McArthur

(Time will tell.)

BENT OVER BECKHAM

While reading Sheila Copps' Aug. 8 column on support of "homegrown" Canadian athletes, I agreed that as a nation, we are quite ignorant about the amazing accomplishments of our athletes, both amateur and professional. While complaining about athletes forced to "toil in obscurity" and "languish in the shadows," why on earth would you choose to put yet another picture of David Beckham inside the column. If you really were interested in doing something positive, rather than point out the negative, perhaps a photo of Canada's top-ranked men's tennis player, Frank Dancevic, would have done more to support your supposed cause. It is hard for me as a Canadian to recognize his accomplishments if I don't even know what he looks like. You dropped the ball!

Greg McMaster

(Good point.)

TASTE FOR MARIJUANA

Michael Coren and Licia Corbella's print debate "Cannabis Country" showed why this is such a divisive subject. Sorry Michael, but you obviously live in a cave, and have control issues. Licia seems like she gets out once in awhile and has a better grasp on what's going on in the real world. I could pick Coren's argument to pieces just pointing out the obvious half lies, lies and damned lies. It is really a matter of personal taste. This is supposed to be a free country, so I should be able to make those choices. The world is not going to end if the government wakes up and legalizes, taxes and controls it like alcohol. In fact, I doubt you'd notice the difference, except crime would drop.

Steve Bottrell

(Judging by the stats, Canada is slowly going to pot.)

No state of emergency

IDNUMBER 200708100049
PUBLICATION: The Windsor Star
DATE: 2007.08.10
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A8
DATeline: ISLAMABAD, Pakistan
SOURCE: Los Angeles Times
WORD COUNT: 178

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan – Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf decided Thursday against declaring a state of emergency, hours after senior officials in his government said such a step was under consideration.

An emergency declaration would have given the Pakistani leader, who is beset by plummeting popularity and the worst political troubles of his eight-year rule, sweeping powers to suppress dissent, muzzle the media and put off elections.

Some analysts speculated that talk of an emergency declaration was leaked by Gen. Musharraf's aides in order to gauge international and domestic reaction to the prospect of authoritarian rule in Pakistan, which is considered an essential — if problematic — U.S. ally in the war against Islamic insurgents in Afghanistan.

In some ways, response to the news was worse than the general might have feared. There was the expected expressions of alarm and discomfort from human rights groups, the Bush administration and opposition parties, but also a distinct undertone of derision.

One Pakistani newspaper carried the Urdu-language headline "My Dear Countrymen ... ," in mocking reference to the formulaic pronouncement of martial-law in coup-prone Pakistan.

Pakistan president feels U.S. pressure; Has to get serious about extremists

IDNUMBER 200708100046

PUBLICATION: The Windsor Star

DATE: 2007.08.10

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: A8

ILLUSTRATION: Photo: Faisal Mahmood, Reuters / IN POSITION: Paramilitarytroopers take up positions in a bunker in Islamabad Thursday. Pakistan's beleaguered President Pervez Musharraf was holding a meeting of aides and political allies on Thursday to consider declaring emergency rule. ;

DATELINE: WASHINGTON

BYLINE: Norma Greenaway

SOURCE: CanWest News Service

WORD COUNT: 360

WASHINGTON – Americans expect "swift action" to take out al–Qaida operatives in Pakistan if solid intelligence emerges about their whereabouts, U.S. President George W. Bush said Thursday, but he stopped short of saying the U.S. would do the job if the Pakistan government did not.

Bush told a White House news conference that Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf has to prove to Americans he is serious about cracking down on Islamic extremists within his borders.

A recent U.S. intelligence report said the al–Qaida terrorist organization and the Taliban are using tribal lands along the Afghan border to regroup for battle against forces from Canada, Britain, the U.S. and other NATO countries fighting in Afghanistan.

SOVEREIGN NATION

"I recognize Pakistan is a sovereign nation," Bush told reporters, "and that's important for Americans to recognize that. But it's also important for Americans to understand that he (Musharraf) shares the same concern about radicals and extremists as I do and as the American people do."

The U.S. president also said he pressed his Pakistani ally to hold a "free and fair election." The advice came amid reports, subsequently denied in Islamabad, that Musharraf, who assumed power in a bloodless coup in 1999, was contemplating imposing emergency rule because of deteriorating security conditions in the country.

Questions about the stability of Pakistan and Musharraf's reliability as an ally surfaced when Senator Barack Obama, a leading contender for the Democratic presidential nomination in 2008, said he would unilaterally order U.S. troops into Pakistan if Musharraf refused to take out terrorists.

A vacation–bound Bush also used the news conference to vigorously reassert his case for staying in Iraq, despite mounting criticism of his strategy from inside and outside his own Republican party.

He met reporters just hours before flying to Maine to spend a few days with his parents at their seaside compound in Kennebunkport.

There, he and his wife, Laura, plan a private lunch Saturday with new French President Nicolas Sarkozy and his wife, Cecilia, on Saturday. Bush then flies to his ranch in Crawford, Texas, to relax and to prepare for a meeting later this month with Prime Minister Stephen Harper and Mexican President Felipe Calderon in the Quebec resort village of Montebello.

Bush, Harper architects of North America's demise

IDNUMBER 200708100029
PUBLICATION: The Windsor Star
DATE: 2007.08.10
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Editorial/Opinion
PAGE: A7
BYLINE: Robin Brown
SOURCE: Windsor Star
WORD COUNT: 216

I am writing with complete shock and horror at the Conservative government's total disregard for our Canadian environment. It is obvious that becoming a super power as quoted by Prime Minister Stephen Harper, is more important than the health and well being of Canadians, our wildlife and our planet. The Alberta oil sands development is full speed ahead going against all recommendations to slow it down.

Do they really think our children and their children will thank them for this mess they've quickly created and encouraged? What has happened to conservation?

I am sure this government will go down in history, along with the administration of George W. Bush as being the two governments that jointly destroyed our countries and planet with a few flicks of the pen because of greed, greed and more greed. Selfish and immoral.

The only reason we are sending our youth off to war to be killed in Iraq and Afghanistan, is because of oil. It's very sad. What happened to the Canadian peacekeeping? If there was any point in history that we Canadians need to stand up and say no, it is now.

We are going down the slippery path of greed and wealth for a select few, at the expense of humanity and the earth. I'm ashamed to be Canadian at this time in history.

ROBIN BROWN

Pain Court

Bush puts pressure on Pakistan

IDNUMBER 200708100102
PUBLICATION: The StarPhoenix (Saskatoon)
DATE: 2007.08.10
EDITION: Final
SECTION: World
PAGE: D4
ILLUSTRATION: Photo: Getty Images / President George W. Bush called for patience on the U.S. role in Iraq ;
DATELINE: WASHINGTON
BYLINE: Norma Greenaway
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 428

WASHINGTON — Americans expect "swift action" to take out al-Qaida operatives in Pakistan if solid intelligence emerges about their whereabouts, U.S. President George W. Bush said Thursday, but he stopped short of saying the U.S. would do the job if the Pakistan government did not.

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A vacation-bound Bush also used the news conference to vigorously reassert his case for staying in Iraq, despite mounting criticism of his strategy from inside and outside his own Republican party.

On Iraq, Bush pleaded for patience, and appeared to be bracing Americans for a mix of good and bad news when Gen. David Petraeus, the top military commander in Iraq, goes before Congress next month to give a thorough report on the impact of a controversial surge in American troop levels in Iraq announced seven months ago.

The president said the challenges in Iraq are huge after decades of tyranny, but the "young democracy" is taking steps towards forming a functioning government.

Bush insisted anew the cost to the United States of leaving Iraq too soon would be unacceptable.

"The first question one has to ask on Iraq is, 'Is it worth it?' " Bush said. "I could not send a mother's child into combat if I did not believe it was necessary for our short-term and long-term security to succeed in Iraq."

Bush said the second question revolves around whether the U.S. can succeed in Iraq.

"In my mind, the answer to that is: Absolutely. Not only we must succeed; we can succeed."

(OTTAWA CITIZEN)

Corruption still haunts Afghanistan

IDNUMBER 200708100027
PUBLICATION: The StarPhoenix (Saskatoon)
DATE: 2007.08.10
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Forum
PAGE: A10
COLUMN: Don Martin
BYLINE: Don Martin
SOURCE: Calgary Herald
WORD COUNT: 686

In the end, Afghan police performed as expected. They pocketed a couple more bribes to help this stranded columnist sneak through the Kabul airport without a proper exit visa while an officer resurfaced to partially justify the palm grease I slipped him a week ago.

After a final heart-stopping \$50 bill handed to an officer checking passports at the boarding ramp of yet another jet, I finally escaped Afghanistan on Tuesday after a week of involuntary confinement due to paperwork confusion.

The nagging problem was a departure stamp on my visa showing I had left the country on a date when I was actually sweating with a platoon of soldiers in the middle of Kandahar province. I had — and still have — no explanation for the stamp, so I can't really blame the authorities for being suspicious.

But the picture-perfect proof of Afghanistan security corrupted to its core was on display in the junior police officer blocking access to the diplomatic entrance at 6 a.m. Tuesday. A billboard asking visitors to report anyone taking bribes was over his head. And yet, he was full of promises and winks that left no doubt that he was seeking a salary subsidy from me as I languished for hours around the gate, watching yet another flight depart with my seat empty on a non-refundable ticket.

The way it was explained later by a U.S. army security whiz, all the 'mentors' who monitor regular officers were off protecting Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai upon his return from a meeting with U.S. President George W. Bush, which meant it was a bonanza of a payoff payday.

Even on monitored days, police corruption is a serious problem here. They are loathed more than feared and respected not a bit by the average Afghan. It's hard to blame police for being susceptible to bribes given the average cop's \$70-per-month salary, which is usually reduced as senior officers skim off a piece of the payroll on its way down the chain of command.

My little problem is but a paintbrush stroke in a much bigger picture, but when a Canadian journalist is cleared for takeoff after Canadian Ambassador Arif Lalani personally calls in favours and there's still a crooked cop blocking the exit with his hand out, one can only imagine what average Afghans encounter when they try to deal with their government.

Lalani, who I can say with openly declared bias is a top-notch ambassador with the perfect staff for any stranded Canadian to have in his corner, agrees there's a problem and sees a Canadian role in finding a solution.

He thinks Canada should work to better train police, improve their equipment and get their pay increased — all areas under the mandate of the international security force.

But given how corruption seems both endemic and epidemic in Afghanistan, one wonders if improvement is not decades away.

Take the police captain who prevented me from catching my first flight Tuesday morning. By the afternoon, he was guiding me through the airport to passport control after pocketing a \$50 bribe.

During my involuntary stay in Kabul, many sympathizers have shared stories of palm grease being the only lubricant that works in dealing with the Karzai government.

The Canadian owner of a guest house says he has to bribe the power company to keep the lights on. He has no choice. If he was forced to depend on his generator for electricity, "my profits would disappear."

Arguably, all this is just the Afghan way. But add up all the airline tickets sacrificed, the cost of hotels and fixers during the delay, the new visa application and the bribes, and my employers paid \$4,000—plus for an improper stamp on an Afghanistan visa. That's a stiff price for a business to deal with a mistake I would argue was mostly made by government employees.

Or course, the ultimate irony of my ordeal came after the final bribe when the door finally closed on a Dubai-bound jet and I let out a sigh of relief to be free of the place forever.

I turned on my iPod, hit the shuffle button and burst into laughter to strange looks from the guy beside me. A song came on I haven't heard in years — Supertramp's Take the Long Way Home.

And what a long strange trip it's been.

Obama's threat of force deserves debate

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DATE: 2007.08.10
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SECTION: Forum
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SOURCE: The Washington Post
WORD COUNT: 570

The following editorial is excerpted from the Washington Post.

In May 1998, President Bill Clinton announced that his policy would be "to capture terrorists, no matter where they hide."

After al-Qaida attacked on Sept. 11, 2001, there was widespread agreement that neither Clinton nor President George Bush had pursued that policy with sufficient dedication. The Sept. 11 commission recommended that, for every actual or potential terrorist sanctuary, the United States "should have a realistic strategy to keep possible terrorists insecure and on the run, using all elements of national power."

So why is everyone from Democrat Hillary Rodham Clinton to Republican Mitt Romney beating up on Barack Obama for endorsing that common-sense position?

In a speech last week, delivered after a National Intelligence Estimate reported that al-Qaida had reconstituted menacingly in the mountainous Waziristan region of Pakistan, Obama said that he would condition military aid to Pakistan on its willingness to go after foreign fighters and the Taliban.

He continued: "I understand that President (Pervez) Musharraf has his own challenges. But let me make this clear. There are terrorists holed up in those mountains who murdered 3,000 Americans. They are plotting to strike again. It was a terrible mistake to fail to act when we had a chance to take out an al-Qaida leadership meeting in 2005. If we have actionable intelligence about high-value terrorist targets and President Musharraf won't act, we will."

For this, Obama was ridiculed by Romney as a "Dr. Strangelove" who is "going to bomb our allies."

At a Democratic debate Tuesday, sponsored by the AFL-CIO and MSNBC, Christopher J. Dodd called Obama "highly irresponsible" for saying that "we may be willing unilaterally to invade a nation here that we are trying to get to be more co-operative with us in Afghanistan and elsewhere."

And Clinton chimed in: "I do not believe people running for president should engage in hypotheticals. . . . I think it is a very big mistake to telegraph that, and to destabilize the Musharraf regime, which is fighting for its life against the Islamist extremists who are in bed with al-Qaida and Taliban."

Obama recently has taken a number of foreign policy positions with which we disagree, but on this it strikes us that he has the better of the argument — both on substance and on the importance of debate. Faced with such "actionable intelligence," of course any president will weigh risks against potential benefits, and it's impossible to predict that calculus.

It's crucial, as the Sept. 11 commission went on to say, to "reach out, listen to, and work with other countries that can help." But the principle that the United States will defend itself by going after terrorist enemies in foreign countries, even without those nations' permission if necessary, is already U.S. policy. Does Romney really want to equate such self-defense with "unilateral attack" on an allied nation and repudiate it as U.S. policy? Clinton's advocacy of greater discretion may make sense for a president — but not for a presidential candidate.

These are the issues candidates should be debating: Is the United States in a generational conflict with Islamic fundamentalist terrorists? Is the appropriate response primarily military or law enforcement? What's permissible, or wise, in the realm of capture, rendition and detention of terrorism suspects? And, if Obama is wrong, what would they do about the terrorist training camps in Waziristan?

We'd like to hear their answers to that not-so-hypothetical question.

Bush presses for action against insurgents

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KEYWORDS: WAR; IRAQ; ARMED FORCES; UNITED STATES
DATELINE: WASHINGTON
BYLINE: Norma Greenaway
SOURCE: Ottawa Citizen
WORD COUNT: 304

WASHINGTON — Americans expect "swift action" to take out al-Qaida operatives in Pakistan if solid intelligence emerges about their whereabouts, U.S. President George W. Bush said Thursday, but he stopped short of saying the U.S. would do the job if the Pakistan government did not.

Bush told a White House news conference that Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf has to prove to Americans he is serious about cracking down on Islamic extremists within his borders. A recent U.S. intelligence report said al-Qaida and the Taliban are using tribal lands along the Afghan border to regroup for battle against forces from Canada, Britain, the U.S. and other NATO countries fighting in Afghanistan.

"I recognize Pakistan is a sovereign nation," Bush told reporters, "and that's important for Americans to recognize that. But it's also important for Americans to understand that [Musharraf] shares the same concern about radicals and extremists as I do and as the American people do."

The U.S. president also said he pressed his Pakistani ally to hold a "free and fair election." The advice came amid reports that Musharraf, who assumed power in a bloodless coup in 1999, was contemplating imposing emergency rule because of deteriorating security conditions in the country.

Questions about the stability of Pakistan and Musharraf's reliability as an ally surfaced when Senator Barack Obama, a leading contender for the Democratic presidential nomination in 2008, said he would unilaterally order U.S. troops into Pakistan if Musharraf refused to take out terrorists.

A vacation-bound Bush also used the news conference to vigorously reassert his case for staying in Iraq, despite mounting criticism of his strategy from inside and outside his own Republican party.

The president said the challenges in Iraq are huge after decades of tyranny, but the "young democracy" is taking steps towards forming a functioning government.

Afghan police won't be an effective force for years, Kandahar chief says

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KEYWORDS: WAR; TERRORISM; BOMBINGS
DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan
BYLINE: Andrew Mayeda
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 381

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan — It could take as many as 20 years to transform the Afghan National Police into a professional force capable of securing Kandahar province, the recently named Kandahar police chief said Thursday.

The national police are still plagued by such problems as corruption and lack of training and equipment, Sayed Agha Saqib conceded in an interview with CanWest News Service at the provincial police headquarters in Kandahar City.

"But I believe that in 15 to 20 years, they can be turned into a professional police force that can secure all the cities and districts," he said through an interpreter.

Meanwhile, at Kandahar Air Field, a top Canadian military commander threw more cold water on the notion that the insurgency will be defeated anytime soon. Col. Christian Juneau, deputy commander of Canadian Forces in southern Afghanistan, said the Taliban are "on their heels" and have resorted to such "desperate" tactics as suicide bombings.

But he rejected the notion, recently put forward by the governor of Kandahar province in an interview with Canwest News, that the war is nearing its conclusion.

" 'Coming to an end' is a relative term," said Juneau, who along with other commanders from Quebec's Royal 22nd Regiment, the Van Doo, recently took the reins of Canada's operations here.

"Do we see the war ending in two years, three years, 10 years? It's tough to say."

The amount of time needed to stabilize Afghanistan, and the consequences of not doing so, will increasingly become an issue in Canada as it debates whether to withdraw its troops.

Canada's military commitment ends in February 2009. Prime Minister Stephen Harper said recently he would seek opposition consensus before extending the mission.

Top government and military officials have recently placed an emphasis on training the Afghan National Army (ANA) and Afghan National Police (ANP) so they can eventually hold their own against the Taliban and al-Qaida militants.

It is believed that reforming the ragtag ANP will be the much tougher task. The force is also widely considered underpaid. Sensing a weak link, the Taliban have stepped up attacks against police checkpoints in the province.

Saqib said the ANP usually wins such skirmishes, but could use more support from NATO and the Afghan Army, especially in volatile districts of the province such as Panjwaii and Zhari.

"NATO, the Canadian military and the ANA have good equipment, and they can call in air support whenever they need it. But the police only have AK-47s and occasionally machineguns," he said.

Saqib took over as chief last month.

Juneau said the military does its best to pass on intelligence on possible attacks to the police.

Calgary council disgusts man

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KEYWORDS: PROVINCIAL MUNICIPAL FINANCES; INFRASTRUCTURE; MUNICIPAL TAXES; MAYORS; POLITICIANS
DATELINE: NANAIMO
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 155

NANAIMO – A Nanaimo man whose soldier son-in-law died in Afghanistan says he is disgusted by a Calgary city council decision to ban "Support Our Troops" decals on municipal vehicles.

Tim McGrath, the father-in-law of the late Cpl. Jordan Anderson, said Calgary council should reconsider the decision it made last week, and he would be willing to drive to Alberta to make his case.

Anderson was one of six Canadian soldiers who died July 4 when their armoured vehicle struck a roadside bomb in Kandahar province.

"The majority of Canadians do support our troops, regardless of what the Calgary politicians say," McGrath said.

But Calgary Mayor David Bronconnier said the council decision shouldn't suggest Calgary city hall doesn't support Canadian soldiers.

"The difference is that council has said the way to show support is not by putting a decal on a dump truck," he said. "It is . . . to show support for our troops in other, tangible ways."

McGrath said the least Calgary council can do is follow the Alberta government's lead and let employees put the decals on municipal vehicles.

Another black eye for RCMP; CSIS suspected Arar could be sent to third country for torture

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ILLUSTRATION: Photo: The Canadian Press File Photo / Material blacked out from the Maher Arar inquiry shows the RCMP failed in 2002 to disclose to the courts it was seeking search warrants using bogus confessions. ; Photo: Toronto Star File Photo / Maher Arar: sent to Syria for "firm" questioning. ;
DATELINE: OTTAWA
BYLINE: Tonda Maccharles
SOURCE: Toronto Star
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 1149

Police have an "extremely high" obligation to be candid with the courts, and that didn't happen during the RCMP's investigation into Maher Arar, says Paul Cavalluzzo, lead lawyer for the inquiry into the ordeal of the Canadian who was deported by U.S. authorities to Syria and then tortured.

Previously blacked-out material from the inquiry released yesterday shows the RCMP failed in 2002 to disclose to courts that it was seeking search warrants using information based on confessions that were likely obtained by foreign agencies using torture.

In at least one case, the confession was that of another suspect, Ahmad El Maati, who claimed he was tortured in Syria.

"When you're issuing a search warrant which has a massive intrusion on your civil liberties, then the police and security services should be fully candid in their disclosure and in this case what we saw is they didn't disclose to the judges the fact that Syria has just a terrible human rights record," said Cavalluzzo, who was counsel for Justice Dennis O'Connor's inquiry into the Arar affair.

Arar was detained on Sept. 26, 2002, during a stopover at New York's JFK airport as he was returning home to Ottawa after a vacation. He was held for two weeks in the United States, then flown on a private plane to Jordan and driven across the border to Syria where he was tortured and held for a year without charges.

The commission of inquiry, led by O'Connor, concluded that faulty information the RCMP passed to the United States very likely led to the Ottawa engineer's year-long ordeal.

Late last month, the Federal Court of Canada ordered the federal government to release some information withheld by the government when O'Connor's inquiry report was published last September. The government had cited national security concerns for blacking out portions of the report.

Yesterday's revelations stunned Arar and his lawyers.

"Maher told me he was shocked when he saw some of the new information today," said Arar's lawyer Lorne Waldman.

"What this really amounts to is a subversion of the judicial process," Waldman said of the RCMP's actions in the warrant applications.

It was revealed yesterday that a senior Canadian Security Intelligence Service official suspected early on that the U.S. would deport Maher Arar to the Middle East to be tortured. It was also shown that CSIS was told that even the Syrians did not regard Arar as a major case, but rather "a nuisance."

Still CSIS later opposed his release from a Syrian jail.

Yesterday, assistant RCMP commissioner Mike McDonnell told CBC Radio that the force's counter-terrorism investigators did not act "in bad faith" and the new information should be seen in the "context of the day" — the aftermath of 9/11 terror attacks in the United States.

Now, he said, the "landscape has evolved" and agencies handle such cases differently.

Jack Hooper, at the time deputy director in charge of CSIS operations and second-in-command at the spy agency, defended his actions in the Arar investigation, even given that the agency was aware of the American practice of rendition.

The newly released information revealed a memorandum Hooper wrote on Oct. 10, 2002, two days after the U.S. secretly deported Arar, without advising Ottawa.

Hooper wrote to an unnamed recipient: "I think the U.S. would like to get Arar to Jordan where they can have their way with him."

"I wrote what I wrote," the now-retired Hooper said in a telephone interview with the Star. "And I can't go beyond that without revealing a whole bunch of other stuff, so my official line is no comment."

The new information revealed that on Oct. 11, 2002, a CSIS liaison officer based in Washington reported to his superiors "a trend they had noted lately that when the CIA or FBI cannot legally hold a terrorist subject, or wish a target questioned in a firm manner, they have them rendered to countries willing to fulfil that role. He said Arar was a case in point."

Yesterday, Hooper said: "I would maintain that I did what I could, and I did what I could within the scope of my duties and responsibilities on behalf of the service and the government of Canada. So, no. There's nothing I would have done differently." Hooper would not say to whom he wrote the Oct. 10 memo.

Of the newly released material, Waldman said yesterday: "Why was this information withheld from us for a year? It was held, in my view, because it was highly embarrassing to the government of Canada and to all the different agencies, especially to CSIS given the role they played in this."

But Hooper and spokespeople for CSIS and Public Safety Minister Stockwell Day dismissed the suggestions yesterday, saying the information was not new to O'Connor, and did not alter his main conclusions — that Canadian officials did not actively participate in or acquiesce to Arar's deportation to Syria by the U.S.

In Washington, a spokesperson for the U.S. Justice Department reiterated his government's long-standing position that Arar was lawfully deported as a security risk, Canadian Press reports. The Americans have always maintained they had assurances from the Syrian government that he wouldn't be tortured.

Key dates in Arar ordeal:

- * Sept. 26, 2002: Arar arrives at JFK Airport in New York City, on a flight from Zurich, headed for Montreal. He is questioned, told he is inadmissible to the United States and asked where he would like to go. He says Canada.
- * Oct. 4, 2002: Arar is visited by Maureen Girvan, a Canadian consular officer in New York. She later says she never thought the Americans would send him anywhere except home to Canada.
- * Oct. 8, 2002: Arar is taken from his cell at 3 a.m. and told by American officials he is being deported to Syria on suspicion of terrorist activity.
- * Oct. 9, 2002: The plane lands in Jordan and Arar is quickly transferred by car to Damascus where he is to be jailed by Syrian military intelligence.
- * Oct. 10, 2002: Arar gets his first look at a cell he describes as being the size of a grave. He is to spend most of the next 10 months there. In Ottawa, the deputy director of CSIS, not knowing where Arar is, states in a memorandum: "I think the U.S. would like to get Arar to Jordan where they can have their way with him."
- * Oct. 11, 2002: Arar is tortured for the first time, beaten on his palms, wrists, lower back and hips with an electrical cable. He confesses — falsely — to terrorist training in Afghanistan. A CSIS official in Washington writes of so-called "rendering" to third countries by the FBI and CIA, saying Arar adds up to just such a case.
- * Oct. 23, 2002: Arar meets Canadian consul Leo Martel for the first time. The beatings have lessened since he was first jailed, and Martel later says he couldn't detect any signs of physical torture.
- * Aug. 23, 2003: Arar is blindfolded, put in a car and driven to a new prison. His treatment improves and there is no further torture.
- * Oct. 5, 2003: Arar is taken to meet a prosecutor who reads out a confession of his supposed terrorist past and tells him to sign it without giving him a chance to read it. He is then taken to meet the head of Syrian military intelligence, who has been joined by Canadian officials for the occasion. Arar is freed and put on a plane to Canada. The Canadian Press

Bush pressures Musharraf for 'swift action' on border

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DATELINE: WASHINGTON
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COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
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President George W. Bush says Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf, his embattled war-on-terror partner, must hold free presidential elections, share intelligence and take "swift action" against terrorist leaders pinpointed in his country.

Musharraf is under growing United States pressure to crack down on militants along the border with Afghanistan. The Pakistani leader is under considerable pressure at home, as well, where his support is dwindling and violence is on the rise. Earlier yesterday, he ruled out declaring a state of emergency to deal with the growing protests.

Aware of both Musharraf's fragile status and his value to Washington as an anti-terror ally, Bush dodged talking about unilateral U.S. military action inside Pakistan -- an extremely sensitive issue for Musharraf because it would be seen as threatening Pakistani sovereignty.

Musharraf, an army general, seized power in a bloodless 1999 coup and pledged to quickly restore democracy. Critics oppose his plan to seek a new five-year presidential term from outgoing legislators and his continued holding of the dual posts of president and chief of the military.

Where does Ignatieff stand?; His thinking on the Iraq War has reversed. Canadians need to know his stance on Afghanistan.

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ILLUSTRATION: Photo: Canadian Press File Photo / Michael Ignatieff, right, shown with Liberal Leader Stephane Dion, must clearly declare his position on Afghanistan. ;
BYLINE: Bob Bergen
SOURCE: The Hamilton Spectator
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 719

If Michael Ignatieff were any other Canadian intellectual who very publicly changed his mind on the U.S.'s war in Iraq — now saying he thinks it was wrong for the United States to invade — there likely wouldn't be near the firestorm of debate over his mea culpa.

Since he has switched ideological horses mid-stream, Canadians need to know whether he has changed his mind on Canada's two most-pressing foreign policy issues: Canada's mission in Afghanistan and the Responsibility to Protect.

It is important to know that because the former Cambridge, Oxford and Harvard professor and widely published author is now the deputy leader of the Liberal Party of Canada.

Having been to northern Iraq in 1992 and seeing Saddam Hussein's destruction of Kurds' and Shia Muslims' marsh lands, habitat and 5,000-year-old way of life, Ignatieff publicly supported the 2003 invasion of Iraq by the United States.

But, that was three years before he entered Canadian federal politics aspiring to be the Liberal leader.

On the weekend, the New York Times published a two-page reversal of Ignatieff's position on Iraq and his reasons for it in its glossy Sunday magazine.

He wrote that emotion was behind his initial support for it, not the harsh light of cross-examination and argument which he has apparently discovered as a politician.

He wrote that he failed to ask whether Iraq's Kurds, Sunnis and Shiites could hold together in peace what Hussein held together by terror.

With Hussein's ethnic cleansing of nearly 200,000 Kurds in northern Iraq in 1988 (often using gas), the killing of up to 5,000 Kurd civilians in Halabja also in 1988, the 1990 invasion of Kuwait and the campaign against Kurds and Sunni Muslims in 1992, there are those who still think that the world is better off without Saddam Hussein.

Where does Ignatieff stand?; His thinking on the Iraq War has reversed. Canadians need to know his stance

But, agree with Ignatieff or not, American and some Canadian readers know what he now thinks about the wisdom of the U.S.'s 2003 invasion.

The problem with Ignatieff's sudden change of heart is that it raises troubling questions among those who have read his works for years and thought that he had coherent foreign policy principles and positions.

Long before 9/11, in his 1998 book *The Warrior's Honour*, Ignatieff — who had been to Afghanistan — questioned how the Taliban's Islamic jihad could be squared with human rights, women's rights and how the laws of war could be taught to people who had never heard of the Geneva Convention.

He had witnessed first-hand thousands upon thousands of Albanian refugees fleeing ethnic cleansing in Kosovo in 1999 and in 2000 argued in *Virtual War* for the decisive use of military force against nation states which massacre its own citizens.

The ethnic cleansing was halted in 1999 when NATO warplanes — without United Nations Security Council resolution authorization — bombed Slobodan Milosevic's Serbian troops and para-militaries in Kosovo and Serbia for 78 days.

Ignatieff was later a member of the Canadian-sponsored International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty which published the *Responsibility to Protect* in 2001.

It argued that the international community has a moral imperative to intervene militarily to resolve humanitarian crises in failed and failing states such as the ethnic cleansing of Albanians in Kosovo.

It also argued that if the UN Security Council fails to act, then regional coalitions such as NATO, ad hoc coalitions or individual states ought to in its absence.

Ignatieff's thinking in *Virtual War* is marbled like seams of gold through rock in the *Responsibility to Protect*, which has now been endorsed by the UN and is central to Canada's International Policy Statement put forward by the previous Liberal government in 2005.

Then, in May 2006 when Prime Minister Stephen Harper's government introduced a debate in the House of Commons to extend Canada's mission in Afghanistan to February 2009, Ignatieff was among just 24 Liberals who supported the mission.

In September 2006, he repeated his support for the mission even as the bodies of five Canadian dead returned home from the battlefield. He said Canadians had to keep "their moral promise to Afghans."

At the time, 32 Canadians had been killed. Today, at 66, that number is more than double and the 40,000 NATO troops in Afghanistan are anything but the overwhelming military force Ignatieff advocates.

One wonders, with his sudden change of heart, if Ignatieff is asking himself some of the hard questions about Afghanistan that he thinks U.S. President George W. Bush should have asked about Iraq.

In the end, Ignatieff has ignored his own past personal empathy for the Kurds in Iraq, so why should he worry about Afghans?

Are the Afghans next on his switch list, despite Canada's moral promise?

What about our responsibility to protect?

Americans know what you think, Mr. Ignatieff. Canadians are waiting.

Where does Ignatieff stand?; His thinking on the Iraq War has reversed. Canadians need to know his stance

Bob Bergen, PhD, is a research fellow with the Canadian Defence & Foreign Affairs Institute (CDFAI) in Calgary -- www.cdfai.org

The opinions expressed in this document are his own.

THE ARAR REPORT: CENSORED PASSAGES Arar tortured after RCMP handed files over to CIA

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BYLINE: COLIN FREEZE

SECTION: National News

EDITION: Metro

DATELINE:

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WORD COUNT: 986

COLIN FREEZE Canada suspected Maher Arar was to be sent to the Middle East to be tortured after the RCMP gave intelligence to the CIA, newly uncensored documents reveal.

A Washington-based CSIS operative reported there was a new "trend" post-9/11 that "when the CIA or FBI cannot legally hold a terrorist subject . . . they have them rendered to countries" that will question them in "a firm manner." The deputy director of Canadian Security Intelligence Service, Jack Hooper, wrote a memo on Oct. 10, 2002, saying: "I think the U.S.

would like to get Arar to Jordan where they can have their way with him." Canada was unaware that Mr. Arar, a telecommunications engineer, had already been secretly sent by Central Intelligence Agency Gulfstream jet to Jordan and on to Syria two days earlier from New York.

These details, and criticism of related RCMP court testimony, have been kept from the public by government lawyers who have argued that releasing such information would compromise national security.

After a legal fight that pitted the Arar commission against the government, final disclosure of almost all of Mr. Justice Dennis O'Connor's findings was completed yesterday. Although roughly 500 words remain secret, yesterday's material gives the clearest picture yet of what led to the Ottawa engineer being sent to Syria, where the O'Connor report found he was tortured.

Among the points to emerge yesterday were: * The CIA contacted RCMP officers who entered into an intelligence-sharing relationship.

* When applying for search warrants, Project A-O Canada, an RCMP anti-terrorism operation, relied on information obtained from a country with a poor human-rights record and "no assessment was made of the reliability of that information." * Even though the RCMP was made aware that a confession from a terror suspect, Ahmad Abou El Maati, was extracted by "extreme coercion," they insisted that it was "still accurate and continues to be true." All of this information had been kept from the public by first the Liberal government and then the current Conservative government on the grounds of national security.

Although Mr. Arar was held in foreign detention for nearly a year, the Syrians told visiting CSIS agents in Damascus they regarded him as more of a "nuisance" than an actual al-Qaeda suspect, the disclosed documents show.

Yet the Canadian spent most of the next year jailed in Syria, as federal officials debated whether they would intervene on his behalf.

Paul Cavalluzzo, a lawyer who acted as counsel for the judicial commission that unearthed the details, said: "One asks oneself, why did he remain in the hellhole he was in for another 10 months?" The Canadian commission of inquiry that spent years probing Mr.

Arar's ordeal wanted to reveal the details last fall when volumes of findings were first released but it is now known the federal Conservative cabinet approved a continued censorship of 1,500 words, ostensibly for national security. It took a court order last month to force the federal officials to relinquish their claims on most – but not all – of the information that was deemed secret.

Many observers yesterday questioned why the information revealed in yesterday's "addendum" was ever considered a state secret. They said that while important, the revelations appeared to be more embarrassing than sensitive.

"The law is very clear that the government can only legitimately claim material that could injure national security," Mr. Cavalluzzo said. "That's not to be used to cover information that could cause embarrassment." References to the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency and intelligence possibly tainted by Syrian torture abound in the new information that had been excised from the original findings. Canadian officials – including an RCMP official referred to only as "Mr. X" in an affidavit – had sought to keep this information secret by arguing they did not want to compromise the goodwill of foreign allies who send in intelligence from abroad.

Exchanges between Canada, the United States and Syria were key to the detentions of Mr. Arar and others. Several security officials have argued that intelligence agencies never reveal their sources and methods – and that any breach of this principle compromises security.

Judge O'Connor said Canadian agencies should not necessarily be forbidden from using intelligence from countries that abuse human rights, but they should carefully assess reliability. Judge O'Connor found Mr. Arar was never a threat to Canadian national security and that Canadian authorities had spread incorrect information that may have caused the United States to send him to the Middle East.

Mr. Arar has received \$10-million in compensation and it appears the new information released in his inquiry might bolster the claims of his onetime alleged associates, higher-level suspects.

Many of the new findings centre on the original Canadian suspect detained in Syria, Ahmad Abou El Maati. The former mujahedeen fighter was jailed after flying into Syria two months after 9/11. He was forced to say "he undertook pilot training at the request of his brother and that he accepted a mission to be a suicide bomber by exploding a truck bomb on Parliament hill," new documents say.

Mr. El Maati has previously described this admission as a fabrication he was made to say under torture. He also says that he falsely placed Mr. Arar in Afghanistan. Another suspect, Abdullah Almalki, was jailed after flying into Syria in 2002. The RCMP had zeroed in on him as an al-Qaeda suspect, after probing his business exporting two-way radios to the Pakistani military. It appears Mr. El Maati's coerced statements figured into searches in the Almalki case too.

"I am innocent, yet the RCMP and other Canadian agencies destroyed my life and business," Mr. Almalki said in a statement, responding to the new findings.

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Canada

THE ARAR REPORT: CENSORED PASSAGES Arar tortured after RCMP handed files over to CIA2

SUBJECT TERM:justice inquiries; freedom of information; civil rights; human rights; terrorism; suspects; political

PERSONAL NAME: Maher Arar; Dennis O'Connor

ORGANIZATION NAME: Royal Canadian Mounted Police; Canadian Security Intelligence Service

THE ARAR REPORT The Arar File: A clearer picture begins to surface Last month, the Conservative government lost its battle to keep secret further disclosures from the Arar Commission for national security reasons. Yesterday a portion of those censored words were finally revealed.

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Maher Arar The wireless technology consultant from Ottawa has gained global fame as a wrongfully accused terrorism suspect. After being arrested in a U.S. airport, the Canadian citizen was deported to Syria and spent 10 months in jail there before returning to Canada and launching a campaign to clear his name.

Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks Dec. 20, 2001: Mr. Arar complains that Canadian border agents seized his computer and snooped through its contents while he was returning from a trip to the United States.

Jan. 21, 2002: RCMP officers execute seven search warrants across Ontario, seizing items from the homes of Abdullah Almalki, an acquaintance of Mr. Arar who was visiting Malaysia, and Ahmad Abou El Maati, who is in a Syrian jail. They also knock on Mr. Arar's door, but he is in Tunisia, his wife's homeland.

June 2002: After twice travelling to the United States with no apparent problems, Mr. Arar returns to Tunisia for an extended visit.

Sept. 26: En route home to Canada from Tunisia, he is arrested at JFK Airport in New York, accused of having terrorist links and shown his 1997 Ottawa rental agreement, witnessed by Mr. Almalki, the brother of one of Mr. Arar's colleagues.

2002 Oct. 3: During a visit by Canadian consular officials, he says he fears the United States plans to deport him to Syria.

Oct. 7: A U.S. immigration official formally tells Mr. Arar that he is considered a terrorist and al-Qaeda member. Why? Because he knows Mr. El Maati and Mr. Almalki.

Oct. 9: U.S. officials fly Mr. Arar to Jordan and several days later hand him over to Syria, where, he says later, he is immediately beaten with electric cables.

Oct. 11 to 16: Subsequent beatings, he says, prompt him to confess to having been trained as a terrorist in Afghanistan. After that, the intensity of the beatings subsides.

Early November : He signs and applies his thumbprint to a document containing the confession he will later recant.

Early April, 2003: He is allowed to see sunlight for the first time in six months. April 23: Paul Cellucci, then U.S. ambassador to Canada, tells a private audience that "Mr. Arar is very well known to Canadian law enforcement. They understand our handling of the case. They wouldn't be happy to see him come back to Canada." Aug. 14: During a prison visit by a Canadian consular official, Mr. Arar breaks down and says he has been tortured.

Aug. 19: Again, he says, he is coerced into writing that he trained Afghanistan.

Sept. 19: Mr. Arar sees that Mr. Almalki is also in the Syrian prison and appears to have been tortured even more severely.

Oct. 5: Released from prison, he leaves Syria for Canada.

Nov. 1: Then U.S. secretary of State Colin Powell tells foreign Minister Bill Graham that the RCMP and CSIS alerted U.S. agencies to Mr. Arar's possible links to terrorism.

Nov. 4: Mr. Arar appears on national TV to say that "I am not a terrorist. I am not a member of al-Qaeda and I do not know anyone who belongs to this group." Nov. 8: Contents of the Canadian government's secret dossier on Mr. Arar appear in the Ottawa Citizen, alleging that he trained in Afghanistan and may have been part of an al-Qaeda cell.

Jan. 12, 2004: Despite a growing outcry over Mr. Arar's treatment, the U.S. Justice Department sticks to its guns, stating "we have information indicating that Mr. Arar is a member of al-Qaeda and, therefore, remains a threat to U.S. national security." Jan. 28: Under fire, the government announces a public inquiry into the circumstances of Mr. Arar's detention.

Ahmad Abou El Maati Born in Kuwait to Syrian and Egyptian parents, he was a naturalized Canadian employed as a truck driver in Toronto when, in the months leading up to 9/11, he came to the attention of security agents.

After the attacks, the scrutiny became so great that, fed up, he left for Syria and was jailed for almost 2 1/2 years.

April, 2001: Mr. El-Maati complains to friends and family that CSIS is asking questions and trying to recruit him as an informant.

Mid-August, 2001: He is quizzed at the U.S. border for eight hours about a map in his truck showing schematics of government buildings in Ottawa.

Sept. 11, 2001: After the attacks, he is visited again by CSIS when his name and that of his brother Amer appear on international terrorism watch lists.

Nov. 11, 2001: He flies to Syria after telling friends and co-workers he is joining his new bride. He is arrested upon arrival.

Dec. 3, 2001: Rocco Galati, his Canadian lawyer, gives the RCMP the mysterious map to show his client has

nothing to hide. Later, Mr. El Maati says the map winds up in the hands of his Syrian interrogators, who, he claims, force him to confess to plotting to bomb Parliament with his brother. He also is forced to name everyone he knows, including acquaintances Maher Arar and Abdullah Almalki.

January, 2002: He is transferred from Syrian custody to Egypt, where he is questioned about the whereabouts of his brother.

November, 2002: A year after his Canadian citizenship papers are found in an al-Qaeda safe house in Afghanistan, Amer is identified by the FBI as an "armed and dangerous" fugitive.

July, 2003: In an apparent reference to Mr. El Maati, Seymour Hersh writes in The New Yorker that Syria "helped the United States avert a suspected bomb plot against an American target in Ottawa." Nov. 6, 2003: Amnesty International urges Canada to do more to safeguard Mr. El Maati's rights.

January, 2004: After three orders by their own supreme court, Egyptian authorities release Mr. El Maati, two years after his transfer from Syria.

March 29, 2004: The paperwork is finally complete and he returns to Canada.

April 16, 2004: He swears an affidavit about what happened to him in a bid to obtain official standing at the Arar inquiry. His application is denied.

May 26, 2004: The FBI says its intelligence suggests that his brother Amer wants to hijack a plane for a reprise of the 9/11 attacks.

An imam in Toronto, however, says Amer probably died long ago in Chechnya.

Abdullah Almalki He is the same age as Mr. Arar, has the same birthplace and is also in the high-tech business. Security agents were curious about Mr. Almalki's travels to Afghanistan and his exports of computer equipment to Pakistan.

Sept. 11, 2001: Not long after the attacks, Canadian security agents question Mr. Almalki at his home in Ottawa.

October, 2001: Police observe him having lunch with Maher Arar at a restaurant. Soon he travels to Malaysia, his wife's homeland, as global intelligence agencies track his movements.

Jan. 21, 2002: During their sweep across Ontario, RCMP agents question Mr. Almalki's friends and relatives about his computer business.

April, 2002: Mr. Almalki leaves Malaysia to visit family in Syria, where he is arrested upon arrival.

Sept. 19, 2003: Mr. Almalki sees Mr. Arar in the Syrian prison for the first time, and complains of being beaten with tires and two-inch-thick cables, and of being hung upside down. "He was very, very thin and pale," Mr. Arar later recalls. "He was very weak." March, 2004: Almost two years after his arrest, Mr. Almalki is finally released from prison.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS: 2006: Judge O'Connor's report exonerates Mr. Arar of any wrongdoing.

2007: Federal government settles with Mr. Arar for \$10.5-million, plus legal fees. Prime Minister Stephen Harper offers a formal apology.

July, 2007: Federal Court rules that some previously secret findings of the commission must be revealed after commission counsel challenges a government decision to censor 1,500 words from O'Connor report.

WORDS IN BOLD WERE CENSORED BY UNNAMED GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS UNTIL YESTERDAY In October 2002, CSIS officials knew that the United States might have sent Mr. Arar to a country where he could be questioned in a firm manner. In a report to his superiors dated October 11, 2002, the CSIS security liaison officer (SLO) in Washington spoke of a trend they had noted lately that when the CIA or FBI cannot legally hold a terrorist subject, or wish a target questioned in a firm manner, they have them rendered to countries willing to fulfill that role. he said Mr. Arar was a case in point. On October 10, 2002, Mr. Hooper stated in a memorandum: "I think the U.S. would like to get Arar to Jordan where they can have their way with him." Mr. Arar's whereabouts were unknown at the time.

RELEASED YESTERDAY BY COURT ORDER forcement the CIA is seeking any evidence that can assist in the support of criminal charges.

Find attached request forwarded by the CIA with a list of questions.

They would be most appreciative of any additional information you can supply on this subject. They further request that any response be channelled through the FBI for evidentiary purposes.

Due to time restrictions facing investigator in the U.S.; the CIA would be grateful for your attention to this matter.

This was the first contact Project A–O Canada had with the CIA concerning Mr. Arar's detention; up to this point, the Project had been dealing solely with the FBI. RELEASED YESTERDAY BY COURT ORDER The RCMP did not give the following information to the presiding judge: (i) the human rights record of Syria (ii) the public record that the Syrian Military Intelligence (SMI) was known to torture detainees in order to get information while the detainees are held in comunicado at the Palestine Branch. At the material time, Mr. El Maati was held in was held in comunicado at the Palestine Branchy by the SMI; (iii) When reference was made that Mr. El Maati appeared to be in good physical condition by DFAIT, DFAIT observed Mr. El Maati in August 2002 while the "confession" given to the SMI was in November 2001, nine months earlier.

COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO THE ACTIONS AND OFFICIALS IN RELATION TO MAHER ARAR |ADDED SEARCH TERMS: |GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Canada |SUBJECT
SOURCE: TERM:justice; inquiries; human rights; freedom of information; civil rights; terrorism suspects; chronology; list; political |PERSONAL NAME: Maher Arar; Ahmad Abou El Maati; Abdullah Almalki; Dennis O'Connor

THE WAR ON TERROR: U.S. HAS TOUGH WORDS FOR ALLY Bush prods Pakistan to hunt for al-Qaeda Musharraf, facing mounting domestic unrest, opts not to impose state of emergency

PUBLICATION: GLOBE AND MAIL

IDN: 072220254

DATE: 2007.08.10

PAGE: A14 (ILLUS)

BYLINE: PAUL KORING

SECTION: International News

SOURCE: STAFF NYT

EDITION: Metro

DATELINE: Washington DC

WORDS: 592

WORD COUNT: 564

PAUL KORING With a report from The New York Times WASHINGTON Pakistan needs to step up the hunt for al-Qaeda leaders believed holed up in its rugged and remote frontier areas close to Afghanistan and be ready to capture and kill them, U.S. President George W.

Bush said yesterday.

As nuclear-armed Pakistan slips closer to crisis, with mounting domestic unrest, continuing suspicions that military dictator Pervez Musharraf is tacitly tolerating Taliban cross-border operations into Afghanistan and no hint of a return to democracy, Mr. Bush prodded his ally to action.

"I have reminded him that we share a common enemy: extremists and radicals," Mr. Bush said at a White House news conference before heading for a holiday at his father's New England beach compound.

The President, who transformed General Musharraf from a coup-staging, international pariah into a key ally in the war on Islamic extremism, said he had told the Pakistani leader that Americans "would expect there to be swift action taken if there's actionable intelligence on high-value targets inside his country." Osama bin Laden, the fugitive al-Qaeda leader, is believed to be hiding somewhere in the mountains along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border.

Although Pakistan has seized a number of senior al-Qaeda leaders in the years since the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the United States, its Afghan neighbour accuses Gen. Musharraf of turning a blind eye to Taliban insurgents using Pakistan as a base.

Gen. Musharraf declined to appear yesterday at a joint Afghan-Pakistan jirga, a gathering of more than 600 elders, intended to form a joint front against Islamic extremists, in general, and the Taliban, in particular.

In his place, he sent Pakistan's mostly powerless Prime Minister, Shaukat Aziz, who told Afghan delegates that they shouldn't point at Pakistan as the source of their problems. "They can't blame anyone else for failing to achieve this objective [peace] that lies at the heart of their malaise," he said.

Meanwhile, Gen. Musharraf, who had toyed in recent days with declaring a state of emergency to deal with the growing crisis in Pakistan, apparently decided at the last minute not to gather even more power in his office.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice telephoned Gen. Musharraf about 2 a.m. yesterday in Pakistan, the State Department spokesman, Sean McCormack, said. Bush administration officials refused to discuss in public what was said, but one Pakistani official said Ms. Rice exhorted Gen. Musharraf not to declare emergency rule. The conversation lasted about 15 minutes.

Mr. Bush echoed the call for a return to democracy in Pakistan.

Throughout its troubled history, military coups have repeatedly ousted fragile and ineffective democratic governments in the country.

"My focus in terms of the domestic scene there is that he have a free and fair election," Mr. Bush said.

Since seizing power eight years ago, Gen. Musharraf has repeatedly promised a return to democracy. Instead, Pakistan has emerged as a locus of extremisms and a source of nuclear-weapons proliferation.

Pakistan's performance in targeting al-Qaeda leaders has also emerged as an issue in the U.S. presidential campaign. Last week, Senator Barack Obama, one of the Democrat front-runners, said he would order U.S. strikes on Pakistani terrorists if Gen. Musharraf failed to target al-Qaeda leaders.

Islamabad denounced the senator's suggestion.

Yesterday, Mr. Bush made it clear that he isn't about to order attacks on targets inside Pakistan without Gen. Musharraf's approval "I recognize Pakistan is a sovereign nation," he said. "And that's important for Americans to recognize that."

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: United States; Pakistan

SUBJECT TERM:foreign policy; terrorism; statements

PERSONAL NAME: George W. Bush; Pervez Musharraf

ORGANIZATION NAME: al-Qaeda

Feeling icky about Iggy

PUBLICATION: GLOBE AND MAIL

IDN: 072220215

DATE: 2007.08.10

PAGE: A17

BYLINE: RICK SALUTIN

SECTION: Comment Column

EDITION: Metro

DATELINE:

WORDS: 691

WORD COUNT: 705

RICK SALUTIN For a moment last Sunday, as I opened Michael Ignatieff's alleged mea culpa – Getting Iraq Wrong – in The New York Times Magazine (heralded in advance by The Globe and Mail and lauded by the Times's resident war critic, Frank Rich), I thought he might have learned something. Then I read his piece.

"One thing is clear: The costs of staying will be borne by Americans, while the cost of leaving will be mostly borne by Iraqis." How obscene.

It is Iraq that was shattered. There are two million internal and two million external refugees. Everyone has weapons. No one has dependable power and thus clean water except the occupiers in the increasingly targeted Green Zone. The people of Iraq bore the cost of the U.S. going in and staying, and they will bear the cost when and if it leaves. All U.S. losses are collateral damage.

Or this: The war's opponents "opposed the invasion because they believed . . . America is always and in every situation wrong." Exactly who said that, Michael? Could we have a name? It's a cheap straw man, that's all, to go along with platitudes such as, "Not all good things, after all, can be had together, whether in life or in politics." What was the error of the war's backers? That they took "wishes for reality" and supposed, "as President Bush did, that because they believed in the integrity of their own motives everyone else in the region would believe in it, too." What motives? To build "a free state" in Iraq, defend "human rights and freedom," etc.

In other words, he accepts at face value all the rhetoric and propaganda used to justify the invasion. In other other words, there were no lies told. That's the stunning moment in his article. We are to believe that governments do not routinely lie about their motives, yet he himself writes in this very piece: "In public life, language is a weapon of war . . . All that matters is what you said, not what you meant." So we're supposed to believe George Bush did say what he meant? Let me catch my breath.

(There.) I admit I feel a bit icky attacking someone while he's trying to apologize, but I'm forcing myself because I think there's a larger issue here. I consider this article part of an effort to salvage a carefully constructed policy of Western interventionism in much of the world that has recently been sullied by the Iraq fiasco.

The policy itself remains. Tony Blair retires as British PM and morphs into a Mideast peace envoy, as if what that wretched region needs is yet more Western meddling. Gordon Brown takes over from him and prepares to depart Iraq but move even more heavily into Afghanistan, which gets typed as the good war, as opposed to the bad one in Iraq. The U.S. Democratic presidential candidates are all interventionists on this model. Yves Engler has presciently noted Canada's modest role in the pattern by policing Haiti, a tragic land that has

suffered two centuries of near constant intervention.

The arguments for this course of action were built up by, among others, Michael Ignatieff, during the 1990s, when anti-communism was no longer available to justify Western foreign policy. The new rationales were human rights, failed states, right to protect, etc.

The showcases were Bosnia and Kosovo (though ethnic cleansing in Kosovo occurred after, and due to, the NATO bombing there), which led to Iraq and Afghanistan. It amounts to the same old world order of power politics, in a new dress. The only nations that claim the right to protect are those with the might to protect. The issue not addressed is whether foreign interventionism itself is a problem, complicit in many problems that "we" must then intervene in order to contain.

These policies have helped bring us to a point where almost everyone in the world is irate, terrified or both. It's time for a big rethink.

That involves more than saying Oops about the isolated case of Iraq.

rsalutin@globeandmail.com

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: United States; Iraq

SUBJECT TERM:foreign policy; political; ethics; strife; iraq war

PERSONAL NAME: Michael Ignatieff

THE ARAR REPORT: CRITICISMS COME TO LIGHT

RCMP misled court in seeking phone warrant, judge found Case naming El Maati lacked full context, O'Connor wrote in censored section

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IDN: 072220061

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PAGE: A11

BYLINE: COLIN FREEZE

SECTION: National News

EDITION: Metro

DATELINE:

WORDS: 674

WORD COUNT: 696

COLIN FREEZE Misleading court testimony given by unnamed RCMP officers was kept secret on the grounds of national security, it emerged yesterday.

Mr. Justice Dennis O'Connor found the Mounties had failed to properly disclose the full context of their case against a terrorist suspect when they attempted to obtain a telephone warrant that would allow them to eavesdrop on an unknown suspect's conversations. And when Judge O'Connor highlighted the problems in his findings, the government decided the criticisms should be kept from the public, and redacted them.

Yesterday, that 350-word passage was finally released, highlighting three specific points that showed how the RCMP overreached in their application before a judge for a telephone warrant based on information Ahmad Abou El Maati gave while detained in Syria.

The first of several Canadian Arabs held in Syria after 9/11, Mr. El Maati spent two years held first in Syria and then Egypt.

He says he was tortured. His lawyer, Barbara Jackman, said: "He has seen 62 doctors." Since her client returned to Canada in 2004, she added, he has been treated for injuries to his shoulders, knees and back, and also an anal fissure he suffered while detained in the Middle East.

In their application for a warrant in September of 2002, the RCMP referred to a confession Mr. El Maati was said to have given to Syrian interrogators. He told them that he had undertaken pilot training at the request of his brother and that he had accepted a mission to be a suicide bomber on Parliament Hill. The RCMP said that although they had been told such a confession had been recanted as it had been gained under torture, they had corroborated the information and it "continues to be true." But Judge O'Connor found that the unnamed RCMP officers involved in the warrant application failed to give complete information to the presiding judge. They failed to explain that Mr. El Maati was held incommunicado by Syrian military intelligence, which is known to use torture; they had not told the judge about the human-rights record of Syria; and they failed to explain that a foreign-affairs report suggesting Mr. El Maati had been seen in custody and in good health had come in a visit nine months after the alleged torture took place.

Mr. El Maati was an obvious candidate for close scrutiny after 9/11. Though he has always denied any links to al-Qaeda, he acknowledges he fought with mujahedeen forces in Afghanistan and returned to Canada in the late 1990s to drive transport trucks and that he also took about five flight lessons.

Authorities were alarmed by a seemingly suspicious map they say was found in his rig, which was later determined to be a Canadian government handout.

After 9/11, the Canadian citizenship papers of his brother allegedly turned up in a bombed al-Qaeda safe house. The FBI continues to seek Amer El-Maati as an al-Qaeda fugitive today.

Ms. Jackman said yesterday's newly released information will assist a continuing commission into her client's case, which is proceeding largely in secret.

She added that Mr. El Maati is pleased with yesterday's disclosure and sees "it as an affirmation that what they [authorities] did was wrong." She added that when Mr. El Maati was in Afghanistan he fought against the Taliban – and not with them. She said she thinks he aligned with a faction known as Hezb-e Islami Gulbuddin. The organization was not banned by Canada at the time, but it was declared a terrorist organization by the Conservative government last year.

All of this factored into the arrest of Mr. El Maati by the Syrian government when he flew there in 2001. He was immediately taken into custody and says he was made to utter false confessions – a bomb plot incorporating various details of his past, as well as an assertion that he saw Maher Arar in Afghanistan a year before that Canadian also was detained in Syria for interrogation.

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Canada

SUBJECT TERM: justice; inquiries; human rights; civil rights; freedom of information; terrorism; suspects

PERSONAL NAME: Dennis O'Connor; Ahmad Abou El Maati; Maher Arar

ORGANIZATION NAME: Royal Canadian Mounted Police

Musharraf pulls back from big gamble with nudge from Washington; Pakistani president sets aside plan for emergency rule; elections new 'priority'

IDNUMBER 200708100019
PUBLICATION: The Ottawa Citizen
DATE: 2007.08.10
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A6
BYLINE: Zahid Hussain in Islamabad and Norma Greenaway in Washington
SOURCE: The Times, London and CanWest News Service, with files from The Los Angeles Times
WORD COUNT: 612

Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf yesterday backed away from plans to impose a state of emergency, after fierce opposition from the public, his own ruling coalition and the United States.

Government sources said Gen. Musharraf was considering emergency rule to contain the biggest political crisis he has faced since taking power in a coup in 1999. The move would have given him sweeping powers to limit the role of the courts, restrict civil liberties and postpone parliamentary elections due by the end of the year.

But a government spokesman said the president had rejected the idea, after consulting his coalition partners and top civil and military aides. "He was being ill-advised by some people," said Information Minister Mohammed Ali Durrani. "He has decided against declaring the emergency. Elections are the president's priority."

Some analysts speculated that talk of an emergency declaration was leaked by Gen. Musharraf's aides in order to gauge international and domestic reaction to the prospect of authoritarian rule in Pakistan, which is considered an essential, if problematic, U.S. ally in the war against Islamic insurgents in Afghanistan.

In some ways, response to the news was worse than the general might have feared. There was the expected expressions of alarm and discomfit from human rights groups, the Bush administration and opposition parties, but also a distinct undertone of derision.

One Pakistani newspaper carried the Urdu-language headline "My Dear Countrymen ... ," in mocking reference to the formulaic pronouncement of martial law in coup-prone Pakistan. Some commentators said that even considering a state of emergency was a sign of desperation on the part of the president.

"It's like a gambler trying one last roll of the dice," said Ayaz Amir, an analyst and commentator for the Dawn newspaper. "He wants everything his own way, and he doesn't want to give up anything. It's an impossible situation."

Gen. Musharraf wants to be re-elected by parliament in October and to stay on as head of the army, a role he says is necessary to stop Pakistan falling into the hands of Islamic extremists. But he faces an unprecedented challenge to his authority, with moderate Pakistanis outraged by his attempt to sack a chief justice, and Taliban loyalists in open rebellion along the Afghan border.

Musharraf pulls back from big gamble with nudge from Washington; Pakistani president sets aside plan for e

Condoleezza Rice, the U.S. secretary of state, spoke to Gen. Musharraf by phone for more than 15 minutes. According to diplomatic sources, she advised the president against emergency rule.

In Washington, U.S. President George W. Bush said he pressed his Pakistani ally to hold a "free and fair election."

Mr. Bush also said Americans expect "swift action" to take out al-Qaeda operatives in Pakistan if solid intelligence emerges about their whereabouts. But Mr. Bush stopped short of saying the U.S. would do the job if Pakistan's government did not.

Mr. Bush told a White House news conference that Gen. Musharraf has to prove to Americans he is serious about cracking down on Islamic extremists within his borders. A recent U.S. intelligence report said the al-Qaeda terrorist organization and the Taliban are using tribal lands along the Afghan border to regroup for battle against forces from Canada, Britain, the U.S. and other NATO countries fighting in Afghanistan.

"I recognize Pakistan is a sovereign nation," Mr. Bush told reporters, "and that's important for Americans to recognize that. But it's also important for Americans to understand that he (Gen. Musharraf) shares the same concern about radicals and extremists as I do, and as the American people do."

Questions about the stability of Pakistan and Gen. Musharraf's reliability as an ally surfaced when Senator Barack Obama, a leading contender for the Democratic presidential nomination in 2008, said he would unilaterally order U.S. troops into Pakistan if Gen. Musharraf refused to take out terrorists.

Afghan police face decades of training: chief; Force may need up to 20 years before they can secure cities, new boss says

IDNUMBER 200708100011
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SECTION: News
PAGE: A4
DATELINE: KANDAHAR
BYLINE: Andrew Mayeda
SOURCE: The Ottawa Citizen; With files from The Daily Telegraph and Agence France–Presse
WORD COUNT: 589

KANDAHAR – It could take as many as 20 years to transform the Afghan National Police into a professional force capable of securing Kandahar province, the recently named Kandahar police chief said yesterday.

The national police are still plagued by such problems as corruption and lack of training and equipment, Sayed Agha Saqib conceded in an interview with the Citizen at the provincial police headquarters in Kandahar City.

"But I believe that in 15 to 20 years, they can be turned into a professional police force that can secure all the cities and districts," he said through an interpreter.

Meanwhile, at Kandahar Air Field, a top Canadian military commander threw more cold water on the notion that the insurgency will be defeated any time soon. Col. Christian Juneau, deputy commander of Canadian Forces in southern Afghanistan, said the Taliban are "on their heels" and have resorted to such "desperate" tactics as suicide bombings.

But he rejected the notion, recently put forward by the governor of Kandahar province, that the war is nearing its conclusion.

"'Coming to an end' is a relative term," said Col. Juneau, who, along with other commanders from Quebec's Royal 22nd Regiment — the Van Doos — recently took the reins of Canada's operations here.

"Do we see the war ending in two years, three years, 10 years? It's tough to say."

The amount of time needed to stabilize Afghanistan, and the consequences of not doing so, will increasingly become an issue in Canada as it debates whether to withdraw its troops.

Canada's military commitment ends in February 2009. Prime Minister Stephen Harper recently said he would seek opposition consensus before extending the mission.

Top government and military officials have recently placed an emphasis on training the Afghan National Army (ANA) and Afghan National Police (ANP) so they can eventually hold their own against the Taliban and al-Qaeda militants.

It is believed reforming the ragtag Afghan army will be the much tougher task. The force is widely considered corrupt, underpaid and ill-equipped. Sensing a weak link, the Taliban have stepped up their attacks against police checkpoints throughout the province.

Chief Saqib said the police usually win such skirmishes, but could use more support from NATO and the Afghan army, especially in volatile districts of the province such as Panjwaii and Zhari.

"NATO, the Canadian military and the ANA have good equipment, and they can call in air support whenever they need it. But the police only have AK-47s and, occasionally, machine-guns," he said.

Chief Saqib took over as provincial police chief last month.

Col. Juneau said the military does its best to pass on intelligence on possible attacks to the police. He said Canadian commanders are reviewing the layout of police checkpoints around the province.

The military could also bolster police checkpoints with "quick reaction forces" of Canadian troops and Afghan soldiers, Col. Juneau said.

In other developments:

- British commanders have asked for American Special Forces to be removed from their area of operations because of the number of civilian casualties. Officers operating alongside the small U.S. contingent in Helmand province have requested their removal because their actions were allegedly damaging the "hearts and minds" operation to win over residents.

A senior British officer, quoted in the International Herald Tribune, said the Americans had caused "the lion's share" of the estimated 300 civilian casualties in intense battles with the Taliban this year.

Des Browne, the British Defence secretary who is on a visit to Afghanistan, said the comments were "an observation of a British officer on a particular part of the American military."

A NATO spokesman said he was "unaware" of any request to remove U.S. Special Forces from Helmand and that all steps were taken to minimize civilian casualties.

- Britain announced it will pump an extra \$45 million U.S. into the fight against opium production in Afghanistan. The money is earmarked to help the counter-narcotics strategy over the next three years, and will be used to disrupt traffickers and their links to insurgents.

Coming home to EI

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PUBLICATION: National Post
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SECTION: Editorials
PAGE: A8
SOURCE: National Post
WORD COUNT: 272

Major Wallace Noseworthy, a Canadian army reservist and soon-to-be father, has just returned from a six-month tour of duty in Afghanistan. Though he's thankful not to have been killed or injured in Afghanistan, he isn't thrilled about things on the home front.

In addition to being an army reservist, Maj. Noseworthy was also the manager at Humber Motors Ford in Stephenville, Nfld. That was until he went to Afghanistan and Humber Ford refused him a leave of absence to serve his country. Maj. Noseworthy was dismissed, meaning that one of his first tasks now that he's back will be to apply for Employment Insurance.

Federally regulated industries offer no formal job protection for reservists who volunteer to serve overseas. And most provinces allow employers under their jurisdiction to dismiss employees who need a leave of absence to serve in the military. Only three of Canada's provinces have passed legislation making such action illegal — Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper has made a special effort to raise this issue with provincial governments, most recently asking P.E.I. Premier Robert Ghiz to pass legislation in his province.

The Prime Minister should not have to ask. There is no reason why the small number of reservists who serve Canada abroad (in Afghanistan, there are roughly 300) should have to come home to the unemployment line. Why they do is a question that our federal Parliament and the premiers of seven Canadian provinces should be made to answer the next time they voice their appreciation for the sacrifices being made by our soldiers.

KEYWORDS: EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

MUSHARRAF OPTS FOR STABILITY; No State Of Emergency; 'Free, Fair' Elections In Pakistan Will Go Ahead

IDNUMBER 200708100127

PUBLICATION: National Post

DATE: 2007.08.10

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SECTION: World

PAGE: A12

ILLUSTRATION: Color Photo: / (See hardcopy for Photo Description); Color Photo: Faisal Mahmood, Reuters / Pakistani paramilitary troops man a bunker in Islamabad yesterday. General Pervez Musharraf, the President, continues to be criticized for his attempts to remove obstacles to keeping the positions of president and head of the military. ;

DATELINE: ISLAMABAD

BYLINE: Isambard Wilkinson

SOURCE: The Daily Telegraph, with files from news services

WORD COUNT: 724

ISLAMABAD – General Pervez Musharraf, the President of Pakistan, stepped back from declaring a state of emergency yesterday, persuaded by a storm of media, political and diplomatic pressure against taking a step bound to further inflame tensions in his increasingly volatile country.

The U.S. State Department said Condoleezza Rice, the Secretary of State, telephoned Gen. Musharraf at around 2 a.m. yesterday in Pakistan. U.S. officials refused to discuss the 15-minute conversation, but one Pakistani official said Ms. Rice had exhorted Gen. Musharraf not to declare emergency rule.

Gen. Musharraf, facing the greatest challenge to his leadership since he seized power in a 1999 coup, ultimately opted against the move, which would have suspended fundamental rights, placed restrictions on the Supreme Court and delayed elections scheduled for later this year.

"President Musharraf has decided not to impose the state of emergency in the country as suggested by some political parties and others," Information Minister Mohammad Ali Durrani said.

"The decision was taken because the priority of the President and present government is to have free, fair and impartial elections in line with the constitutional requirements."

Gen. Musharraf's problems are legion. He has been facing public anger over his suspension, since overturned in court, of the country's chief justice — which critics saw as an attempt to remove any legal obstacles to keeping the dual positions of president and head of the military.

Mass protests over the attempted suspension, mounting criticism in the West of his government's handling of terrorists along the Afghan border and efforts by rivals to come back from exile to contest the election have combined to put unprecedented pressure on his regime.

U.S. President George W. Bush, speaking at a news conference yesterday before leaving on his annual summer vacation, reminded Gen. Musharraf that he expected "a free and fair election," as well as action from Pakistan against Islamic extremists on the country's border with Afghanistan.

MUSHARRAF OPTS FOR STABILITY; No State Of Emergency; 'Free, Fair' Elections In Pakistan Will Go Ahead

"We spend a lot of time with the leadership in Pakistan talking about what we will do with actionable intelligence," Mr. Bush said.

The U.S. President was careful, however, to express respect for Pakistan as a "sovereign nation" following Islamabad's public anger over a recent barrage of statements by senior U.S. politicians, including Barack Obama, a Democratic presidential candidate, calling for unilateral U.S. action to target Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda on Pakistani soil.

Domestically, Gen. Musharraf's government is facing fierce opposition from Islamic radicals, as well as pressure to share power with moderate opposition leaders.

Welcomed by most Pakistanis as a potential reformer when he ousted the incompetent government of Nawaz Sharif in 1999, the 63-year-old former commando has struggled to live up to demanding expectations.

At the outset he set out to implement his vision of "enlightened moderation" — tackle Pakistan's endemic corruption, collect taxes and bring stability. He succeeded in some difficult areas. The economy stabilized and he has embarked on pursuing peaceful relations with arch-foe India. But he has never escaped the key contradiction of his tenure: how to skirt between Islamist terrorists while living up to American expectations as an ally in the war on terror.

After 100 extremists were killed in the Red Mosque siege in Islamabad in July, where Islamic militants had held out for months, the Islamists promised revenge. Intelligence agencies report that more than 600 students who escaped the siege are potential suicide bombers.

The mainstream Islamic parties have threatened a mass movement to topple Gen. Musharraf and bring Islamic government.

However the real wild card is the Supreme Court, which has pledged to follow the rule of law after being treated with contempt by Gen. Musharraf. A single one of several cases awaiting adjudication could bring down Gen. Musharraf.

Last week Gen. Musharraf reiterated his plan to have himself re-elected in his dual role as army chief and president. But this is likely to be challenged in the Supreme Court. His attempts to extend his rule by allying with Benazir Bhutto, the exiled former prime minister, have so far foundered on his unwillingness to shed his uniform.

Imposing emergency rule would allow Gen. Musharraf to suspend the court while extending the current parliament for another 12 months, meaning a delay in the elections that are currently due to be held later this year or early in 2008.

Talat Masood, a political analyst, said that if Gen. Musharraf took such action it would be an "act of desperation," adding: "This is his weapon of last resort."

KEYWORDS: FOREIGN RELATIONS; TERRITORIAL ISSUES; TERRORISM;
NUCLEARWEAPONS; PRESIDENTS

Don't yield to terror kidnappers

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SOURCE:	The Gazette
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The horror continues for the 21 South Koreans held captive by Taliban kidnappers in Afghanistan and for their families and friends. Two of those taken hostage in mid-July have been killed, and others are said to be gravely ill.

Presidents George W. Bush and Hamid Karzai said jointly this week that there can be no deal with these kidnappers. That, hard as it is to bear for anyone with any empathy for the prisoners, is the only correct response.

Kidnapping, like suicide bombing, is a weapon of weakness by which a few desperadoes, lacking popular support, can gain leverage over the whole community or, as in this case, a whole foreign country. The Taliban chose Christian aid workers, perhaps believing that this would be popular among Afghans and drive out other Christian groups. That second calculation, at least, seems to be paying off: Christian activists in South Korea are now reportedly cutting back their Afghan plans.

No matter who is kidnapped, the response from authorities must always be the same. Rewarding the thugs who abduct and murder would result only in open season for the kidnapping of anyone who displeases the fanatics.

The world, including all the ordinary people of Afghanistan, can see what the Taliban have become: kidnappers, bombers, murderers, thieves. Most of the people of Afghanistan might have little use for Christianity, but they can see aid work for what it is, too. They know who's trying to build their country, and who's trying to dominate by bloodshed alone.

No doubt Karzai was too optimistic, as well as politically naive, to dismiss the Taliban as a spent force, as he did this week. But tactics such as kidnapping peaceable foreigners deserve only contempt.

Chief concedes Afghan cops need 20 years to pass muster

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ILLUSTRATION: Photo: AHMAD MASOOD, REUTERS / Afghan Foreign Affairs Minister Dadfar Rangin Spanta (right) greets Pakistani Interior Minister Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao at the peace jirga in Kabul yesterday designed to get Afghans and Pakistanis to agree to ways to combat the Taliban and Al-Qa'ida. ;

KEYWORDS: WAR; TERRORISM

DATELINE: KANDAHAR, Afghanistan

BYLINE: ANDREW MAYEDA

SOURCE: CanWest News Service

WORD COUNT: 162

It could take as many as 20 years to transform the Afghan national police into a professional force capable of securing Kandahar province, the recently named Kandahar police chief said yesterday.

The national police are still plagued by such problems as corruption and lack of training and equipment, Sayed Agha Saqib conceded.

"But I believe that in 15 to 20 years, they can be turned into a professional police force that can secure all the cities and districts," he said.

At Kandahar air field, a top Canadian military official threw more cold water on the notion that the insurgency will be defeated anytime soon. Col. Christian Juneau, deputy commander of Canadian Forces in southern Afghanistan, said the Taliban are "on their heels" and have resorted to such "desperate" tactics as suicide bombings.

But he rejected the notion, recently put forward by the Kandahar governor, that the war is nearing its conclusion.

"'Coming to an end' is a relative term," said Juneau, who along with other commanders from Quebec's Royal 22e Régiment recently took the reins of Canada's operations here.

U.S. public must be patient with Pakistan, Bush says; President presses Musharraf to hold 'free, fair election'

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DATELINE: WASHINGTON

BYLINE: NORMA GREENAWAY

SOURCE: CanWest News Service; Reuters contributed to this report

WORD COUNT: 262

The U.S. public expects "swift action" to take out Al-Qa'ida operatives in Pakistan if solid intelligence emerges about their whereabouts, U.S. President George W. Bush said yesterday, but he stopped short of saying the United States would do the job if the Pakistan government did not.

Bush told a White House news conference that Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf has to prove to Washington that he is serious about cracking down on Islamic extremists within his borders.

A recent U.S. intelligence report said Al-Qa'ida and the Taliban are using tribal lands along the Afghan border to regroup for battle against forces from Canada, Britain, the United States and other NATO countries fighting in Afghanistan.

"I recognize Pakistan is a sovereign nation," Bush told reporters, "and that's important for Americans to recognize that. But it's also important for Americans to understand that he (Musharraf) shares the same concern about radicals and extremists as I do and as the American people do."

The U.S. president also said he pressed his Pakistani ally to hold a "free and fair election." The advice came amid reports, subsequently denied in Islamabad, that Musharraf, who assumed power in a bloodless coup in 1999, was contemplating imposing emergency rule because of deteriorating security conditions in the country.

Such an emergency declaration would have given the Pakistani leader, who is beset by plummeting popularity and the worst political troubles of his eight-year rule, sweeping powers to suppress dissent, muzzle the media and put off elections.

A spokesperson for Musharraf said the general wants Pakistan's elections to happen, as scheduled, by the end of the year.

NDP out to grab Quebec votes in by-election; Outremont race. Layton and Mulcair keep the topic on Afghanistan, algae

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ILLUSTRATION: Colour Photo: MARCOS TOWNSEND, THE GAZETTE / CamilleBaumans-Boisvert, 10, a young NDP volunteer, gets a moment with NDP leader Jack Layton and Thomas Mulcair (far right) at an ice-cream parlour during a campaign stop for the Outremont by-election yesterday. ;

KEYWORDS: PREMIERS; POLITICIANS; POLITICAL PARTIES; QUEBEC

BYLINE: ANDY RIGA

SOURCE: The Gazette

WORD COUNT: 480

New Democratic Party leader Jack Layton and his star Quebec candidate Thomas Mulcair steered around the minefield that is constitutional change yesterday in favour of issues on which they hope to grab Quebec votes – Afghanistan and blue-green algae.

Layton, in Montreal to help Mulcair's campaign in the Sept. 17 Outremont by-election, was asked by reporters whether he supports Quebec Intergovernmental Affairs Minister Benoît Pelletier's idea of entrenching a limit on federal spending power in the Canadian constitution.

Layton said the federal government must stay out of areas of provincial jurisdiction, adding Canada should "very carefully and step by step" create the conditions under which Quebec would agree to sign the 1982 constitution.

That would probably require constitutional negotiations, Layton acknowledged.

But "issues such as the environment, the desperate need to address the growing social disparity in our country and many other issues probably can't wait for the months or years or, more likely, decades of constitutional discussions."

Mulcair also dodged the constitutional question, saying the NDP prefers to focus on ensuring Ottawa butts out of areas under provincial jurisdiction.

Layton said Quebecers like the NDP's "practical approach" to such problems as blue-green algae in lakes – a hot issue in the province this summer. The NDP last week called for larger buffer zones around waterways in agricultural areas to help stop the spread of the algae, which can be harmful to humans. (Fertilizers used on farms are one of the causes of the algae's spread.)

Layton also repeated his call for the immediate withdrawal of Canadian troops from Afghanistan, a position supported by most Quebecers, according to opinion polls.

NDP out to grab Quebec votes in by-election; Outremont race. Layton and Mulcair keep the topic on Afghanistan

Canada must "embark on a whole new process that leads us toward a comprehensive peace process in the region, works toward a ceasefire and puts the kind of investment in reconstruction and aid that is essential," Layton said.

For every \$10 Canada spends on "aggressive military" efforts in Afghanistan, only \$1 goes to reconstruction and humanitarian aid, he said.

"In a peace mission, the last thing you do is shoot," Mulcair added. "In the current war in Afghanistan, it's the first thing we do."

In the by-election, Mulcair is touting his environmental credentials, focusing on issues like blue-green algae. He quit as Liberal Premier Jean Charest's environment minister over the opening of Mount Orford provincial park to condo developers.

Layton yesterday also took aim at Defence Minister Gordon O'Connor, who is under fire for his handling of Canada's mission in Afghanistan.

Referring to a news report that Prime Minister Stephen Harper will shift O'Connor in a cabinet shuffle expected next week, Layton said O'Connor should be thrown right out of the cabinet, not simply demoted to Veterans Affairs.

"If the minister isn't competent enough to do the proper job as minister of defence, and we don't believe he is, he shouldn't be in charge of the veterans, either," Layton said.

"They don't deserve a consolation prize, for heaven's sakes."

In the Outremont by-election, Mulcair is up against Liberal Jocelyn Coulon, a prominent writer and commentator on international affairs, Conservative Gilles Duguay, a former ambassador, and the Bloc Québécois's Jean-Paul Gilson, a psychoanalyst.

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Bush pushes Pakistan to act fast on al-Qaeda; President wants Musharraf to call 'free, fair election'

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DATELINE: WASHINGTON
BYLINE: Norma Greenaway
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
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The U.S. president also said he pressed his Pakistani ally to hold a "free and fair election."

The advice came amid reports, subsequently denied in Islamabad, that Musharraf, who assumed power in a bloodless coup in 1999, was contemplating imposing emergency rule because of deteriorating security conditions in the country.

Questions about the stability of Pakistan and Musharraf's reliability as an ally surfaced when Senator Barack Obama, a leading contender for the Democratic presidential nomination in 2008, said he would unilaterally order U.S. troops into Pakistan if Musharraf refused to take out terrorists.

A vacation-bound Bush also used the news conference to vigorously reassert his case for staying in Iraq.

He met reporters just hours before flying to Maine to spend a few days with his parents at their seaside compound in Kennebunkport. There, he and his wife, Laura, plan a private lunch Saturday with new French President Nicolas Sarkozy and his wife, Cecilia.

Bush then flies to his ranch in Crawford, Texas, to prepare for a meeting later this month with Prime Minister Stephen Harper and Mexican President Felipe Calderon in the Quebec resort village of Montebello.

On Iraq, Bush appeared to be bracing Americans for a mix of good and bad news when Gen. David Petraeus, the top military commander in Iraq, goes before Congress next month to give a thorough report on the impact of a controversial surge in American troop levels in Iraq announced seven months ago.

Bush said the challenges in Iraq are huge after decades of tyranny, but the "young democracy" is taking steps towards forming a functioning government. He insisted the cost to the U.S. of leaving Iraq too soon would be unacceptable.

"I could not send a mother's child into combat if I did not believe it was necessary for our short-term and long-term security to succeed in Iraq," Bush said.